

HISTORY *of the* **BIATES**

(One of the oldest hill tribes of Assam)

*Containing their historical background,
domestic life, culture, traditions, laws &
customs, games, festivals & folklores.*

Ramdina Lalsim
Haflong

PREFACE

History of the Biates (One of the oldest hill tribes of Assam) written by Ramdina Lalsim, Halflong, Published by the Directorate of Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Jawahar Nagar, Guwahati-22

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The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati under the aegis of Ministry of Tribal affairs, Government of India and Government of Assam have been providing grants-in-aid to authors for publication of books written on different aspects of Tribals and Scheduled Castes people of Assam. The scheme is basically known as 'Grants-in-aid for Literary Works for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' The scheme has been made successful by the scholars and the authors of the State for their literary Contributions. As a part of this popular scheme, the book on **History of the Biates** (One of the oldest hill tribes of Assam) by Ramdina Lalsim, Halflong, has been sponsored by the Institute for publication. It is expected that the book will provide interest to the readers and fulfill their needs to some extent. We look forward for comments and suggestion from the readers.

I am grateful to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, and Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes Department of Government of Assam for providing financial Assistance for implementation of the scheme.

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In fine, I like to extend my thanks to M/s. Bohniman Printers, Guwahati for their help and co-operation in bringing out the book.

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(Shri D. Sarma, ACS)

Director,

Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes,

Guwahati-22

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Introductory :

The Biates are a small hill tribe of Assam. The inhabit mainly the western extremity of North Cachar Hills District of Assam and spreading into the other side of the Kopili river in the Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya. The river Kopili, locally known as Kangkalang or Tuipuidung, which flows in between their habitat towards the Umrangsho dam is the Geographical boundary of the states of Assam and Meghalaya. So far their locations are concerned; they are as if the sentinel of the South-Westernmost hills of Assam. The area lies approximately between 25°5' to 25°30' North Latitude and 92°28 to 93° East latitude and is mostly covered by the thatch grass and thick forest. Their total population in these two areas is estimated at sixteen thousand only, out of which half of the total population lives within the Assam territory. The small Biate community of these mentioned regions still speaks the Biate languages and follows its age-old customary laws with a blend of Christian ethnicity as the people had accepted Christianity as their main faith since 1890 from the Saipum village of Jaintia Hills. The main stay of the people is shifting jhum cultivation. Few people are employing in the Government service and are living in the district Hd. Quarter areas like Haflong and Jowai.

Apart from these two regions, few numbers of Biate are also found in the northern part of Mizoram, Churachandpur district of Manipur and South Cachar of Assam, who can no longer speak Biate language, but Hmars and Lushais whom they have been living with them for many centuries. The Biates who speak the Biates language were now only the Biates of North Cachar Hills of Assam's and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, who has been living aloof from the beginning from their exodus beyond Burma. This book, therefore deals mainly with the Biates of Assam and Meghalaya, where the Biate ethnicity like language and culture are still uphold.

Politically, the Biates of the said two adjoining areas have representative in each respective District Councils. A circle called Kharthong constituency is thus under the administrative control of N.C. Hills Autonomous council, Haflong

Assam, and the other Saipung constituency is under the Jaintia Hills District Council, Jowai, Meghalaya.

By race, the Biates are quiet, meek and peaceful and did not have any apple of discord with their neighbours throughout their history. They are peace-loving people and form one of the ethnic groups of North Cachar Hills of Assam and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, consequently inhabiting these two regions peacefully since time immemorial.

Racial affinity :

Physiologically and linguistically, the Biates are a sub-tribe of the Chin Kuki Mizo, who again are a branch of old Kuki. In his 'Kuki-Lushei Tribes (1893)' C.A Sopitt asserted that the Hrangkhoh, co-tribe is Bete and their sub-tribes are Sakachep and Langrong¹. Moreover, Dr. Grierson, in his Linguistic Survey of India, affirmed that the languages of all these following tribes under a single group called Old Kuki ; Rangkhoh, Bete, Halam, Langrong, Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Hiroi-Lamngang, Kolren, Kom, Purum, Mhar and Cha². Besides, small section of the following tribes has also been in close affinity with each other of the old group-Pangkhoh, Chorei, Langkei, Kaipeng, Darlong, Muaisom, Chothe, Bong, Mersephang, Koirang, etc. As regards to the old Kuki clans, J Shakespeare stated that the ancestors of Old Kukis and the Lushais were related and lived very close together somewhere in the centre of the hills on the banks of the Tyao and Manipur rivers³. The Manipur river, which Shakespeare mentioned could, seemed to be the Run (spelling as Room) river which has been habitually found in their folk songs.

In the old days the Biates are also known as Bete or Biete. However, they seldom call themselves by these names but call themselves 'Riam' or 'Riem' from the word *mi-riam*;

1. C.A. Sopitt, *A short Account of Kuki-Lushai Tribes*, TRI Aizawl-1st ED: 1893, Reprinted : 1976, P-9.

2. G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol-111 Part 111, (Calcutta-1904), P-3.

3. J. Shakespeare, *Lushei Kuki Clans*, (Macmillan & Co. Ltd. St. Martin's Street, London 1912) P-148.

'mi' means man and 'riam' means being, which literally means a man or mankind. Sometimes, the word "Riam" implies not only to themselves, but also to their entire co-tribes Kuki-Mizo groups who have close affinity with the languages. Since the Kuki-Mizo group did not have any prominent collective name during the colonial days, the English administrators designated them as Kuki. Moreover, when groups of new emigrants were noticed they called them as New Kuki while the former were designated as Old Kuki.

According to Dr. G.A Grierson, the word "Kuki" and "Chin" are synonymous and are both used for many of the hill tribes in question. 'Kuki' is an Assamese or Bengali term, applied to various hill tribes, such as the Lusheis, Rangkhols, Thados, etc. 'Chin' is a Burmese word used to denote the various hill tribes living in the country between Burma and the Provinces of Assam and Bengal⁴. The term 'Chin Kuki Mizo' therefore, may be summed up as follows the word "Chin" the Burmese term and "Kuki" is the Bengali and Assamese term and "Mizo" the Mizo term which literally means high landers or hills people.

Myths of Origin :

According to the Biate legends they were the descendants of Manmasi and their progenitors have sprung out from Khurpui Tlabung, also known as Sinlung. It is generally believed that Khurpui Tlabung, meaning, a giant hole of Tlabung or a large cave in the earth of Tlabung covered by a rocky slab is supposed to be somewhere in the southwest China.

Another version of the tale of the peopling of the world as handed down by tradition is as follows : 'Once upon a time, before the great darkness called Thimzing fell upon the world, a pair of man and woman came out of Khurpui, a hole below the earth. However, a ferocious tiger who was watching the event had eaten them up one by one. As this continued for many years, the land remain uninhabited and was empty. Nevertheless, one particular day, a hero came out with his sword and spear, and when the tiger jumped over him, the

4. G.A Grierson, *op. cit.*, P-2, 3.

hero fought a good fight with all his might and finally after a long chase, killed the tiger in the hill *Nengsentlang*. As a result, the ancestors of the Biates began to survive in the earth and the following phrases reminded them of their victory over the man-eating tiger-*Nengsentlanga chu ikei ti ngai mangme, Sakhi sen keng* Meaning- "In the hill of *Nengsentlang* one should fear the red deer instead of a tiger."

This means that the tiger is not to be afraid of, as it is already a defeated foe⁵.

Sojourn to North Cachar Hills & Jaintia Hills :

The Biates came to North Cachar Hills and Jaintia Hills in two waves from the southwest China via Mizo Hills, Rengram (Tripura Hills), South Cachar. Legend says the Biates legendary hero by name Lamlira led the first group. Although the precise period when the first group or section of the Biate migrated into the North Cachar Hills and Jaintia Hills cannot be determined, it can be assumed that the second group came to their present areas in the seventeen eighties. They had arrived in N.C. Hills at the point of Ngaibangtlang, via Vangaitlang and Ruang neh Viasua from the Rengram (Tripura Hills) and Mizoram. Within the North Cachar Hills, they made their first settlement at the rolling ranges of the Ngaibantlang. They then made their Northwestward progress; and established at Pangserki. This village was said to be the first established village so says the legends. A few groups of people thence crossed the Kopili river and made their final home in Jaintia Hills. Concerning the Biate in North Cachar Hills, Assam A. Mackenzie, writes, 'the old Kookies were reported in 1853 to be four clans, viz., Khelma (Sakachep), Ranthai (Rangkhols) Bete (Biate) and Lamkron (Langrong). Their numbers as given in Mills Report 1854 is 3,335 and Allen's Report (1859) is 3,709 respectively⁶.

5. Interviewed : Rengchonga Darnei, at his residence on 19 sept. 2001 Tiongpui

6. A. Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India. First Published in 1884 entitled 'History of the relations of Govt. With the hill tribes of the north-east frontier of Bengal.* 1989 Delhi-p-145.

Early designation of the Biates in Jaintia Hills & N.C. Hills :

During the eighteenth century the Biates and their sub-tribe Sakacheps of Jaintia Hills are called as 'Hadem' or 'Kuki' by the Pnars-Khasis. Meanwhile, the Biates called the Khasis and Pnars as Karo. It is generally considered that the word Hadem means backward people. Meanwhile, to the Biates the word "Karo" implies in their mind as flying traders or business people. In fact, they (Pnars, Syntengs, and Khasis) were the people who were usually witnessed as traders in their own respective villages, by selling items like pot, serving dish, dao, hoe and so on. It is said that their transactions had been in barter system. In those days, the Biate goods mostly comprised of chillies, cotton, ivory, etc. It is impossible to comprehend why the term, 'Karo' was used to imply all the Khasis and Pnars. It would seem that the trader in their area probably belonged from the Garo community.

Meanwhile in N.C. Hills, the Biates along with Hrangkhols and Sakacheps are called as Langtame by the Zeme Nagas and the latter are called Mirong by the former. The Dimasas identify the Biate, Hrangkhols and Sakachep as Dakhinsa, and the Biates called them as Kajari from the word Kachhari. According to the Dimasa scholar, J.L. Thaosen, "The Biates, Hrangkhols, Khelmas, who had already inhabited North Cachar Hills during the Heramba Raj, were fondly called as Dakhinsa, meaning southerner, by the Dimasa Raja himself. However, this term was gradually used more to refer to the Hrangkhols since they are greater in number than their brethren in the old days. Eventually, the smaller co-tribes have also been given names like-Biate as Bedesa, and Sakachep as Khelma respectively⁷. The present generations, however have begun to call each community by their respective identity.

Former leaders under the British administration :

In regards to the early leaders of the Biates, B.Pakem, a renowned Khasi scholar remarked that 'When the Biates

7. Interviewed: -JL Thaosen, Age 72, on 14th, November 2000, at his residence, Haflong Town.

came to their present abode; they had no political chief but the institutions for customary laws. When the British penetrated into the area, a leader was found in the person of Pu. Lalthalura Thiaite. He became the first Biate leader who was recognized as a leader in 1854 at Asalu, the then headquarters of Cachar District. He became the first Sirdar or Dolloi of the Biates of North Cachar Hills. Pu, Taichonlura Ngamlai was another Biate leader in 1854 at Asalu. He was born in 1793 and recognized as a Biate leader in 1854. He continued to be the Biate leader in Khasi and Jaintia Hills District when the Saipung area of Biateram, Khasi and Jaitia Hills District in 1864. On August 6, 1879, he was appointed as Sirdar or Dolloi of Saipung by Mr. S.E. Ritta, Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner. He had the post of Sirdar or Doloi of Saipung until his death on August 6, 1899⁸. The institution of Sirdarship or Dolloiship continues until today in the Jaintia hills, whereas in the District of North Cachar Hills, it is known as Maujadar. The Maujadars are known as Mukja in Biate and following are the names of Biate Maujadars of the good old days of North Cachar.

The memorial Stone of Pu Toichonlura, can be seen to this day on the upper roadside of Saipum Village of Jaintia Hills. The cemented stone is about 4ft. by 4 ft. and 6 ft. in height, which was permanently standing in the upper part of the village. When I visited the Saipum village of Jaintia Hills in the ensuing programmed of Gospel Centenary in 1990, incidentally I come across the said memorial stone of Pu Toichonlura. The following lines of the stone still remains but is hardly visible to be deciphered **"In loving memory of my beloved Friend Lura, Doloi of Saipum, William Ward"**. The villagers do know indeed their late leader Lura. However, they do not know who William Ward was. After my brief investigation, I came to know that he was none other than William Ward, the Deputy Commissioner of Assam, who was one of the active pioneer administrators of the then Assam; interestingly the lake which still exist in the heart of Shillong,

8. *Tribes of North East India : Edited By Karantemprel, Shillong-1984, Pakem-p-291.*

is called Ward's Lake, named after the builder William Ward.

Monoliths & Memorial Stones :

The monoliths of the Biate area of Kharthong region are classified in three parts, namely-Lungzubel (wine pot of stone), Lungmaicham (altar of stone) and Lamlira Lungphum (memorial stone of Lamlira, the hero). Of all the memorial stones Lamlira Lungphum named after its builder, situated close to the Mualdam village is the most famous. Although the many mortal friends of this stone have passed away, yet this unsung and uncared immortal stone which is about 5 ft. in width and 8 ft. tall still stand quietly on the green meadow of Lungphunphai. Concerning the aged stones of the Kharthong area, the 'Lungrikul' of Khoback khôru is notable. The three kinds of stone like Lungzubel, Lamlira lungphum and Lungmaicham are found here in great stock at a particular place. As such, the name of that place is called 'Lungrikul' (garden of stones). It is here in this village the great explorer and Archeologist like J.P. Mills and J.H. Hutton explored sometime in 1920s, and brought to light the monoliths of Vaitang and Khobak as ancient monoliths of North Cachar Hills. But they are mentioned as Kobak and Waichang and Kartong⁹. This in fact is a corruption of the word Khobak, Vaitang and Kharthong respectively. Interestingly such kinds of memorial stones are also found in their ancestral homeland, i.e., Mizoram and were called by the same name as Lamhlira Lungphun. Anthropologists like Mills and Hutton, however, opine that some of these megaliths relics, except Lamlira Lungphum are of the middle stone age and classified them as Haobinhan tradition of Vietnam.

Family structure :

The Biates follow the patriarchal system of family structure. The sons and daughters take the father's clan title. The line of descent is traced through the male members only. The female, however, after marriage, takes her husband's

9. *Mills, J.P. & Hutton, J.H. 1929-Ancient Monoliths of North Cachar, Jr. Asiatic Soc. of Beng., xxv : 285-300 p.*

clan. The youngest son is the formal heir who generally remains with his father and mother, and inherits the house and its property. The youngest, *ithlum*, as its name signifies generally is look upon as the apple of an eye of the family. Moreover, physically and mentally, the youngest is supposed to be the weakest of all the siblings and this could be the reason behind the chosen one for the inheritance of the heir. If a man dies without leaving any sons, his property shall be inherited by his nearest male kin. If the deceased has no brother also, the property will go to his nearest relatives. However, traditions of inheritance is not a rigid one, the father has every right to give his property like lands and other items to his daughters also. As a rule mother's properties like necklaces, clothes, looms, etc., are usually distributed to the daughters and daughters in-laws' as per the wish of the mother accordingly.

Villages/Clans :

Every Biate village is administered under the traditional council called Siarkalim Devan. Over the Siarkalim council is the supreme council called Laldevan or Namringa Devan, meaning court of the five clans. The court of five clans signifies the five clans of the Biates, such as-1. *Nampui*, 2. *Darnei* (*Thlungur*), 3. *Ngamlai*, 4. *Lalsim* (*Ngirsim*) 5. *Thiaite* (*Theite*). The five clans are further subdivided into sub-clans as follows :

1. **Nampui :** *Chungngol, Don-Chungngol, Thianglai, Munring, Fatlei, Rangchal, Pungte, Kungte.*
2. **Darnei :** *Thangbei, Khoreng and Lungoi.*
3. **Ngamlai :** *Durpui, Ranglem, Sonlen and Jamate.*
4. **Lalsim :** *Ngirsim, Ngaite, Jate, Riamate and Chonsim.*
5. **Thiaite :** *Failing, Ralvonga, Taizang, Sumbuma & Khampaia.*

Names :

Traditionally, the Biates' male names ends with "a" and a female with "i". The common male names are such as-

Thanga, Singa, Khupa, Renga, Lura, Roia, Fonga, Liana, etc., which could be Rallianthanga, Lalchonsinga, Neichongkhupa, Thangrenga, Lianlura, Lairoia, Chongliana, etc., in full name, but it must end with "a". Whereas the common female names are,- Thangi, Chongi, Choni, Chini, Khili, Chiri, Dari, Riami, Lali, Rii, Dingi, etc.,. This too could be Sumtinthangi, Laikungchongi, Riamtinchini, Chongkhili, Roilali, etc., but it must end with "i". Without indicating the masculine or feminine gender of "a" and "i" in the person's name, it is impractical to form the Biate dialect in neither speech or writing. However, when the speaker calls a person by name, the indicator 'a' and 'i' is not necessary if the name is more than one syllable. For example, "Lianvung ni dam im? (Lianvung, how are you?) But if it is just one syllable, the indicator 'a' is to be added. For example, "Vunga ni dam im?" And not "Vung ni dam im?" (amahi Vunga in anit. Meaning- This is Vunga's house and not Vung in anit). As far as the traditional personal name is concerned, interestingly among the Chin Kuki Mizo group of families such indicator on the name of the persons, i.e., "i" and "a" is existing only to the Biate, Lushais and the Darlongs of Tripura.

Teknonymy, however, like the other Chin Kuki Mizo group, is very common among the Biates. The parents of a child called Renga will generally be known as as Renga-Pa and Renga-Nu. When Renga will get married and have a daughter called Chongi, ultimately Renga and his wife will be called as Chongi-Pa, Chongi-Nu. Eventually, Renga-Pa and Renga-Nu will be called as Chongi-Pu and Chongi-Pi or Grandfather and Grandmother of Chongi. It is not considered a good form to address the married man or woman by his or her name directly. However, if the speaker is much elder than the addressee, he or she can call by his or her name. It is also commonly addressed as Pu or Pi before their names instead of so and so's father or mother. The young boys are called as *Tlangval* and the young girls *Nungak*. When in written the short form of Nungak is Nk and Tlangval is Tv. The children are called by their short names; as a rule the affection called like- Puia, Ngoia, Donga, Toia, Bounga, Sena, whereas in girls- Seni, Ngoii, Bongi, Toii, dongi, etc. It is usually

addressed also when one does not know the particular name of the child. Likewise, to show respect to the elders when address one would say Epu or Epi. Not necessary mentioned his name when directly talk to him. This is equivalent to the English of Sir and Madam. The formal friends however, irrespective of their ages call each other Mala (masculine) and Chami (feminie).

Marriage :

The Biates do not follow exogamy rigidly. A man can marry a girl belonging to his clan although such a marriage is not favour with them. That is to say, there is no bar to marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to the same clan. Cross cousin marriage is always favoured.

In the Biate society, polygamy is taboo; hence monogamy is the established rule among them. In most cases, love results in marriage if the parents or guardians of the boys and girls raise no serious objection and the customary law of clan exogamy is not violated. Widow re-marriage is prevalent. Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing practice among the Biates. Under the traditional marriage system when a boy wishes to marry a girl of his choice or liking, he sends his parents or relatives to the parents of the girl. The parents of the young girl will inform the approaching parents to confirm the consent or agreement of the girl within few days. Within the probable period, the parents of the young man will again approach the parents of the girl. If the parents of the girl agree to the proposal, they will fix the day to solemnize the marriage. On the fixed day marriage are solemnized in a Church under a Pastor in front of the Church congregation. After the solemnization of the marriage, feast, it prepared will follow. People of all walks of life will come and bless the couple, some with gifts. On the night of the marriage day all security payments of the bride called 'Man' are to be given to the father of the bride under the guidance of law authorities of the village. The legal Security payment for marriage called 'Man' is Rs. 9.25 p and a bronze plate called Mairang (a big bronze plate of six spans). According to Biate customary society the son-in-law is required to stay in his father-in-law's house at least for three years. The period is called 'Maksin'.

During his stay in his in-laws' house he is supposed to provide a helping hand in the jhum works of his in-laws.' At the same time he should begin to construct his hut. When the time comes to take his wife, if fortunate, with child or children, the parents and relatives of the wife will release and bid their daughter and her children with best of wishes. The ceremony of taking his wife to his house is called Moithui, meaning taking the bride. The bride parents would present her with gifts of household materials and properties of different kinds. Among the gifted goods, two things are compulsorily required to present their daughter, one is 'Puanpui' (a big and thick hand made cotton, blanket) and second one is 'Rel/Thul' (a nice handicraft work of container basket made of fine cane). In these modern days, some people may replace these two things with complete bed materials, box, almirah, and other materials. The serving of in-laws for three years is now on the wake of being given up, since the brides and grooms are now not of farmers but Govt. employees.

Terms of Relationship used in address :

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Father's Fater | - Epu. Never by name.
Father's uncles are all address as Epu. |
| Mother's father | - Epu. Never by name. All male members of mother's clan are address as Epu if older than the speaker, by name if younger than the speaker. In general, the maternal uncle is treated with deep respect and veneration, and has definite rights and privileges over his tupa and tunu (nieces and nephews). When a boy or girl is to marry, the maternal uncle is first to be informed regarding the to decision he has taken. Even when a man dies, the news of the death was also to be informed his maternal uncle. This highest term |

of respect is called Puson. The maternal uncle is even believed to have the power of fate upon his tupa or tunu. Old adage goes as follows- 'Ei pu hei chu ei sam rizik itu tu annit' meaning 'the palm that hold your hair is your pu or maternal uncle'.

- Father's mother - Epi. Never by name.
- Mother's mother - Epi. Never by name.
- Father - - Epa. Never by name.
- Mother- - Enu. Never by name.
- Father's elder brother-- Ki pater or Epa or Pa ulian. Never by name. In third person, Ki pater Moia Pa, that is My father, the father of Moia referring to him by his eldest child's name. "Ki" singular, 'Ei' plural.

Father's younger brother-Epangak or Epa. Same way as father's elder brother.

Father's sister, elder or younger - Eni. In third person, Ei ni Reminu, My aunty, mother of Remi refereeing to her eldest Child's name. 'Ki' Singular, "Ei" Plural. By name, if younger than speaker.

Father's sister's husband - Ke rang, or Epa or Epangak. Never by name

- Mother's brother - Epu. Never by name
- Mother's brother's wife - Epi. Never by name
- Mother's elder sister - - Ki puitar of Enu. Never by name.
- Mother's elder sister's husband- Epa. Never by name.
- Mother's younger sister - Epuingak or Enu. Never by name
- Mother's younger sister's husband - Epangak. Never by name
- Mother's brother's son - E u if older, by name, if younger than speaker
- Mother's sister's daughter- E u if older, by name if younger

than speaker

Elder sister's husband - E u if older than speaker, if of same age by name.

Sister's (older or younger) son - Tupa or by name.

Sister's (older or younger) daughter- Tunu or by name.

Brother - E u or u. if older than the speaker. If younger, by name

Sister - E u or u. if older than the speaker. If younger, by name.

Descriptive terms for Relationship :

Grandfather (paternal and maternal)- Pu.

Grandmother (paternal and maternal) - Pi.

Father - Pa.

Mother - Nu

Father's elder brother - Pater or Pa or Pa ulian.

Father's younger brother - Pa or Pangak.

Mother's elder sister - Nu, or Nuulian.

Mother's younger sister - Epuingak.

Brother-(elder) - U. (Ki ulianpa- my elder brother)

Brother (younger) - Unai. (Ki unaipa my younger brother)

Sister (Elder) - U. (Ki uliannu)

Sisters - Sister Farh, (including his own sisters/sister or his own clan female of his generations are his Farnu or Farhei.

Borthers - Tapa (including her own brothers or brother or of her own father's clan male of her generations are her Tapa or Tahei.

Husband - Pasal, Lompa.

Wife - Nupui, Lomnu

Relatives (Paternal) - Parual

Relative (Maternal) - Nurudal

Relative (same clan/General)- Suapui.

Younge girl - - Nungak
 Youngman - - Tlangval

DOMESTIC LIFE :

The Village :

The Biate villages or khua are built generally on some high slope or ridge. The khua or villages are known by their place-names and are sometimes given in accordance with their ancestral village names. Thus a village Mualsei means 'Long ridge' and "Thingdol" means a kind of large tree known as *Monia-gash* in Hindi having many thingdol trees on the site when the village was founded. Meanwhile a village called Fiangpui meaning a hamlet above brooks that located near Haflong is said to have been named after their former village of Mizoram. Likewise, the Saizol meaning a place of an elephant, Saibual- a bathing place of the elephant, Saikarh- a place of an elephant trap, Saipum-A place of an elephant pitfall, Jongria- a place where monkeys pass the night. The above-mentioned villages are of Jaintia Hills and N.C. Hills. Moreover, a place called Kharthong means a kind of an edible creeper after which it was named. The hills and rivers too were named in the same way. The river Kopili is known as Kangkalang in Biate, the name being derived from the fact that a kind of corn tree which they called as Kangkalang was found abundantly in that particular riverside. Besides, a particular high range that stands in between Vaitang and Mualdam is called Arfaksip, meaning fowl eating hilltop, which in fact is in the days gone by; the eagles used to devour its prey, the fowl, at this particular hilltop. One of the highest ranges, which mightly stand in between New Sangbar and Bangphiri, is known as Thangnangsip, meaning hill of Thangnang. *Thangnang* is a kind of an edible, tasty winged insect, look alike of tiny stinkbug. According to the Biate traditions, a swarm of this tiny flying creature usually navigated, descending in thousands at the high ranges after every fifty years when mulee bamboo plants flowered. So far, the name of the village and a particular place is concerned; the Biates

are able to keep the names of their ancestral villages and come to know the history of the particular spots of the village.

Mode of house building :

A house is called *in*. A typical Biate house is build on a bamboo platform using timber posts for super structure. For roofing purpose, *ngaidi* or thatch grass is used and the walls or *bang* are composed of split bamboo. The house has a veranda called buk and a porch called thapuk. A wooden ladder called Rikal or Kelrikal is used as an approach to the front Veranda. In general, the size of the house is usually about 20 ft. breadth by 60 ft. length. It consist of *Buk* (front verandah), *Thapukh* (porch-a place for stacking firewood, coop, mortar-pestle, baskets). In between buk and thapuk is a first door called *kharlon*. Next to thapuk is a *kharpui* meaning main door. After *kharpui* is the main hall, which is called *Insungpui*, within the main hall on the front, is *ritap* a main hearth used for cooking. Above the fireplace are three shelves hanging called *raprikal*. The lowest meat rack is called *sa-lang* and the next one is *izar*, which is for keeping dry trays of paddy as well as chilies and the next rack is for keeping the salt, dry fish, etc. and the last and uppermost is for keeping miscellaneous, etc. On the main hall, close to the row of the hearth is a horizontally lengthy bedroom known as *ikun*, partitioned in two or three rooms. Closed to the hearth are the master's cabin and the others for his children. In general, the retiring rooms of the young sons is the main hall which may be beside the hearth or in the corner. Like the front porch, next to the main hall is a door and adjoin a small rear porch called *liangkhu*, which is a place for keeping tuithei or water tube, dish, plate, pot and the other half portion is for storing the daily bread like basketful of paddy, pumpkins, yams etc. The rear or end open veranda called as *Chor* is used for washing, cleaning and the tip of the rear is old age bathroom and relieving nature call in case of emergency. Around each village are clusters of granaries-small houses raised well off the ground and placed sufficiently far from the dwelling houses to make them safe from fire. There is no account of Buanzawl or Zawlbuk in Biate society of this region.

As the village is administered by the GB or Kalim, the important meeting is therefore, usually held at the house of the said village head. The institution of bachelors' dormitory called Buanzol or Zawlbuk has gone out of existence long before the spread of Christianity. The original traditional houses are even in the wake of being given up due to scarcity of good quality of timber, thatch grass, bamboo, and cane. Instead, the thatch house is constructed in the ground and some well to do family has constructed in simple Assam house type with tin roof. The villages now look less attractive compared to the artistic touch of the ancient traditional village.

Agriculture :

The primary occupation of the Biates of N.C. Hills and Jaintia Hills is shifting jhum cultivation. In the month of January to February the selected portion of the jungles for the jhum, whether it be trees, bamboos or sun grass is all cut down and left to dry. By the month of March when it is wholly dry, it is set on fire and reduced to ashes. The bamboo or wood ashes form valuable manure. The timber and bamboos that have not left burnt are then cleared which is called *Mangrikhom*. A small raised hut or *itu* in which the workers will live during the cultivating season is built in the jhum. Generally, the hut is built in the middle of the jhum where one can watch the nook and corner of the jhum.

In mid April when the monsoon-rains start, the surface is then slightly scraped with a *tuthlo* or hoe and paddy grains and seeds of various crops like maize, cucumber, pumpkin, millet, bean, sesame and other vegetables are sown. The chief crop is rice. All crops are grown in jhums. In order to prevent wild animals and birds from invading the crops, constant watching is essential until the harvest is completed. To drive these raiders away from the fields they construct *Varung-buk* or bird watching towers at good height on the trees. The tree for this purpose is left standing when the rest of the selected jungle is cleared. From the jhum hut to the watchtower and corner places, they make a pulling rope for a scarecrow sound box, which is called *songbok*, made from

a Tube-vessel. By pulling the rope line, it made a horrible sound from the tube-vessel to frighten away the raiders. (One of the Cicada species is also called *songsongbok* whose cry is similar to the sound made by the man made *songbok*). Of all the jhum works, weeding is said to be the strenuous job, yet from the month of May-July the crops have to be weeded two or three times, since crops and weeds were exceptionally raised faster as rain watered them sufficiently in those seasons. In July-August, pumpkins, maize and other green vegetables are reaped and in October tobacco, chilies and spices are gathered and laid out in the sun to dry. When the month of October come to an end, the villagers begin to harvest the paddy by cutting the paddy with a *koida* or sickle and are tied up in sheaves and stacked in the jhum hut. As soon as the harvest has been finished, the jhum owner make a *ri-zol* or threshing floor at the courtyard of the jhum-hut. If the harvest is bumper crop and the jhum owner has intended invite his fellow villagers for *chilpui* meaning final threshing day, he could invite the villagers. As a mark of gratitude and thanks, the jhum owner in turn would treat his fellow helpers with sumptuous feast then and there. Lastly, in the last part of November and December, cotton, sesame are gathered. When all the crops and paddy grains have been collected, it is carried up in the village and stored in the *Fasiar* or granary, which is usually constructed at a good distance from the house on the lower side in order to be safe from accidental fire. The owner would visit the *Fasiar* time to time for collecting the paddy and vegetables like, red-pumpkin, dried chilies, sesame, arum root, etc. After the paddy has been stored safely in each granary, the men folk would enjoy their leisure time for hunting, fishing, adventuring, feasting, etc, while women for spinning and weaving and manufacturing clothes. The month of November-January is the slackest times and is called *Bolzoi* meaning works and worship is over or falls of the straw, which indicated the end of all works. It is in that very leisure month one of the chief festivals called Nulding Kut, a festival of recreation or renewal of life is observed. Thus, the cycle of drudgery days and leisure moments rotates for

everyone throughout the year.

Food and Drink :

Like the other tribes of North-East India, the staple food of the Biates is boiled rice. It is served with a relish of chilies and other vegetables like pumpkins, beans, yam, arum roots and various kinds of jungle vegetables, such as bamboo shoots, plantain flower, leaves, fruits, mushroom and fungi of different species. As far as the food gathering from the nearby jungles is concerned, they have a vast knowledge and are very expert. According to the seasons, they know quite well where to collect the season's wild vegetables. They take two principal meals, one in the morning and other in the evening.

The Biates eat practically any kind of meat, from bee larvae to an elephant meat. However, they do not take the meat of tiger, snakes, horses, eagles, crows, cats and dogs. The Biates are neither an expertise nor an unprofessional in the art of cooking. Their common recipes include addition of alkaline water (soda) which they call as *Chang-al*. It is made from the ashes of bamboo or wood. Their all time favourite hot water soup is called *Baipok*. A handful of chilies, a tablespoonful of (anibaih) rice flour powder, a half teaspoonful of *chang-al* or Soda, two or three pieces of *Ngathu* (dry fish) is boiled with 500 ml of water in a pot for about 20 minutes and salt is added for taste which make a complete *baipok*. A wild tiny green leafy called *sumrisi** and *sizoi** occupy an important place as far as the traditional curry is concerned. It can be perfectly matched with the meat either smoked or red meat. It is an indispensable item in the community feasting. They also take boiled vegetables. The boiled fish grinded with green chilies, leafy onion is called *ngadeng* (chatni). A common grinded chili, onion with dry fish, is called *merchadeng* and is highly regarded. Small animals like birds and squirrel are generally put above the fire, when it is smoked, are prepared in the same way. In regard to *sumrisi*, incidentally, it has confirmed from this old song that a *sumrisi* of Darlung Hill (supposed to be in Mizoram) is superior to the rest :

"A *Sumrisi sumrisi*, Darlung tlanga *sumrisi*

Atu beia a ngot rang? Son a Lalsinga ngot rang,

Bet ro khilin tho rei ba, Ton ro khilin tho rei ba,
Sum kha darkan tho rei bah!!! Oi ah."

Traditionally, all the Chin Kuki Mizo group of tribe regards the 'Sumrisi' as the indispensable items with the red meat or smoked meat. Interestingly, different tribes of the group has a different name of this leafy vegetables, however, it bear the word "si" in each respective names- eg-* *Sumrisi*-Biate, *Parmansi*-Rangkhoh, *Marsibu*-Thiek, *Sizou*-Hmar, *Kamrisi*-Chiru, *Sihne*-Lushei, *Sizo*-Vaiphei, etc.

Drink :

There are four kinds of drinks : -1) *Baitui* a rice beer, 2) *Zu ning*, a fine distilled rice beer, 3) *Rakzu*, a strong distilled spirit, 4) *Zu-phok*, a type of rice beer made from special flavour rice which is half-solid half-liquid.

The word "Zu" is the common term of the above drinks. However, preparations of any kinds of the mentioned drinks have disappeared in the Biate society of the present days. Since their set of guidelines is now based on Christianity, such traditions are now discouraged. *Zu* has been replaced entirely by red tea or the added milk and sugar one in the present today.

Tobacco :

The Biates, both men and women are fond of smoking. Tobacco is known as *Duma*. It is grown on the banks of the stream or nearby the *jhum* houses. The men folk smoke by rolling it with a particular giant leaf called *korna*. The women however smoke in a special pipe called *dumbel* (pronounced as doomhbell). It is a hubble bubble type with three parts :— a clay bowl or *dumbel-lu* is a container of *duma*, *mairikel*, a main part made out of bamboo root with sucker pipe called *loli* and a nicotine-water receptacle called *dumbel-pin*. The nicotine water produced from the process is called *Tuibur*. Like cigars and chewing tobacco, addiction of this nicotine water is very strong. A sip of *tuibur* or nicotine water is merely kept or retained in the mouth for about ten minutes and then spat out. This can give an invigorating effect on the person. It is for this nicotine water, the women smoke for long hours. This nicotine water is also widely used for first aid in treatment

of leech bites, mosquito bites and any insect bites. Three or four drops on the base of a nail are also an effective remedy for gas in stomach due to indigestions. Applying a few drops on the fresh cuts or wounds have been said to be a good preventive measure for tetanus. There is also a belief that even a snake seldom bites a chain smoker and a *tuibur* addict. Probably this is the only lighter side of tobacco.

Weapons and Tools :

The Biate do themselves manufacture their weapons in the village. They do not acquire many weapons. Their weapons are such as :-

Ifei : The spear javelin is called ifei. The shaft is made out of the fine wood called *Khersei* or *ile thing* plamwood that have been said to be the perfect ifei. The spearhead is in the shape of rhombus and the end consists of an iron spike for sticking into the ground on the pathway when the spear is not in use. The spearhead is made in the village forge by the village *thirsu* or blacksmith. In the old days, every village has a *thirsu* or blacksmith who is also considered as one of the high-ranking official of the village council.

Iphe : A shield for defensive weapon is called iphe. It is made of mithun hide. Iphe is rectangle in shape. At the back of the shield is a cane handle. On saying about the Biate shield, there is a saying— A village called Khobak, which is one of the oldest and largest villages in N.C. Hills had been known as "Phobak" (tattered shield) in the old days; since their shields were found out to be ragged and tattered by the rats when they were in that village' so says the old.

Phel-Thal : It is an arrow bow. The bow is called phel and the arrow thal. The bow stave is made out of hard bamboo called *Vamalangrua*. The string is made out of the bark of cork tree called *ruiza*. The arrow shaft is made out of the same kind of bamboo and the head of the arrow is made of iron. A shrub poison called *keitur* is used which they smeared on the sharp edged arrow heads.

Saili : A pellet bow is called *Saili*. It is made exactly in the same way as the stave of the arrow bow, but the string is made out of *ting* cane. The bowstring is called *saili rui*. In

- the middle of the string is made a pellet holder, which is called *Sailiphan*. Pellets are called *Sailum*, which are made in the size of playing marbles. The red clay of the termites mount is generally recommended for the best pellet clay. *Saili* is a common and important equipment for the agrarian Biate tribe in which one can shoot away the jhum raiders like birds, monkeys. Normally boys shoot small birds and squirrels with them. It can knock out even jungle fowl and small cats when hitting in the right target eg, heads. In the Biate society irrespective of age, boys and grown men alike are expert in *saili*. However, after coming of rubber catapult in the 80s at Haflong market from Aizawl Bazaar, the traditional *Saili* is now outmoded and presently the rubber catapult is even in the wake of being abandoned, since shooting of birds is discouraged in the society. Fortunately, I possessed one old *Saili*, which once belong to my grandfather, that too will not be for hunting but for decorating.

Chem : The dao is called Chem. The handle is made from the core or root of a bamboo. It is used for every kind of work like-cutting jhums, felling trees-bamboos, building houses, etc., practically there is no sort of work without Chem, and it is indispensable. It has been said that in the old days they have a long sword called *Kawchem* or Burmese sword.

Tangsi : The Tangsi is a small knife, which is particularly used by the artisans in the basketry process.

Rei : It is a common axe for cutting firewood, felling trees, etc. There are three kinds of Rei, the big one is called *Reipui* and the small one is called *reite*. The *reite* is basically use in the making of barel of ladder. Moreover, an earless axe is called *Vatrei*, which has been considered the earliest of its kind.

Tuthlo : A hoe is called *tuthlo*. It is used for sowing the seed, weeding the fields, digging the roots and for every kind of earthwork. The handles are made of bamboo base.

Silai : The gun is called *silai*. It is generally believed that they possess the guns only after the establishment of British Hd Qrt in their region in 1854. They possess only few guns that are entirely of licenses ones and most of them are

flint stock, which is considered being the oldest of its kind. Like their neighbours Pnars and Khasi, the Biates in general are fond of angling than hunting. Almost all the grown up men have vast knowledge on fishing term.

Crafts and Basketry :

All wooden work, Cane and bamboo basketry work is done by the men so as the clothes and cotton work is to women. There are varieties of craft works, each with its special use. The following are the main household implements for its special purpose :-

Sumh : Paddy mortar. It is generally made out of *rikhiang* wood.

Farel : Pestle. It is commonly made out of Sekchoi and Khersei wood.

Thingsumh : Pickel mortar. It is made out of gian bamboo called rova.

Bukhe : A wooden stirrer or spoon used for stirring rice that is being cooked. It is commonly made out of Khuaitur wood.

An ikhe : A deep spoon with a long handle used for serving liquid or cooked curry. It is commonly made out of rova bamboo.

Lukham : An wooden pillow, which is also used as seat.

Thingkuang : A wooden barrel used for keeping the cleaned rice. Thingkuang is generally made out of Rivong wood (gamari). The wooden barrel is also used for processing for making of curd and butter.

Tuithei : A large bamboo tube used for keeping the water. Tuithei is made out of rova bamboo.

Tui-um : A gourd water container.

Bemur : A bamboo tube of about one feet for carrying curry.

Semthei : A small bamboo tube of about 1 feet for blowing down to make the fire blaze. It is made out of *ronam* bamboo.

Haisua : A gourd spoon used for pouring water.

Pil bel : An earthen pot used for cooking. It is also known as *iham bel*, which would seem to be from the Ahom bel meaning Ahoms' vessel.

Suanrikual : A ring made out of cane brake for seating the vessel or pot.

Bemtak : A common bamboo basket used for carrying paddy, and carried by the harvesters when gathering the paddy.

Doron : A large bamboo basket used for storing rice in the house. It is also use for carrying the paddy while harvesting.

Sengbem : A cane netted basket used for carrying water tube and firewood.

Longkhai : A large bemtak or bamboo basket used for carrying the paddy while harvesting.

Chempai : A small cane or bamboo basket used by men for carrying his dao and small articles while in the jungle or river expedition.

Kokolong Chempai : A small well-knitted cane basket used for carrying the paddy seeds while seeding.

Taidon : A small cane or bamboo well knitted basket used for keeping the weaving articles like thread, porcupine quill, beewax etc.

Khamlu : A small basket used for measurement of rice and paddy, when heapful it contains 5 kilograms. The Khamlu is also used for keeping small articles.

Iseng : A pedestal plate stand made out of bamboo. The plate is place upon the iseng when eating food.

Sengpui : A dumpy and round large basket for pile up the cotton.

Sipom : A small well-knitted basket used for processing the *sifung riak* sesame oil.

Changal-farh : A small V shaped bamboo basket used for processing the alkaline water.

Kokvar : A large simple and open basket more or less roughly made. It is used for keeping like arum, dry chilies, cotton, etc.

Rel : A covered basket used for keeping cloths, money and valuables, made of cane.

Darbop : A small covered basket used for keeping the thread.

Rilei : A name to any tray made of either cane or bamboo.

Fahak : A large bamboo tray on which paddy is spread out to dry on the shelf upon the fire.

Leitak : A well-knitted tray that is made out of bamboo outer skin. It is particularly used for cleaning rice.

Leipuk : A tray similar to Leitak however is made out of the inner or softer skin of the bamboo, on which vegetables like beans, chili, brinjal, pumpkin leaves spread out when arriving from the jhum.

Hakrel : A large bamboo tray on which chillis, cotton, beans, etc. is spread out to dry in the sun.

Vaidi-ril : A sieve used for cleaning rice grains.

Zampher : A bamboo or cane mat used for sleeping/relaxing on.

Meiri : The indigenous fire-making tool is Meiri. It is a method of making fire by rubbing a cane rope against a dry bamboo. A notch of dry bamboo is split, and on the outer surface of the split bamboo is cut for the rope to run along, and the cut or hole is filled in with the dried *ilepon* sap of the palm. The bamboo is then placed on the ground with one leg on the bamboo and a rope that runs below the bamboo attaching the hole filled with *ilepon* is thus pulled. The fire maker pulls the rope rapidly backwards and forwards until the bamboo becomes so hot that the dry *ilepon* inflame. Another method of indigenous fire-making implement is *Meiri*. It contains a flint, steel and tinder. The tinder is *ilepon* or a dried sap of ile or palm. The flint and the tinder are held in the left hand and the steel in the right, the stone being struck with the steel till the sparks light the tinder. The implements are usually kept in the wooden box. Opportunely, the author has one *meiri* box belonging to his father, which had been passed down by his great great grandfather.

Cloth Manufacturing :

The Biates have their own cloth making system. The cotton, known as *pat* in Biate is grown in the jhums. It is sown in May and the flowers plucked in December. The plucked cotton is spread in the sun to dry for a day or so. The dry cotton is then cleaned and separated from its seeds in a wooden distiller called *Mui-ot*. The *mui-ot* is generally made

with a fine *khersei*, a kind of hard wood. The raw cotton is called *patmual* and the cleaned and teased one is called *Patchon*. Having been separated from the seed, to make it soft and fluffy the cotton is teased with a bamboo bow called *Patsai*. The cleaned and fluffy cotton is then placed on a smooth plank and rolled with a piece of the stem of a tall grass called *lailuang*, about 1 ft. long. When the stick is covered with cotton, the stick is pulled out. The cotton rolls or *patritui* are then ready for spinning into thread on the *muithlur-muithal* spinning wheel. The *muithlur* is made from hard wood and cane while the *muithal* spindle is iron. When the spindle is full, the thread is removed and wound on to a thread-holder called *patding*. The thread is then taken off in a hank and boiled with rice in a pot for about two to three hours. Boiling with rice render the thread extra strong, smooth and lasting. After boiling the hank of the thread is taken out and hung up by stretching the thread and while still wet it is brushed and combed with a brush comb or *patkhui* made out of the particular *patkhui* fruit to remove all the dirt and debris. When the hanks of the thread are dry, they are placed on a thread winder called *Sutlam* and thence wound into round balls. The thread having been wound off the *Sutlam* into balls is ready for loom. The loom is called *puanrikol*. The weaving type is simple and primitive one, containing of *khoving* or shuttle, *Sarkurling* or porcupine quill, and the wooden sword called *Rithliam*.

Cloth :

The popular cloth, which is produced by indigenous loom, is called *Puanhak*. It is a plain coarse cloth used either for a bed sheet or bed cover. A man's shirt and loin-cloth is also made out of this cloth. For dyeing cloth, the Biates know only blue, indigo and red. To dye in blue colour, the leaves of a shrub called *Rimua* are boiled. It seemed to be probably the earliest known dyeing method by the Biates. In the old days, the women's mekhla known as *dumpuan* or blue cloth was highly esteemed. In one of the lullabies, it has been imploring the *dumpuan* in the following way :

Nai o, nai o, tap no roh;

*E ni nu'n dumpuan khong a ti,
E ni pa' n korsai hol a ti,
Kor sai chung a ni chuangin;
E, sial neh rem rum,
E, loi neh bet but, ting ati.*

In addition to this *dumpuan*, C.A. Sopitt in 1893 writes, that the Biate women wear a kilt of blue cloth extending from the waist to just above the knee, and another cloth from the breasts to the waist. Bracelets and earrings are worn in great profusion¹⁰. The Biate female dress of these days however, is of not comprises of those mentioned ones. They clad on whatever dressed they favour.

So far the cotton or cloth making is concerned, *Puanpui*, heavy cloth of very coarse cotton, woven thickly with the cotton in artistic touch is the most valued of all the women's work. It can be used as both a mattress and a blanket. It is the most important customary wedding item in the Biate society. The newly wed daughter is supposed to carry this kind of mattress to her husband's house.

Besides cotton work, rearing of Endi silkworm is another important method of cloth making. Endi silk is spun and endi cloths are woven at house. The silk thread is spun and manufacturing a rough silk cloth called *Rilumgpuan*. This kind of silk cloth is generally made as shawl and head gear. The cloth is light yet it is very warm. So, it is generally considered as an old age shawl. Traditionally, it is highly valued and is regarded is the highest gift item of a grandmother to her grandchildren. Interestingly among the Chin Kuki Mizo group, the Biates, Hrangkhols, and Sakacheps (Khelma) are the only tribes who practice this silk cloth since time immemorial.

Dresses and Ornaments :

The typical dress of the Biates in the former days was very simple. The males have three kinds of abdomen wrapper-*puanbom* (a loincloth), *diar* similar to the dhuti and *kaipereng* a thin flap of cloth for covering private part. The other apparel constitutes of a simple white collar less shirt and the headgear.

10. C.A. Sopitt, *Op. cit.*, p-6.

The length of the headgear is about two meters and its breadth is about the size of two palms. It is a white cloth with a designed border. The cloth is wrapped many times around the head and fastened on the left side by letting out two-palm size of its ends in which one-end reaches up to the back of the person wearing it. In winter a shawl called *Rilungpuan* made from eri silk is commonly put on to keep them warm. Generally, in summer, the old males wear a strip of cloth tied round the waist, hanging both in front and behind to cover the private parts, which is known as *Kaipereng*. Among the males, the hair is drawn back, and tied in a knot at the back of the head. Occasionally, long brass hairpins are fastened in. The males too used to have pierced ears in which they would wear a flower.

Normally, women are clad in two pieces of cloth, extending from the waist to just above the knee, and another cloth from the breasts to the waist. The torso cover is called *Tangvel* and the lower one is *puanbom*. The other special apparel is *Choipuan* (hanging down in cross from the shoulder). The necklaces are of three types-*Rithei tial* is the many strings of tiny varieties of beads falling low down over the breasts. Another is *theival* or amber orange in color and the third is *sum-rithei* or a chain of coins. The ear ornaments are principally a brass-circled ring called *Kuarbet*. The hair is generally let loose in the back and adorned with hair-band in a circular band of deep reddish colored cane called *Ritai*. The arm ring is called *zakser* and the bangle is called *banbun*.

The following dress and ornaments are the details :-

Female Dress :

Puanbom : Women's kilt extending from the waist to just above the knee or calf.

Tangvel : a cloth from the breasts to the waist.

Choipuan : a cloth hanging from left shoulder to right waist.

Zakua : a shirt.

Ritai : a headband, made from split cane.

Kuarbet : Earring.

Rithei : A tiny bead necklace.

Sumrui : A string of coin necklace.

Theival : An amber necklace deep red in colour.

Bakhui : A comb made out from fine split bamboo.

Banbun : A bracelet.

Man's apparel :

Diar : a man's bust wrapper or a kind of dhuti.

Kaipereng : a flap of cloth covering the private parts, hanging both ends front and back.

Zakua : a collarless coarse shirt.

Lukom : a pugree, headgear.

Puan rilung : a shawl made from silkworm.

Musical Instruments :

1. Khuang (drum) : A drum is called *Khuang*. It is made out of a fine wooden log. The drums are barrel shaped. The hides of cows or serat and deer or sakhi are generally used for the membrane. Although the drum or khuang is made in different sizes, the common size is 2 feet long and 1.4 foot in diameter. The songs are generally accompanied by the beat of a drum. The drum is played with a drumstick by beating one side through the song notes accordingly.

II. Darkhuang (gong) : It is a large brass gong generally about 12 finger span in circumference and one span in diameter. Gong is the musical instrument for accompanying dancing and singing. It is beaten slowly at interval. Apart from merrymaking, it is also played as an instrument of the messenger to announce mournful notes to the far-flung areas. The dead slow beats of about fifteen times signifies mournful note. Hence, Darkhuang is also known as *Jamluang* meaning messenger of the dead. It has different kind of beat notes for different occasion. Likewise, the *kut pa* minister of the feast, signifying the five clans of the Biates open the occasion, beats it five times during the festival of Nulding Kut. The *Darkhuang* is greatly valued by the Biates, in ancient days it had been given in payment of marriage prices. Tradition says that this kind of brass gongs was never made by them but was procured from the Mishim country, which is believed to be one of the Burmese provinces.

III. Darribu (a set of small brass cymbal) : It is a set of three pieces of small brass gongs or cymbals. Three people play the three pieces of different notes of sound symphonically tuned at equal interval in fine tune at a time. Without the music of this instrument, one cannot perform the dance like *Buantum* and *Darlam* etc. It is played through the accompaniment of the deep tone of the large gong *darkhuang*. The perfect rhythmic music alone of this aged instrument is considered as the call of the voices of the bygone days.

IV. Rosem (Mouth organ) : It is somewhat like a bagpipe or snakes charmer's flute. Its resonator is made out of a hollow gourd, consists into which nine hollow reeds are inserted, one to serve as a mouthpiece and the others finger notes.

V. Theile (flute) : A small bamboo flute with six-finger note is called *Theidle*. It is generally considered as young men's musical instrument, which is basically played under the moonlit night to woo their lovers. Generally, it is also played in the jhumhut to console his lonely heart in music while camping in the jhum season.

VI. Perkhuang-tringtrang (guitar) : It is a kind of two to four stringed instrument made from a bamboo tube or a dry gourd. Infact the very name has been coined from the sound of this instrument. This kind of rough stringed instrument is also considered as the jhumhut music cal instrument. The so-called guitar of nowadays is now commonly called by the same name.

VII. Seranda (fiddle) : It is a kind of fiddle or violin made out of hollowed tiny log or dry hollow gourd. The hole of the base is covered with a hide of a newt. It has generally three strings or thin cord with a bow of palm hair. It produces a sweet yet low sound. It is also considered as a jhumhut musical instrument, which is usually played for passing a good time.

VIII. Theiphit (simple tiny bamboo blow pipe) : Unlike the other musical instruments, *theiphit*, a simple stalk of bamboo measuring about six inches of different sizes with one end opened for blowing is played only while the hunters succed in killing animals like elephants, stag, tiger, bear, wild mithun

etc. It is played while returning to their villages so that one can hear their victory and come up for lending a helping hand on their loadings. It is also played during the celebrations over the paddy. The sound of this simple pitch pipe simply signifies the sound of jubilation or victory. Three persons or more play this kind of pitch pipe. The smallest and the thinnest stalk pipe produces the key of *Pi, Pi, Pi*, while the second produce *Pe, Pe, Pe* and the third and final produces the sound of *Pu, Pu, Pu* in deep tone. An experienced traditional musician, Pu Lala Thianglai of Thingdol village N.C. Hills, says— the Theiphit beat tune must be dawdling and leisurely at the beginning and finally comes to an end with a fast beat of *Vik, Vik, Vik* the key note word is *pi, pu, vi, vik, tual sum vir vik!!* Excerpts¹¹.

IX. Chompereng : Chompereng is a block of large bamboo, in which a hard skin of three strings is stuck out and is strummed like that of the mandolin of the west. It is generally made and played while camping in the jhumhut. So, it is usually considered as a musical instrument of the jhumhut.

Feast and Festivals :

The Biates being an agrarian tribe depend entirely on their crops for livelihood and split their cultivation season into well-defined parts. Each part of the season is then marked by religious observances, sacrifices, and festivals, intended to ensure the well-being of the crops and humankind. For instance, in the middle part of March or first part of April, before they start sowing their millet, rice, maize, cucumbers, pumpkins, and other vegetables in their respective jhums, the villagers observe *Chichoi* or *Burit-in-om* for one day. The day is spent in sanctity by praying to God to ensure good crops and good luck. However in the observance of Nulding Kut, after the priest make the incantation, each one indulge in singing, dancing and playing games in a jovial manner and this last for two or three days. The festivals of the Biates therefore

11. Interviewed with Pu Lala Thianglai (68), at his residence at Thingdol village, North Cachar Hills, on 15th, Oct-2003.

are found to be partly social and partly religious in its kind.

The celebration of festivals and the practice of appeasing different Gods and deities, mass feasting, drinking of *zu*, and dancing throughout the night have died out amongst the Biates of these days. It is mainly because of the fact that the singing of old songs, appeasing and sacrificing to other deities, dancing and drinking of *zu* is discouraged in the teachings of their new faith i.e., Christianity.

Biate Dance :

Dancing is a common form of amusement. In the old days, it takes place at all feasts and beer parties, young men and girls as well as married persons take part in it. As a rule the Biate dances are generally slow and amusing, except *Meburlam* dance, which is a merry go round hip-hop-jump type of dance. Following are the names of the dances :

1. Darlam, 2. Sikpui-zollam, 3. Buantum-lam, 4. Lampalak, 5. Kolrikhek, 6. Rikifachaoi, 7. Ar-ekinuai, 8. Meburlam, 9. Sul-ribum, 10. Tuipui-lenthluk, 11. Chichoi-lam, 12. Parton-lam, 13. Tuihols Sirphaia, 14. Chemlam, 15. Chitua, etc.

The main festivals are as follows :

There are six traditional ceremonies connected with the crops, except Nulding Kut. They are all known as kut. The ceremonies, amusement and festivals are as follows :—

1. Pamchar kut
2. Lebang kut
3. Tamthar kut
4. Mimkut
5. Favang kut
6. Nulding kut.

Pamchar Kut :

In the middle part of February or first part of March, the trees and bamboos for the jhums are cut down and left to dry to be burnt. The villagers have nothing to do at that particular occasion, but only pass their time in *Pamchar ngak* or waiting to dry the felled trees and bamboos. In such a free and leisure period, the villagers have all the time for feasting,

drinking, merry-making, dancing and singing. It is called Pamchar Kut. It is also in these days the community fishing known as *Iru-suk* generally take place. Apart from these, during these days, some indigenous games like, *Iamving* (top), *poi-rikap* (girls game), *Farel ikho* (pestle throw), *Risuk-rinor* (Push each other) etc. are also organised. The festival lasts for a week.

Lebang kut :

This kut is also known as Ringmu Kut. It is celebrated in the month of April, just after seeding and sowing the crops. It lasts for a day. In ancient times, they used a hoe having a blade made out of palm tree called *Le*. As the sowing operation is done only with this *Le* material, as a result the completion of sowing and seeding period is also marked as *Lebang* meaning, "hoe time over".

In the month of May or first part of June when the toilsome sowing operation is over, the villagers honour the Bolong Raja or Khua Pathian by killing a pig on behalf of the whole village, while each household sacrifice a fowl. On the early morning of the day, the Thiampu or Priest along with his assistants called *tlangva* and *berva* and the village elders would perform the rites and rituals in the Bolkuang or Sacred place by sacrificing a pig on behalf of the village. For each household of the village, a *langkhan* (tube) of water was placed near a priest. When the priest intoned and chanted the charms and cut the throat of an animal, a drop or two of the blood was then let to drop on each tube, and the tube container was the closed with a green leaf called *Khokham*. After sanctification by the priest, each tube or *langkhan* was distributed to each household. The distributed tube of water considered as holy and blessed water was then carried in their respective jhums and sprinkled here and there in the field. This was done in order to get blessing from the heavenly father. Although they felt the omnipresence of the heavenly father, his name was not known. As a result, he has known as Chunga Pathian or heavenly God/Holy Father. According to Upa Lalpuia Darnei, the *Chunga Pathian* was worshipped only through *Bolong Raja* or *Khua Pathian*, who was like a

messenger of God. As such in the conclusion chants, the priest would be usually ask to act as Bolong Raja on his behalf, by saying— "*A pe ki theino 'n, ar lan lei thei roh; Asir ki theino 'n, aril lei thei roh*"¹². Meaning— 'There may be mistake in my appeasing, you may make it just and right in sanctification. There may be mistake in my chanting, you may make it just and right in my beseeching.' The rites and rituals were also known as *Khoroi* and the God whom they called as Bolong Raja was considered as God of the earth. After ritual performances were over, the day was spent in feasting and drinking. Playing of musical instruments, dancing and singing was totally prohibited. It is believed that by doing so, all the crops, which has been sown already, would be badly affected either from the pests or from natural forces. So this Kut was observed through strict obligations.

Tamthar Kut : It is celebrated in the month of May-June, when the young leaves of the pumpkin, mustard, etc., are in its vertex.

Favang Kut :

The word *Fa* here is the short form of *Fang* means paddy and *Vang* means rich harvest. Thus, the word Favang implies a time of rich crop or paddy. The word Favang also signifies, the time of that particular season or phase, which is a time off harvesting or a time when scarcity of grain is over.

In the month of September when the ear of the paddy is bright and yellow, and the crops and vegetable are plenty, in such a good and spacious time they used to celebrate the grand Favang kut with great mirth and fun. Legends has its saying that— 'It is this joyous festival, once our forefathers had celebrated with much pomp and gaiety in such a way when they could no longer stop the celebration. The whole week and month of the days thereby passed in great festivity spirit by dancing and singing. Incidentally, at long last the parrot that passed its days on the ripening paddy accidentally

12. Interviewed : Upa Lalpuia Darnei 74, of Fiangpui village at his residence on the 21 July-2004, at 3.00 pm.

dropped a bunch of grains, which it carried, in the middle of their dancing ground. On seeing the parrot, they realised that their grains were already ripening enough to be gathered and thereby ended their celebration. This was supposed to be somewhere in the region of southern Mizoram.

Mim Kut : Literally, the word *Mim* means maze, corn, etc., Hence, this *Mim Kut* is celebrated in the month of December, when the farmland produces maize and corn abundantly.

Nulding Kut : It is held after the crops are gathered in their respective granaries, which generally take place in the month of *Tualbual* (January). It is celebrated according to the convenience of each village in the said month.

Nulding Kut :

Of all the traditional Biate festivals, Nulding Kut, which literally means 'festival of renewal of life' is the grandest of its kind. It is held after all the crops of their jhums are gathered in their respective granaries, which usually take place in the month of *Tualbual* (January). The whole year they engage in jhum works which would be completed and concluded in that month, and so the name of the month is called *Tualbual* meaning 'get-together around the courtyard'. Since there is no practical work in this month, it is regarded as a period of rest. On such leisure occasion, the people irrespective of age and gender celebrate Nulding Kut to their hearts contents by feasting, drinking, danching and plyaing so as to ensure that the Kut is a festival of rejoicing. The next month February is called 'Vatchang' meaning cutting of bushes. As its name signifies, in the month of Vatchang, they would start the new task for the whole year by cutting the bushes, trees and bamboos for their jhum. Hence, Nulding Kut is also considered as the beginning of a new year. It thereby implies the festival of renewal of life.

In the bygone days, this kut lasted five to seven days. On the first day, at the dawn of the day, the village priest appeased and implored the Chung Pathian by sacrificing fowls and swine in the village altar called *Bolkuang*. The priest and his associate party eat the flesh there, and some sacrificial

portions are left at the place of the sacrifice for the share of the deity. There is then a drinking party of the elders in the house of the priest or *Thiampu*. Subsequently the villagers slaughter a big buffalo or swine, which they consumed with much merry making by drinking, and feasting, and the young men and maidens make merry with dance and song. The animal skulls were placed on posts at the summit of the village. The ceremony is considered as a revered one. The forgive and forget their shortcomings, sorrows and discontentment occurring out of their past deed.

Therefore, the occasion is also regarded as a day of forgiveness and thanks giving to the Chung Pathian or Almighty God. As is said earlier, in the old days this feast usually last for seven nights and seven days during the month of *Tualbual* each year on different dates in different villages according to the convenience of the village.

As per the request of the Biate people, accordingly, in the meeting of the Autonomous Council Executive Committee held on 7 March 2002 vide Office No. GAD 13/2000-2001-57 dt. 11th March 2002, the Autonomous Council of N.C. Hills, authority declared January 11 as Nulding Kut official Holiday in the North Cachar Hills District.

Through the passage of time, to suit our taste and time, the present Nulding Kut celebration does not include Zu or strong drink and baitui or rice beer, though in the past it was an indispensable item. Tea, biscuits or meal now replaces it. The sacrifices of fowls, swine are no more prevalent in the present society, since the Biates are now entirely Christians. Appeasing the deity with the blood of animals is a thing of the past. Instead of sacrificing, either the priest or any person can now call upon the god Almighty for his blessing and guidance. The present Nulding Kut thereby, is celebrated with singing and dancing of traditional songs, devotional hymns, playing of musical instruments and traditional games and sports. However, along the line of the old one, which is "with love and forgiveness in the ceremony", is still the main principle. Therefore, anyone who partakes in the Nulding kut must have a soul of forgiveness. As God is love and forgiveness is only through love. Hence, present day Nulding Kut is a reformed

one maintaining a balance between the old and the new traditions to suit its own time.

Games :

Lamving (top) : Spinning of tops called as *Lamving* is the traditional popular game played by boys and adults. It is made out of a large jungle creeper bean called *poi*. Players of any number divide into two parties, each in turn playing their *lamving* in a particular radius circle of about ten spans on the ground to serve as a target for those of the either party. The goal-line for the target is generally of not less than a distance of seven meters. The aim of the game is to knock out the competitors' top outside the circle. As such, the one who succeeds the best in knocking out the opponents' *lamving* from its circle is the greatest and is declared the winner, whether team wise or individual.

Ituang : A top, which is made out of fine wood. It is played by spinning at a flat surface. It is a toy game.

Poi-rikap : A favourite time pass of a Biate girl is the *poi-rikap* or a creeper bean knocking. The bean of one party is placed on the goal line of the ground, while the other party targets to knock it down by swing bowling from five feet distant. The aim of the players is to hit this bean with their own bean by tossing and releasing their bean in seven different styles. The entire Chin Kuki Mizo groups of people commonly regard this bean game as their favourite pass time. It is known as Koi-inbah in Mizo. Interestingly most of the girl students of Haflong irrespective of caste and creed play this game and commonly call it by the same name as Koi. Probably, it was started by the Students of St. Agnes' Convent School or Synod High School where different girls from different communities study together.

Favourite Pastime of the men folk :

When the harvesting is over, the men folk spend their time in leisure vacation. On such holidays, the favourite pastime of the men folk is fishing and hunting. While they set out for a day expedition, they used to carry their *bufun* (wrapped cook rice) for the midday meal. The curry is never carried, but prepared in the jungle itself. The menu depends on what

they come across, be it a fish, crab or herbs, which are steamed in the bamboo tube that makes a tasty curry. However, if the expedition is for more than a day, one carries a rice and small vessel. Since the author of this book is fond of fishing (line with hooks), he has tasted the tough and pleasure moments for umpteen times on fishing expedition.

Fishing :

Nga-vor (Angling) :

Fishing is a common pastime of the Biates. A European type of angling, consist of rod, hook and line, as an outdoor sport is quite common among the villagers. It is practiced by the menfolk since long. This practice of angling is perhaps an influence of the Jaintias, since they are their age-old neighbour in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. It is a known fact that, within the whole seven sisters' states no places besides the Khasi and Jaintia hills are fond of angling so far outdoor games are concerned. Probably the angling culture of the Pnars and Khasis are originally an influence from the English, whose beautiful abode of the clouds, Meghalaya had been once the English hill resort during the East India company days.

Traditionally, community fishing with the help of root of creeper called *iru* is almost obsolete nowadays. Poisoning of the river by chemicals is not practiced among the Biates, since they regard angling as a sport, which cannot be done away with. Fishing being a part of their culture they are also expert in making fishing equipments and tackling like bamboo rods (*rikuai-ngul*) and creel (*nga-chempai*). Nowadays, some of them use the carbon fiber rod of Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan, which are available in various sport stores of Jowai and Shillong. So far as my knowledge goes being an ardent angler myself I recommend T series carbon rod of SKorea, Mustad hooks (Denmark), 'green Samurai' monofilament fishing line (Japan) 'Atlas' (Germany) ABU Cardinal and Garcia Mitchell series are the most excellent angling equipment.

The month of angling falls from June to November in the hills. When the monsoon rain flooded the rivers for a week or so in the month of June, the different species of

fishes made their seasonal migration from the seas to the streams and rivers. This migrational fishes consists of the ngatun (rockfish) specie of ngalim (rock fish) Ngasen, (goden Mahseer), Nga-bual (Mahseer specie) and Nga-ner (specie of eel). The best bait for the month of June-July are earthworms, crabs, prawns. And in the month of August wild fruits like vomthei rui (wild grapes), thloile-ra (a marble size fruits that bears out of the bark of a giant cork tree), young maize, Siara (cornnut), tatpong, (resemblances of jack fruits) are recommended for big fish. Concerning the fruit baits, any corn or beans that had fallen in the water or stream are usually made the best ones for that particular spot. Angling is purely depends on weather and so it is always recommended to go on fresh and sunny days.

Ngoi :

The traditional method of fishing is as follows : – ngoi (a giant weir trap), itok (small basket trap), casting net (len), Ngakhar (gated trap), iru-suk etc.

The big fishing trap called Ngoi is constructed at the ends of the selected pool where the river is thin and slow. The fencing is re-enforced with pebbles, stones that stretch from side to side of the river. The fencing is usually 5ft. in height. In that strong fencing three to five points of holes or an opening about three feet in diameter is left, through which the dam water rushes with a great force, in which the long barrel shaped basket is laid. As the traps consist of a check plate, the fish once inside, cannot escape. The traps are visited at intervals, and the collected fishes are distributed to each person who had contributed in building the Ngoi.

Trok :

Itok resembles the edged Khasi carrying basket but consist of check plate and is made from a single bamboo 4ft. in depth and 2ft. in diameter. The itok is usually set up in between the rock, where the little current falls down. As the small fishes are generally in the habit of changing their habitat, many are caught, especially a small species of rockfish called ngalim and ngatun. This kind of fish is highly regarded by the Biates. Unlike the other fishes, the stomach is also edible

since they feed on pure plankton only. As a rule, this kind of fish laid their eggs in a shallow clear water stream in the middle part of July every year when it is drizzling. I once noticed in my angling trip, at the river *Robi dung* and collected the same with *my chempai* basket but not with the *tok*.

Iru suk :

The other community fishing is poisoning the pool with the poison herb known as iru. It is a creeper herb. The stalks are cut into three-foot length and have beaten out on the stones with a stick at the edge of the pool, and allow the juice to flow away down the river. As a result, the fishes get intoxicated and finally die and are collected up. The other method for catching small fish is bamboo traps, called itok, a look alike of the Khasis' carrying basket but consists of check plate 4 ft. deep and 2 ft. in diameter. It is supposed to be set on small falls or in between the rocks. The other one is called *Ngakhar*, which is a constructed netted bamboo wall on the shallow water connecting to the deep pool. It consists of crisscross wall in a circle with one door. In its ground, baits and bamboo leaves are spread out to attract the fish. After the shoals of fish are assembled, the hunter who patiently wait and watch from a distant place shut the door by pulling the rope of the door. The fishes once inside, are thus collected and carried in a basket towards his home happily. However, this kind of fishing including casting net is gradually dying out day by day and has been replaced by angling, a European type of fishing with rod, lines and hooks. Traditional fishing has now become almost obsolete.

Hunting :

Like all other hill tribes, the Biates are fond of hunting. The weapon used is always a licensed flintlock gun. There are four types of hunting– 1. *Be-ser*, 2. *Sa-ngak*, 3. *Sa-nung isui*, 4. *Ram-ichaih*.

1. *Be-ser* : It is group hunting and is done during the dry season. The hill or valley that stands in between the streams, was supposed to be homed by animals where few huntsmen on one side lighted a fire. On the other side of the stream, the expert huntsmen waited for the escaping animals.
2. *Sa-ngak* : When the hunter noticed that the jungle fruits

has ripen and being eaten by the deer, swine, etc., the hunter would climb up and make his seat at the very tree or nearby it. He thereby would wait for the expected animal from the tree to blast down. 3. When the hunter noticed the fresh footprints of the animals, he would track them with his hounds. 4. The hunters try their luck by walking here and there in the jungle. The traditional weapons like bows, arrows and spears are now completely a thing of the past. In fact, hunting with a licensed gun is even in the wake of dying out.

Traps and snare :

The Biates have several native indigenous ways of snaring and trapping birds and animals. The name for snare or trap is Chang or Thang; Following are the names of the snares and traps—

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Belong : | A snare for birds, rats, squirrels. A small bamboo fence is erected in the jungle and gaps are left at intervals in the fence, in which the snares are fitted. |
| Detet : | A trap for small animals like fox, small cats, etc.,. At the particular path of the animals, a trap is set consisting of a noose of fibre rope or cane attached with the sapling. As soon as the animals let in the noose, the sapling spring and tight rounds the neck of the animal. |
| Chuk-khap : | A snare for jungle fowls, pheasant, partridge etc. A snare is set in the ground consisting of thin fibre line attache with small bamboo rod. The end of the rope is a noose that are provided with baits. The lure for chuk-khap is called thangmi, which is a tiny bean reddish in color and supposed to be kept within the encircling noose of the same. |
| Karh : | It is trap for ferocious animals. At the |

particular path of the tiger or bear, a spike is set up pointed towards the path. A fibre cord is then run across the path attached with the set off, as soon as the animal knocks against the cord, the set off let off and volleys the spike.

Dip :

It is a trap for big animals like Elephants and wild buffalo. A pit about six feet deep was dug on a track of the wild animals. The mouth of the pit is covered in with dry leaves and dust, and when the animals which comes along falls in the pit, remained trapped in it. The hunters thereby shoot or volley their spears and gun at the animal.

Sarui :

It is a trap generally used for catching barking deer. A noose of a palm thread (*tungsam*) is made in one accord in the size of wood pencil and joined with the cane rope. The springy sapling, which attached the cane rope, is used as the main puller of the snare. The sapling is known as changperh and the snare rope as Sarui.

Mankhong :

It is a log fall trap for small animals like porcupine, small cats, rats, birds. When the baits are pulled, the log become released and falls upon the animals.

Tungkoi :
Sarkuchang :

It is a snare for rates and squirrel. A porcupine trap. The trap consists of rope made out of bamboo or cane which is attached with the sapling. It is generally set on the passage of the animal.

Kharkhep : It is a cage trap for small animals. The cage consists of one door and its enclosure. The baits are kept inside the cage, any animals that take the baits results in enclosure of the trap within the cage.

Iniai : A gum called iniai is also used for catching birds. The gum black in colour is made out of the juice of the rimong (*Ficus elastica*) tree. The bark of the tree trunk is beat by making cuts with the *chem* or dao, the juice is let to accumulate in a section of bamboo container. The collected juice is placed in a pot and boiled until it has become tremendously gummy. When it is ready for use, the gummy material is smeared at the tip of a thin bamboo rod in which two or three flying termites that tuck with tiny stick in a size of toothpick is put at the iniai. The termite is used for a lure. Birds coming to take the termite on the iniai results in their feet and feathers adhering to the iniai and they are then pounced on and caught by the owner of the trap, who is lying in wait for them.

Chalvor isai (birds shooting game) :

Chalvor isai is a bird shooting game of men folk. The word '*Chalvor*' is a name of a particular bird, a look alike of kite or swift species and the word '*isai*' implies shooting or pelleting from the pellet bow not gun. Literally meaning is 'shooting of Chalvor birds'. Unlike the other common birds, the Chalvors appears only in the evening sky of October and November when swarm of *phulum* or flying termites come out from their mound and fly in the above. As soon as the Chalvor noticed swarm of flying termites from good distance, they

would rashly assemble and feast on them in hustle and bustle at the altitude of twenty to fifty feet height. On such occasion, the hunters, young and old alike rockets their pellets towards the soaring chalvor. The best shooters can sometimes shoot down three or four chalvors. However, this shooting game has no particular reward for the best shooter, but the more he shot down the more his name will come up as an excellent shooter among the shooters and the more he could relish the chalvor delicious feast. That his reward, since of all the bird species Chalvor is the best delicacy and the hardest to shoot as it flew like jet fighters.

Phulum or flying termites, are regarded as a delicacy to all birds, insects, reptiles, animals and even to human beings, however, no other animals delights in it is as the *chalvor* does. An old adage in corroboration about the *chalvor* and its delicacy *phulum* goes, "*Chalvorin kumka sunga phulum khatka lua ki fak non chu ki thi nget rang ati*" meaning "I must surely die unless I have not consumed even a single flying termite in a year" pronounce the chalvor.

N.B. : Snares, traps, hunting culture is becoming obsolete day by day in the Biates society except angling.

The seasons :

Like the English months, the Biates have twelve months, which have been followed since time immemorial. Following are the names of the months roughly equivalent to the English calendar namely :-

Tualbual	-	January
Vatchang	-	February
Itai	-	March
Ritun	-	April
Tharlak	-	May
Idoih	-	June
Thlamur	-	July
Thlazing	-	August
Thlaram	-	September
Ritangh	-	October

Thlaphal - November
 Birip - December.

The year is divided into the following season :

Phalbi - Cold season. The month between November-January.
 Khothal - Dry season. The month between January-April.
 Fur - Rainy season/summer. Between June-July.
 Zarh - When the red flower of jhum blooms. September-October Autumn.
 Favang - Beginning for harvesting, last part of Oct-first week of November.
 Bolzoi - End of the phase of work or the end of the harvest.

Measures of length :

Fun ka - The hand with fingers and thumb closed together is called *kuttum fun* and the width between the little finger and the thumb is called Funka. This fist measures system is especially used in the measurement of the swine.
 Zongchal Khapka - The distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the index finger, the lesser span.
 Khapka - The distance between the tip of the thumb and the tip of the middle finger, the greater span.
 Kuttum mukka - The distance from the elbow point to the fist.
 Mukka - Distance from the elbow point to the tip of the middle finger.
 Bantena - The distance from the armpit to the tip of the middle finger of the outstretch arm.
 Tangtheka - The distance from the centre of the chest to the tip of the middle finger of the outstretched arm.
 Thlerokka - The distance from the left armpit to the

tip of the right tip of the middle finger of the out stretched arm.

Kolfurka - The distance from the left elbow to the right tip of the middle finger of the out stretch arm.
 Lamka - The distance from left middle finger tip to the right middle finger tip of an outstretched arm.

Measures of height :

Ke artui tena - From the ground to the ankle.
 Pheirai - From the ground to the calf.
 Rikhuktena - From the ground to the ankle.
 Kongtena - From the ground to the waist.
 Itangtena - From the ground to the chest.
 Ringtena - From the ground to the neck.
 Dungka - From the ground to the top of the skull.
 Dunglei inbanka - From the ground to the tip of the middle finger of the overstretch arm.
 Inchungbok tena - From the ground to the rooftop of the house.
 Ro pum tuanka - From the ground to the full length of muli bamboo.

Measures of nights of a month :

Detmukhai - Zan sarika (7 nights)
 Detthlanam - Zanthumka (3 nights)
 Detvomlu - Zanthumka (3 nights)
 Thlalir - Zanthumka (3 nights)
 Lir masa
 Lir lai.
 Lirnungkhone.

Boivomlu - Zanthumka (3 nights)
 Boithlanam - Zanthumka (3 nights)
 Boivomlu - Zansarika (7 nights)
 Sunglir - Zanka (1 night).

Measures of time of a day :

Khuantirh - early cockcrow, about 4 am.
 Zing neh var richel - early dawn, a darknest hour time between dark and light.
 Kolrisam - daybreak, About 5 am.

Zingfasuk-Zingtuipel – a time of pounding rice in the morn appox-6 am.

Zingbunek – 7 am.

Tuanferuam – 9 am.

Thinglakferuam – 10 am.

Thinglaktlungruam – 11 am.

Sunlai – 12 noon.

Ini kai riak – 1.30 pm.

Fasukrup – 4 pm.

Tuantlung – 5 pm.

Zanzingbup – 6 pm.

Naipangtlu kruam – 7 pm.

Ridi thin – 10 pm.

Zanlai – Midnight.

Measures of space/width :

Belhka – Space of one tip point finger. Bel 2, 3, 4 middle, ring, little finger space

Zabokka – A lay of five fingers space.

Kuttinpho tiaka – The width of a finger nail.

Armai tiaka – The width of a face of a fowl.

Ritap tiaka – The width of a hearth or cooking place.

Inmum tiaka – The width of a house building.

Measures of space/width : (especially of jhum or paddy field)

Nolruang – A measurement bamboo pole of 12 *muk*, (a *muk* is a distance from the elbow point to the tip of the middle finger) is called Nolruang. A marker stick called Chelek which is about 3 *muk* is first eserted in the ground. After every 2 Nolruang the chelek is insert in the ground and after marking 10 chelek in a radius makes 1 (one) Anasika.

Anasika – 240 *muk* or a radius of ten *chelek*.

Kecherka – Two *Anasi* makes *Kecherka*. (480 *muk*).

Nolka – Two *kecher* makes *Nolka* (960 *muk*).

Nolrilutka – Two *Nolka* makes *Nolrilutka*. (it is a

common size of a *jhum*) if it is bigger than *Nolrilutka*, one can count it as *Nol ithumka*, *Nol ilika* meaning 3 *Nol*, 4 *Nol* and so on.

A ram phekin – The width of the whole jungle. It means very large area.

Measures of liquied or water :

Zungka – One drop

Muamka – (One sip of tuibur or nicotine water)

Baika – One mouthful.

Horbongka – One cup. (red tea cup made of bamboo)

Haisuaka – a mug full. (gourd mug)

Tuitheika – a full of watertube. (a bamboo water container)

Umka/Belka – a gourd pitcher full or pot ful.

Measures of firewood :

Herka – One piece of firewood.

Phurhka – One basketful.

Thingmonka – One stack.

Measures of rice or paddy :

Kutka – one handful

Faidaka – one cup, approximately of five handfuls.

Riphalka – half of the khamlu basket, approximately 2500 gm.

Khamluka – One basketful of Khamlu is about 5 kg.

Puakka – about 10 khamlu, 50 kg.

Nungak bemteka – young girl's basketful.

Bemka – One common basketful

Dangka – about 20 kg.

Padangka –

Doronka – one large basketful.

Fasiarka/Pangka – one full granary.

Measures of time :

Mitkhapkarka – (1 minute)

Tuibur indaka – (5 minutes)

Thlaibel inminka – (1 hour)

- Chomaka – (6 hours)
 Sunka – (24 hours)
 Thlarlangka – (15 days)
 Thlaka – (31 days)
 Kumrilangka – (half of the year)
 Kumka – (one year)
 Rikhuka – (75 years)
 Kumzabi – (100 years).

Measures of thickness :

- Thirtual tiaka – As thick as the stick of chilli.
 Chem iha tiaka – As thick as the handle of the *chem* or *dah*.
 Bukhe tiaka – As thick as the *bukhe* or food ladle.
 (this is especially used in the measurement of fish).
 Ban puam tiaka – As thick as of a man's arm.
 Pheirai tiaka – As thick as the calf of a man's leg.
 Malpui tiaka – As thick as of a man's thigh.

Measures of scarceness :

- Rivana-ra – Literal meaning is 'bearing fruit in the sky'. It indicates impossibilities, since no fruits exist in the sky.
 Mit-ina khua rang
 tak omak – Hardly sufficient to use as eye balm. It indicates non availability.

Measures of rain :

- Rua sangsari – Literally meaning is 'seven thousand rains'. Which means very heavy rainfall.

Measures of stubbornness :

- Pathian sari'n isoi khomseh
 tha khai no ni : Seven Gods cannot even discipline him/her. It indicates extreme stubbornness.

N.B. : (Interestingly the number 7 (seven) has significant important in the Biate language).

Laws and Customs :

The Village Organization :

In the Biate society, there are two types of political institutions— modern and traditional. Modern institution refers to the Gaonburaship, Sirdarship, Mauzaship (Mukzaship) and Doloiship, which introduced by the British administrators has been constituting under the authority of the District Council or Autonomous District Council since the establishment of District council of North Cachar hills in 1952. On the other hand, the Biate traditional institution Kalim Kabur system – Laldevan or Namringa Devan, which has been said to be in practice from time immemorial deals mainly inter disputes, marriage, customary laws, etc. The two prevailing institutions, therefore, govern the whole Biate community side by side. Firstly, let us discuss about the traditional institution.

The Biate customary rules and laws that govern the whole population of the Biate Community are called Laldevan or Namringa Devan (court of five clans). The organization is administered under the joint authority of Kalim and Kabur, joint Chiefs, with their Secretaries and Cabinet members called Lalchor and Lalpafong respectively. In the old days, the Kalim acted as the guardian of the religion upon the customary set up, whereas the Kabur as the political as per the customary set up. Their titles are not hereditary and the system of administration is democratic type. In the Biate Society, there is no classification and degradations of people. There are no high and low class sections. All are equal before the eye of laws including the highest leaders of the community. The Kalim and Kabur council is always consisting of the Biate NAMRINGA (five clans). Hence, the Laldevan also known as Namringa Devan, meaning Court of the five clans therefore, is the highest institution in the Biate society, which existed since time immemorial. The court of the five clans signifies the five clans of the Biates, such as : – 1. *Nampui*, 2. *Darnei* (*Thlungar*), 3. *Ngamlai*, 4. *Lalsim* (*Ngirsim*), 5. *Thiaite* (*Theite*).

Each and every Biate village has a traditional council called Siar Kalim Devan. A senior and experienced man called Siar Kalim heads the said village council along with his two or more Siar Chors (Secretaries), Pafongs (members), tlangvas (announcers) and Thirsu (Blacksmith). The office bearers are selected or elected by the villagers in a rotation system in every five years. Over the village council or Siar Kalim Devans is the general Laldevan or Namringa Devan or Kalim-Kabur Devan, who heads the whole Biate community. When villagers have some petty matters, his village council decides and disposes off all the matters in accordance with the customary laws. In case of some matters that are too hard to decide and dispose off, the same is referred to the general Council of the Kalim-Kabur (LalDevan). What ever the Laldevan has decided is the final word, since he is the supreme and final authority in making decision on matters relating to the community or individual man or woman. It is said that before the British power rule over our community, the Royal council (Laldevan) exercised all supreme powers including capital punishment on hardened criminals, punishment of anti-socials, imposition of collection of food and voluntary defense and development works. However, these powers are now usurped by the Govt. authorities. Presently the customary laws deal with matters relating only with customs like marriage and divorcee, extra marital acts, some social evils like theft, violence of small nature, encroachment of lands fencing, causing damages on crops and animals, inheritance, kinship, ownership, rights and prestige of woman and cultures, etc. However, it does not deal in matters relating to religions and politics.

By tradition, the Kalim and Kabur wear a *bala* (Silver bangle) on their wrist, which signifies, Kalimship and Kaburship. It is said that the balas has been passing down from many generations. Regarding the balas, the old adage says, "Bala chu Vairengpa ne ipek keng" meaning- it was indeed the Tripura Raja who gave us the Bala". From this old saying, we simply come to know that the Biates Kalim-Kabur system of prevailing administration has begun from Rengram (Tripura) where they lived for some years. It is also said that the Vairengpa did not give the bala only to the Biates but the

Hrangkhols and Sakacheps too. The author has found proof and correct to the point, as the traditional institution of the three tribes have still been headed by their respective Kalim-Kabur system and found the bala on the wrist of each respective leader. After the presentation of bala, some years later, the Vairengpa again presented a tiny idol of Hindu deity called Devi. But at this, the Hrangkhols and Sakachep accepted the gifts and thus one of the Hindu deities Devi has been found in the traditional religion of Hrangkhols and Sakacheps. The Biates however, did not accept it, as they believed their traditional Chung Pathian (high god) might be angry with them. As a result, due to the fear of the wrath of the Vairengpa the Biates left Tripura finally, says the legend. Taking the above reasons into consideration, the reason behind the migration of the small and weak Biates was not only caused by Poi rallian alone, but also Vairengpa.

This system of administration, which is believed to have been adopted from the Rengram, however is still prevalent in the society of the Biates. Earlier, like the other Mizo tribes, they had a chief or "Lal" and the institutions of the Kalim-Kabur were not known. While they were in the present Mizoram, one of the Chiefs in the range of Fiengpui, was known as Fiengpuilala, and in the Thingtin and Failing Zamatleia and Zingthloia respectively. Moreover, at one time they had chiefs by name Chonluta and Manlala¹³. Tradition says, while they were in the Mizoram, their administration was known as '*Tlaikung dan*', which means people's consensus or law of equality and that too was a type of democracy.

In the village, the village Councils called Siar Kalim Devan maintained and enforced the customary laws. A senior and experienced man called Siar Kalim heads the village Council. He is selected or elected by the villagers. He heads the village Council with his two or more Siar Chor (Secretaries) and Pa fong (members). In the bygone days every village use to have a blacksmith called Thirsu and considered him as one of the officials. This Village Council decides and disposes off all the matters within the village in accordance with the

13. J. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p-187.

customary laws. In case of some matters, which are too hard to be settled, the same is referred to the Supreme Council of the Kalim and Kabur (Laldevan/Namringa devan). There is no fixed term of office for Siarkalim for some villages whereas some other villages fix the term for three years or five years.

The Royal Council Laldevan is the supreme and final authority to make decision on matters relating to the community or individuals, man or woman. Before the British power ruled over the community, the Laldevan exercised all supreme powers including capital punishment on hardened criminals, punishment of anti socials, imposition of food and voluntary defense and developmental works. However, the Govt. authorities have now usurped these powers. Presently the customary laws deal with matters related only to customs like marriage and divorce, extra marital affairs, some social evils like theft, violence of small nature, encroachment of land and fencing, causing damages on crops and animals, inheritance, kinship, ownership, rights and prestige of woman and cultures, etc. However, it does not deal with matters related to religion and politics.

The traditional Kalim Kabur system of administration is a democratic type and has limited powers. Unlike the other Chin Kuki Mizo group, the traditional Kalim-Kabur- system is same as democratic system of administration. In regards to their organization, Col. J. Shakespeare stated that- "They are organized far more democratically than the Lushai and the Thados. Leut Steward in his Notes on Northern Cachar says- There is no regular system of government among the old Kukis and they have no hereditary chiefs as among the new ones. They appoint a headman called the "Ghalim" over each village, but he is much more a priest than a potentate is, and his temporal power is much limited. Internal administration among them always takes a provisional form. When any party considered himself aggrieved, he makes an appeal to the elders, or the most powerful householders in the village, by inviting them to dinner and plying them with victuals and wine"¹⁴.

14. J. Shakespeare, *op, cit, p, 149.*

Apart from traditional councils, at the village level, the village headman or Gaobura is either selected or elected by the village council or Khua Devan. The candidate may belong to any of the five clans. There is no hard and fast rule in selecting the village headman or Gaonbura; it is totally dependent upon the resolution of the village council.

Besides the village leader, there is a leader of the area or region called Mauza or Mauzadar (they are also addressed as Mukja) and is known as Sirdar or Dolloi in Jaintia Hills. Presently the Biates of Assam and Meghalaya have one representative each to their respective Autonomous District Councils. Another representative to the government is Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) in North Cachar Hills of Assam and Member of District Council (MDC) in Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya.

Traditional Religion :

The concept of High God or Chung Pathian :

Belief in the existence of the Supreme Being is quite common to all the tribes of Kuki-Chin-Mizo family and the tribal people in general. As such, the Biates too strongly believe in the existence of Supreme Being sometimes High God called Chung Pathian or Rivana Pathian, which essentially forms the very core of its religion. The word '*Chung*' means above or heaven, and '*Pa*' meaning father and '*Thian*' means Holy, which in its primary sense means 'Heavenly Holy Father'. Though they do not have any clear concept regarding the *Chung Pathian* yet they believe and feel his omnipresence and thus they acknowledge that *Chung Pathian* is all in all, the beginning and the end of everything and also supreme above all the other Gods and Goddesses.

Above all, Pathian is perceived, as a male in gender who does not require any propitiation. Moreover, He is not offered a daily sacrifice because he is considered as a benevolent God. Even if offered, it is as a sign of thanksgiving. However, in certain cases Chung Pathian or Pathian in chungtak is remembered with sacrifice especially on important occasions and when ever natural calamities take place. The God whom

the Biates invoke by name *Chunga Pathian Nuaia Malal* is above all the giver of all the people's needs.

Sometimes their religion also indicate that there were lesser Gods and Goddesses like *Bolong Raja*, *Theisini kara*, *Khua vuai*, *Vanlai ding*, *Fapite*, *Sangkuru*, *Tuanpui* etc. Besides these, they believe in the existence of spirits that live in the mountains, pools, trees, rocks, caves, streams etc. which are malevolent spirits or mischievous towards human beings. They also believe in the benevolent spirit like '*Fapite*' (grandmother/deity/queen of the paddy) the *Lasi* (fairy or queen of the animal or the young beautiful woman, keepers of wild animals) the village God or the protector of the village is known as *Tuanpui* as well as *Bolong Raja*. In fact, they believe that each spirit rule over their surroundings, the natural forces of course are considered as the handiwork of he spirits. Due to this, they make sacrifices and try to control the natural phenomenon by appeasing and worshipping them. It is because of this that the traditional religion is usually referred to as animism. It appears that besides the *Chunga Pathian* and *Nuaia Malal* the above-mentioned Gods and Goddesses were adopted from the land in between Rengram (Tripura) and N.C. Hills.

It seems that they did not worship the malevolent spirits in a true sense of adoration. But they were coaxed, appeased and they made sacrifices only to get away with from their wraths. Meanwhile the sacrifice also was performed for the benevolent spirits; their objective is improve the land, the crops, to succeed in hunting, and to ensure good health of the villagers.

Common Primal God :

a) **Bolong Raja** : *Bolong Raja* is regarded as an old man hence he is sometimes called as *Tarpa*. He is also known as *Khobon Raja*. *Khobon*, one of the highest ranges located above the Barak river in the western part of Manipur is considered as the abode of gods. As the word '*Raja*' is not the original word of the Biates and is of the Devanagiri word, the god *Bolong Raja*, therefore is, believed to be adopted or accepted while they were close to the ranges of the northernmost part of Mizoram. It is believed to be somewhere

in the *Ruangnehvaisua* (Tipaimukh) where they lived close by with the plains people like Bengalis, etc.

B) **Theisini Kara** : *Theisini Kara*, one of the common primal gods of the Biates is said to be the elder brother of *Bolong Raja*. *Theisini Kara* or Tiger's keeper, is worshipped in the same place where *Tarpa* is worshipped. However, he is not so powerful like his younger brother *Bolong Raja*.

c) **Tuanpui** : Besides these two primal gods, the Biates have another god in common which they call *Khua Pathian* or village god. The name of this village god is beyond the knowledge of the people. However, since all the Biates worship this particular god in common they just call it *Tuanpui* or *Roipui* in which a powerful god is worshipped once in a year during *Parsen leitot* or *Zamzoi* or the time when the red flower of the jhums blooms. Furthermore, a lesser god is worshipped three times in a year during *Chemchoia* (before clearing the jhum field), *chi Choia* (before sowing the paddy) and *Faraidoma* (during the time of paddies bearing its fruit). This particular village god, *Tuanpui* is worshipped and appeased by sacrificing animals in the *Bolkuang* village alter. Pig and fowl is generally sacrificed for this particular village god.

The concept of Spirits :

In the Biate Primal religion, belief in the existence of supernatural being or spirits forms the core of its religion. Because of this belief, the Biate Primal religion has often been termed as animism. The Biates believe in the existence of malevolent spirits and benevolent spirits. The spirits that live mostly in mountains, rocks, trees, river, water, dense, forest, caves, etc. are malevolent or mischievous towards human beings. They are known as *Chomnu*, *Khori*, *Khuk-boite*, *Tai Ri-ang*, *Ramkulnu*, and *Midengte*. On the contrary, the spirits such as the ancestors that came down from high heaven, etc are benevolent towards human beings.

As such, the Biates believe in the existence of both benevolent spirits and malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits, which are generally thought to have responsibility for the welfare and prosperity of human beings. are—

a) **Buangtin Lal**, **Buang Naran**, **Buang kai thei** and

Buang Kung Ngak : These four beings are believed to have come down from heaven with a particular responsibility over human beings. Buangtin Lal is the eldest among them. They are also said to have taken part in the creation of human beings. Being benevolent, they are the sources of life and have a duty to sustain human beings. As such, they are not destructive to human beings.

b) Sangkuru : Sangkuru is believed to be female in gender; she is the creator of Ringna tui (water of life). Hence, she is also called water god. Being one of the benevolent spirits, she has a duty to sustain the life of human beings.

c) Khuavuai : These Khuavuai spirits are thought to be guardian spirits benevolent towards human beings. Hence, they are not destructive and mischievous to human beings. It is said that Khuavuai in many ways became the helpers of human beings. These guardian spirits are also thought to have their abode in mountains and in pleasant places. They are also said to be beautiful and sometimes become friends with the priest or Thiampu. Being benevolent, they are in many ways helpful to human beings.

d) Lasi : Lasi is said to be a keeper of wild animals or queen of the wild animals. Hence, a man who is always lucky and successful in hunting is called *Lasi mal* (Lasi's friend).

Fachiklung : Literally, *fachiklung* means hard paddy stone. This rare stone has been believed to have a certain power that the one who find it and possess would harvest always bumper crops. It is considered as a good luck harvest stone. It is said to be a very smooth, round and hard stone that found in the jungle. A place of *fachiklung* indicates a heap of paddy husks in the shape of molehill. A person discovery such a place at once digs down and captures it, and takes it home. It is believed that if a *Fachiklung* is displeased with its owner it can escape and disappear.

2. Rithla sia (Malevolent or Malignant spirit)

Unlike *Rithla tha* or benevolent spirits, *Rithla sia* or malevolent spirits are thought to very dangerous since they can harm human beings. Hence, these spirits are always appeased with the sacrifice of fowl, pig, egg, etc.

a) Huai :

Huai is general term for the demons or spirits living on both land and water. The demons living on the land are called *Ramhuai* sometimes *Ramrili* and in water are called *Tuirili* sometimes *Tuihuai*. In the Biate religious belief, there are innumerable and different types of huai. Natural object that appear supernatural or unusual are thought to be possessed by *huai*, while most of them are invisible few are visible in form like *Khukboite* (Knee less demon). It is also believed that they can appear to human beings. Living in poor hygienic condition and without modern medicine the people of those days suffered from diseases ranging from ulcerous sores to mental disorder. They believed the causes of the diseases were derived from the malevolent spirits.

Some of the goblins imps and demons are as follows :

Chomnu : Chomnu is one type of malevolent spirit and is female in gender. She is said to be big in figure with loose breasts. It rarely causes any trouble to human beings.

Tai-ri-ang : This demon is sometimes seen as a fire. It is said that this Tai-ri-ang is mostly seen as flare or *meirial* in the space or in the high rocky cliffs.

Theikorok : This spirit can make a frightening sound in the jungle or elsewhere. He is a very dangerous demon, can harm human beings, and would sometimes send his servant spirits to catch them. Hence, seeing or meeting such a spirit could affect a person mentally or with any kind of disease.

Khukboite : This is another type of elf, which has no knee but has one eye in his forehead. He is a small elf but can make a big sound. Unlike human beings, his toes point back words. It is visible in form unlike other spirits. It seldom harms people.

Dangdo : This is a dangerous male spirit, which frightens people, and people might die out of shock and fear. He is active during night time and its form is said to be elastic though mostly is seen very tall stature. It has further been told that it usually stands at the same height as that of any

tree near by. The Dangdo is very fond of sucking chicken's blood and hence kills mostly cocks and hens by throttling the neck and sucking its blood.

Pheisam : The Pheisam spirit is believed to have only one leg and to be the keeper of wild animals. The name Pheisam is given because one of his legs is missing and some say that one of his legs does not reach the ground. Despite its malevolence, he can be a blessing to a hunter. Hence, while going hunting a person should not whistle.

Mi Dengte : This type of goblin or imp loves to throw stones at human beings from any direction. It is said that if Midengte's stone hits a person, it could be harmful.

The concept of Taboo :

Coming to Biate religious belief, the observance of taboo is very strong. The Biates have certain types of taboos or Serh or Khap related to different things. Because of this, the Biates can be referred to as extremely superstitious people. In connection with this, there are three closely related terms used such as *Serh* or *Khap*, *iril* or *ril* (caution, warning) and *Rithiangino* (unclean). Sometimes these are used as synonyms. Considering them separately, *Serh* or *Khap* is anything possessing significance or any unusual occurrence, which is seen as portending misfortune. *Iril* or *ril* is the reaction to such portentous occurrence by refraining from all works. *Rithiangino* is breaking the rules for *iril* or *ril* (caution, warning) or doing things that are unlawful, unlucky, inauspicious or prohibited. The major taboos observed by the Biates are discussed here.

(i) **Sarhi Serh** : If anybody dies from an unnatural death like falling from a tree, drowning, committing suicide, being killed by wild animals or in childbirth, every member of the village has to observe the sarhi serh. Failure to do so is considered as *Rithiangino*, meaning impure or infected one, and such person is expected to meet a misfortune and unlucky fate. In order to ward off the ill luck, the Thiampu or priest has to perform the necessary rituals accordingly.

(ii) **Sampui Serh** : Materials or tools used for drinking Zu or rice beer during the Raidiar (Sending the soul off

ceremony), are to be seriously observed in the sense that those tools or materials should not be thrown away in other days. Misfortune befalls a person who fails to do so. However, in the case of Sarhi Serh, misfortune can be warded off by asking forgiveness with the sacrifice of a pig.

(iii) **Kangtui Meisia Serh** : When a village, house, paddy or anything is burnt, everyone is expected to observe it mostly at night by refraining from any kind of manual work. Failing to do so, ill luck comes to a person who breaks the warning or the *iril* or *Ril*.

(iv) **Kho serh** : This is a village taboo, which is one of the most important taboos one has to observe. All the Biates are bound to observe it one day when sacrifice is offered in order to protect the people from natural and unnatural calamities, diseases, etc. During this sacrificial day, the entire village should not be away from the village and should abstain from manual work. Women are also restricted to accompany the men folk in the sacrifice. Failing to observe it, misfortune comes. In case, a person dies because of breaking the warning or *iril*, his dead body is not taken inside the village rather buried in the jungle itself. The people who witness the dead body are also tabooed to enter the village without cleansing them. Moreover, visitors or outsiders are also tabooed to enter the village while this day is being observed. Those visitors are expected to stay near the village boundary until the observation is over. They can only enter when the stars appear in the sky. In case, a person breaks the warning by entering into the village while such is being observed he/she is fined with one jar of zu (rice beer). As a whole, the days of Serh nikhua are to be strictly observed as it is for the benefit of individual, family and villagers in general.

(v) **Thiampu Thil Serh** : Using the properties of an honoured person like Thiampu or Priest is prohibited in the sense that no one should wear and use Thiampu or priest's apparel, instruments and materials.

(vi) **Vani Risam Iserh** : In the Biate primal religion, unguarded or boastful utterance of curses is seriously prohibited. If a person utters such a curse, that utterance will

bring evil consequences to the family or the descendants if not to the person himself/herself.

(vii) **In ithar Chungchanga Serhna** : This is a taboo related to cleansing of a new house. As such, in the Biate religious beliefs and practices every new house is cleansed by means of sprinkling water. A person has to observe very carefully lest sickness or even death might come upon the family.

(viii) **Pasal Chunga Serhna** : This is taboo related to husband. A husband is prohibited to kill an animal while his wife is pregnant. Violation of this will affect the child in the mother's womb.

(ix) **Uire Serh** : A mother is prohibited to have sex with anyone other than her husband. Hence, the violations of such or person indulging in such means are punishable not only by clansmen but also by the whole community.

(x) **Loi chungchanga Serhna** : There are taboos related to jhum cultivation. As far as jhum cultivation is concerned certain things are tabooed and violation of some may be dealt with the offering of sacrifice in order to ward off misfortune. Others are so serious that the jhum field itself should be left even if cultivation is at an advanced stage because it is feared that misfortune will come to the cultivator if he continues working near the *Rithiangino* object. As such, *Loiruaktuam* is one of those objects, which appears like human shape on the soil or ground. There is a belief that this *Loiruaktuam* originated from an ugly woman name Longalii whom her brothers chased out of the family because of her ugliness. Hence, if this human shape object is found in the jhum field, cultivation should not be continued. Failing to do some diseases may come to the cultivator or the whole family. Besides, Longalii has also been attributed to certain *Rithiangino* objects such as *Rizuang kung* (*Rizuang tree*). It is told that Longalii was chased out with these words, 'let your legs become *Rizuang tree*', 'Let your eyes become *Tuivamit*' (a small stagnant pool of water found in the jungle) and 'let your arms become *Bantlang Kung*' (*Bantlang tree*). Because of these reasons, a person is restricted to piss or spit under the *Tuivamit*, *Rizuang* and *Bantlang* trees. If violated, diseases

come to a person. Moreover, cultivation of jhum where the *Tuivamit* is found is considered unlucky. Furthermore, if *Sakik khur* or *Sakik's hole* (a species of porcupine, said to be the pillow or *Rulpui* or *Python*) is found in the jungle field, cultivation should be totally given up.

(xi) **Serh danghei** : (Taboos related to certain things)

As far as taboos in the Biate Primal religion are concerned, there are innumerable natural and unnatural objects that are tabooed. For instances, urinating under *Rilum* (yellowish timber) tree, the *Rithlung* or white ants hill, etc. are prohibited because they are believed to be possessed by supernatural power or force. Besides, carrying pair of *Daos*, eating fruit or vegetables of double barreled (twins) especially by women are prohibited. Breaking this *Rithiangino* (caution) object will result in giving birth to twin or unhealthy child. Moreover, women should not leave the log unsplit; doing so will disturb the delivery of the child. Finally, whistling at night is prohibited because it is believed that if a demon called *Thlungmin* hears it, she comes and lets an epidemic break out in the village and whistling while harvesting is also prohibited because it reduce the grains.

The Idea of Life after death :

Like all other tribal people, the Biates too from time immemorial have had a clear concept of life after death. They are very much aware of the fact that unlike all other living creature human beings have an imperishable soul, which continues to survive even after the physical body, perishes. In short, the Biates strongly believe in the existence of the soul of human and life beyond the grave in the form of invisibility. It is believed that human being has altogether-7 (seven) souls out of which one soul are believed to become living one or immortal after the physical body perishes. That soul is called *Thlarngampu* or the soul of peace. The rest are believed to be mortal and perishable on the earth itself. However there is also a suggestion of 3 (three) souls in human being but seems to be unreliable.

As regards to the life beyond the earthly grave, the Biates believe that the soul becomes immortal and does not go to his/her eternal abode until the *Raidiar* ceremony is

performed. After which only the soul leaves for heavenly abode passing through Lungthlaleng and Rih dil or *Rih* Lake.

Mithikhua :

In the Biate belief, the soul first comes across the hill called Lungthlaleng and then a lake called Rih dil. The soul is believed to proceed on to the other world where he also meets an old man named Kulsama who guards, directs the souls where they have to go and at the same time performs sacrifice for the soul. Hence, on reaching the gate of Mithikhua, Kulsama performs sacrifice for the soul without which the soul is not allowed to enter the abode. After Kulsama's sacrifice, the soul is then directed to enter the other world. A woman dying of childbirth has to be bathed or washed before burying her dead body otherwise her soul will not find a place in that place. Besides, the Biates believe that the souls of infants are led by an egg to Mithikhua and thus infants are always buried with an egg. It is said that Thairani, Kulsama's wife would check the hair of every female spirit in order to remove the lice. Failing to find the lice would anger her. For this reason, women are buried with sesame seeds to make it look like lice. As a whole, the dead body is always buried with Thiamtham (sacrificial objects like fowl, pig, egg, etc) with which Kulsama performs sacrifice for the soul. According to some Biate elders, the souls of those persons who do not lead a virtuous life on earth are supposed to go to Mithikhua where they have to keep on working for their living and hence it is not a place of perfect bliss.

Pialral : As has been stated earlier, the Biates believe in existence of another heavenly abode called Pialral or paradise besides Mithikhua. The Christian term of paradise is Rivanram. It is often told by the Biate elders that the soul goes to this place according to the merits, which is determined by his actions on the earth. Pialral, which is believed to be located beyond the Pial river (this is also known as turinat dung or sticky river), is the final abode. According to the Biate belief, Pialral is an abode of perfect bliss, the soul that finds a place there leads a very happy life because he/she does not need to work any more for his/her living. The status of the one who has found a place there is so high that it is

called Thangisua tak. Hence, he/she enjoys equal right and status irrespective of the kind of life he/she led on the earth when he/she was alive.

Bolkuang : It is a sacred place of the village where individual or community God is worshipped by sacrificing the domestic animals of the concerned juncture. In every worship domestic animals like pig, fowl, goat, etc. are offered. Apart from domestic animals, Zu (rice beer) and egg are also important objects offered in the worship. As far as worship at this place called Bolkuang is concerned, the Priest with the help of his disciples calle Berva plays a very important role without whose presence any sacrifice cannot be made. In most cases, womenfolk are tabooed to go at the altar called Bolkuang. Besides the worship of common gods like village god, Bolong raja or Tarpa (old man), etc, each family has its own gods worshipped at home. As far as the worship of family god or Dong Pathian is concerned each family has an altar called Suntmung and Simbak where necessary sacrifices are offered. Generally, in every worship domestic animal offered is eaten sacramentally. The main reason of worshipping god is for the protection of community or village, family and individual from epidemics and calamities, for ensuring good health, for attaining prosperity and for a better life after death. Hence, sacrifice is an important element through which the people communicate with God.

Sacrificial System : Generally, the Biates do not have particular place where sacrifice to appease the demons is offered. The places can be home, forest, fields, villages, etc. On the other hand, the place of sacrifice depends on the case for which sacrifice is made.

Tools or Material of Sacrifice : There are several tools or material used in the sacrifice without which no sacrifice can be performed. Some of them are so important that they are often used in the sacrifice. Since it is not possible to mention all of them, some of the common ones are mentioned here.

1. **Thiamla (incantation) :** Almost all the sacrifices have incantation or charm.

2. **Maicham (altar) :** Some sacrifices require altar, which

is mostly made of split pieces of cane having four squares with stands.

3. Chem or a dao : Chem or dao is used in the sacrifice, in which the animals like fowls and pigs are killed.

4. Zubial (Beer container) : Zubial or rice beer container is used in some sacrifices, for instance, sacrifice to Theikorok devil and sacrifice to evil eye or Khor.

5. Rua (Bamboo) : Rua or bamboo is one of those used in the sacrifice. In some sacrifices such as Theikorok bol, bamboo is utilized after making it split.

E.G. Roche : This is a small stick of bamboo used in connection with certain sacrifices. The top is split for the insertion of a piece of cotton.

6. Thingna Ring (green leaf) : In most cases, green leaves of plantain are used as a plate on which the Khalaih or sacrificial food items are placed.

7. Patmual or Patchon (cotton) : Some sacrifices require cotton. For instance, sacrificial rite in relation to the dead needs Patmual or cotton, which is kept on a Rilei or Sieve for touching as a ritual.

8. Thillem (effigy) : It is said that some devils accept artificial effigy objects as the real ones. For instance, a devil named Theikorok is offered small effigies of cows, butterflies and men, etc. made of mud in place of the real ones.

Types of Sacrifice :

Zing Bol : This sacrifice is performed in the morning in relation to different kinds of diseases caused by the demons. The Thiampu performs it on the sick person's behalf. The sacrifice requires 12 Nos. of small stones. 12 Nos of Zubial (rice beer container) and 12 Nos of Khalai (a leaf placed in the ground where gingers are kept supposed to be food for the demons). The members of the sick person's family are supposed to arrange all these objects and materials. As the performance of sacrifice begins, the priest chants the incantation during which he kills the fowl. The blood of a fowl is dropped in the ginger kept on the Khalai and is tinted on the legs and head of the sick person after which the exorcism is chanted. The exorcism begins with a word of worship followed

by the address to the demons and ends with a word of worship. Example.

Khale..... Pitianga, Putianga, Pidamhei, Pudamhei.....

.....Chibai, Chibai, Chibai,

As the priest exercises, he asks the demon to heal the sick person. After the performance is over, the sacrificial objects are left at the spot. As they return home, they pick up some grass on the way and tuck them on the wall of the house as a sign of performing the sacrifice. Outsiders or visitors are tabooed to enter into the house. As they reach the house, the priest first asks the family members whether the soul has come. In Biate "Rithla zuang thlung tgak mo?". In response, the family members have to say, "O a zuang thlung tak" (yes, it has come). After that, they enter inside and consume Zu (rice beer). Moreover, the fowl killed for this sacrifice is cooked without chili and is eaten up. The fowl's thighs are given to both the priest and the sick person. Before the sick person eats, he drops a piece of chicken. This is done in order to appease the demon who is supposed to be underneath the house. The priest also does in the same way with the chanting of exorcism. By doing so, the sick person recovers from sickness.

Chung Bol : This sacrifice is performed for a person who is weak and swelling caused by Chung demons. It is believed that if those devils possess a person, he/she becomes physically weak, swells and finally dies. They even chase the priest when he tries to bring him/her back from them. For this sacrifice, a fowl is offered. Besides, Iruanna (one kind of tree leaf), Puansen or red cloth and Changlong ril (edible heart of plantain) are also offered. After the performance is over, the part of the sacrificial object, (fowl) or serh is to be left at the place where sacrifice takes place. By performing this sacrifice, a person can physically recover from weakness and swelling.

Runa Inthoina : This sacrifice is performed when a person suffers from bone ache like pain in jaw, backbone, wrist bone, etc. For this sacrifice, fowl is required. The priest mutters the charm and kills the fowl. The priest then paints

the blood of fowl on the sick person. By doing so, the person recover from bone ache.

Iret Bol : This sacrifice is performed for a person who suffers from inflammatory disease. The sacrifice requires 2 (two) fowls— cock and hen. Besides, 7 nos of Zubiel or rice beer container and Nathial Ichar (dried leaves of Nathial, found in swampy places) are required in the sacrifice. Khalai or food are placed on the ground after which 7 nos, 5 nos, (3 times) 7 nos and 2 nos of leaves are put in order. After arranging all these in order, the priest then cuts the neck of the fowl and recites the exorcism. By doing this, the sick person recovers from such disease.

Theikorok Bol : This sacrifice is performed for a person who suffers from body pain, headache, etc. caused by Theikorok devil. Normally, cock is offered in this sacrifice. Beside it require Rangkachak Zubial (beer container) Rophai Tuibial (bamboo tube) and Ton Dep (which is worn in the ear). In addition, 3 (three) effigies of Theikorok devil are made of bamboo, 3 (three) pictures of men, cows and 1 (one) picture of butterfly (Theikorok's horse) are drawn and offered). 3 nos. of Roche (s spilt pieces of bamboo) are also used in the sacrifice. As regards to the sacrifice, the cock's head is thrown over to the ground by the priest, if the clock's head points towards the jungle, the suffering person is believed to recover but if the head points towards the priest it is a sign that the person has not recovered yet. Hence, if the suffering person is not all right at once, the sacrifice can be repeated¹⁵.

Sel Pai Ribol : This sacrifice is made for a person who suffers from stomach pain with vomiting. The sick person or his family members are expected to arrange all the necessary materials and objects for the sacrifice, normally, chicken is offered. Beside, 3 nos. of Zubial or rice beer container are also required in the sacrifice. Khalai or food is prepared as usual, on which An-ibaih (rice flour) is placed. The Priest then

15. Indebted to my brother Late Joipuilliana Lalsim on "A study off the Traditional Religious beliefs and practices of the Biates before the advent of Christian religion in the 19th Century, 1995, Haflong. p-58.

performs the sacrifice. If the sick person does not recover by once, it can be repeated.

Sutmung : (a household ritual)

Apart from the village *Bolkuang* or sacred place, each family has its own altar called *Sutmung* in which they worship the common high god Chung Pathian, Bolong Raja (Tarpa) and their family clan god etc. A *sutmung*, which consist of a 4-ft. tree sapling called *Siathing*, tucked in the middle wall of the house is considered as the main family altar. The tree signifies as iringa thing meaning a tree of life. New one is every household ritual performance replaces the sapling. Whenever a fowl is sacrificed to appease the God, the blood is sprinkled over this *Sutmung* tree. Along with the *Sutmung* sapling, there is another altar material called *Simbak*, which is made of a split piece of cane and bamboo. It is in this material the sacrificial fowl's feathers and a shell of an egg is hung. The main reasons of appeasing the deity and worshipping god is for the protection of family and individual from epidemics and calamities, for ensuring good health, attaining prosperity and for better life after death. Hence, the Biates regard the house altar or *Sutmung* as an important part as far as their belief is concerned.

In the year 1990, when I had been to Kharthong area of N.C. Hills for collection of folksongs, incidentally I happened to witness the said household rite in the house of Pu. Lallura of Jahai village. The village priest Pu Darkunglala performed the rites and rituals. As this friendly old priest had no objection in joining his ceremony, I joined them right from the beginning until the end. The sacrificial item consisted of three fowls and an egg. The invoking of the high God Chung Pathian and village god Tarpa or Bolong Raja was first performed in the *Bolkuang* in the nearby jungle in the village. After numbers of members assembles on the sacred ground, the priest helpers called *Berva* prepared and constructed the necessary bits and pieces of objects. In a short while four pieces of bamboo measuring about two feet, was tucked in the shape of somewhat like an X to the earth. They then placed a plam size of plantain leaves in front of each tucked sticks. Upon

each plantain leaves, a handful of grain, rice powder, an egg, a lace of cotton, and a small tube of zu was placed. The sacrifice commenced by a long incantation uttered by the priest, who stood opposite to his altar. He continually called upon all the wandering spirits who went up and down upon the earth, and calling them to the feast. When a sufficient number of these invisible guests were believed to have assembled, he cut the throats of the fowls with his *Thiampu cham* or dao and letting few drops of the sacrificial blood upon the said plantain leaves and bamboo pieces. His helpers afterwards cooked the flesh of the fowls in the same arena. Meanwhile, a priest and the house owner left the *bolkuang* once and entered the house and replaced the *sutmung* with a new sapling (a young plant of siathing), which was brought from a nearby jungle. This new tree *Sutmung* (siathing), was about five feet in height having no branches but leaves. After it was hoisted by tapering on the wall of the main centre wall, the priest began his chanting in front of the new *Sutmung*. A fowl was once again sacrificed in front of the new *Sutmung*. The sacrificial blood was then and there smeared on the leaves of the sapling.

At the end of his sacrifices, a mouthful of Zu was sipped and blown out. On behalf of his family, the house owner then makes his beseeching under the new altar accordingly. After he made the supplication, the priest and the house owner then go to the *bolkuang* in which the sacrificial victuals was eaten, which I was invited to partake. This meal marked the end of the ritual phase. This was followed by the programme of beer party in the house, which signifies the commemoration of the new *Sutmung*. Everyone was sitting row by row by drinking rice beer. The village elders or officials, however, are allowed to drink the beer only through the small bamboo pipe, which is called *Thlongthli*. A pitcher full of fine rice beer, which was specially prepared for this particular day was placed in the main hall. On the mouth of the pitcher a *thlongthli* a straw for sucking purpose and a split cane spoon in a shape of rake called as *ileng* was inserted for mixture purpose. Unlike the other time, it was to be taken in rotation system, which simply signifies discipline and dignity. To my surprise, I was

offered to sip in the third number, the first, and second being the aged Kalim and old priest respectively. (In spite of my young age, my interest in folksongs has perhaps given me a privilege to drink the beer in the third position). As soon as a potful of beer was about to finish, one and all sunk in the sweet bygone days be narrating and singing *Nunkhohoi-la* or songs of the good old lovely days. Someone who was well versed in the folk music began singing, and then the other members joined him in singing that verse in great choruses. After that some one else repeated another verse and was sung in the same way, and this went on all afternoon, evening and night. Such *Nunkhohoi* was indeed the reminiscence of the past. The *Nunkhohoi** so far I had come accross probably became the last *Nunkhohoi* of the Biates of this region, because after few months this old groups became Christians.

Disposal of the dead and death rites :

The Biates dispose off the dead bodies by burying them in the *ithlan* or graves at the village *Thlanmual* or cemetery. There are no traces of cremation. A vault is made by digging a pit of about six feet deep, six feet long, and three feet wide. On the floor level, a space for the corpse is excavated at one side in which the corpses being simply wrapped in a cloth is laid and enclosed with a bamboo fence. Nowadays, coffins are popularly used like their other Christian counterparts and the use of side space is now an entirely abandoned practice. The grave is then filled up with earth. In the bygone days, the cemetery is made to the west of the village, and the corpse is also supposed to lie towards the west and the legs on the east.

Concept of life after death :

In the Biate belief, the soul first comes across the place called *Lungthlaleng* and then *Rih Dil* or *Rih Lake*. The soul is believed to proceed for the other world and finally reach *Lungthlaleng*, where he meets a guard or guide by name

**Nunkhohoi-meaning feasting, drinking, singing and dancing in ease and ecstasy. The last rituals a performance of the 1990 that I witnessed was became the last traditional rituals.*

Kulsama* who directs the souls where they have to go and at the same time performs sacrifice for the soul. Hence, on reaching the gate of mithikhua, the guard Kulsama performs sacrifice for the soul without which the soul is not allowed to enter the abode. After Kulsama's sacrifice, the soul is then directed to enter another world. A woman dying of childbirth has to be bathed or washed before burying her dead body otherwise her soul will not find a place there. In general, the dead are always buried with Thiamthan (sacrificial objects like fowl, pig, egg, etc.) with which Kulsama performs sacrifice for the soul. Meanwhile the infants are buried with an egg, as the souls of the infants are believed to be led by an egg to their abode. According to some Biate elders, the souls of those persons who did not lead a virtuous life on earth are supposed to go to Mithikhua where they have to keep on working for the living. Hence, it is not a place of perfect bliss.

It is said that in the bygone days uttering of the word 'Rih-li' or 'Rih-dil' by a common people is taboo, except a priest, which also muttering only while performing on the ritual Thiam-izal. When a person is afflicted by a disease, the priest usually coaxes and appeases the deity who is supposed to be responsible for the victim by sacrificing the concerned animals. If the patient's health does not improve even after the concerned stage of ritual performances and performance of such ritual practices, his spirit thereby is believed to be already homed in the dead man's village. Unless the priest brings his soul back, he cannot recover from his health, but will surely die. So in order to bring back the patient's soul from that hedge, the priest performs the Thiam-izal. The priest, after chanting and invoking the charms for sometimes, he is supposed to be in the spiritual world and eventually make a voyage to the Rih-dil where a coward guard or king of the dead men known as Kulsama guard with his full might. The priest then show obeisance and implore the guard earnestly. If his prayer is accepted, the soul of the victim would be brought back and would recover from his health ultimately.

The coming of Christianity among the Biates :

The entire Biates, at present have embraced Christianity as their religion. In between 1870-1880, seven mission stations

were opened at different places in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. In the same year, Shangpung became the mission centre under the superintendence of Rev. D.M. Sykes and Rev. Robert Evans (Rev. Evans was originally from Wales and the 16th Presbyterian Missionary of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills). The missionaries were entrusted to look after the mission works in Shangpung and the surroundings areas. After ten years of serving in Shangpung, in the year 1890, Rev. Roberts Evans came to Biate area along with one native preacher U Khulu Malang. It is noted in the history of Biate churches of the first arrival of English missionary to the Biate area. The first preacher who took initiative to visit Biate area was a native preacher U Khulu Malang who was also the first Missionary to the Biates. U Khulu Malang was a Pnar-Khasi tribe from Sutnga village of Jaintai Hills. He was a man of dedication who has enormous zeal in his ministry. He came to the Biate area in April 1890 to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and first entered Saizol village. The Biate leader (Mukja), Pu Toichonlura, accorded him a cordial welcome and recognition. He learnt that there was severe drought, since it had not rained during the whole seedling season. The dryness troubled the people as it had affected their annual seeding or sowing of seeds. The village thiampu (village priest) had been invoking his gods for rain for many times, but could not receive a fruitful answer. The villagers were in great trouble not only for the entire annual paddy plantation but also for lack of drinking water. When Khulu Malang tried to share his message about the living God, the Biäte leader or Mukja (Maujadar) and other village leaders requested him (Khulu Malang) to pray to his God for rain to prove to them that his is for real. As usual, the people assembled in a particular place, and brought ritual materials such as rice, cloth, mat, egg, which they felt were the requirements for offering sacrifices, because they thought Khulu Malang would perform offering sacrifices according to their traditional way of offering. However, Khulu Malang told them that those things were not needed for his prayer. Instead, he went silently inside the house and prayed to his living God fervently for certain minutes. After praying, he came out of that house and told the people who were assembling outside

the house, saying, that the rain would be falling definitely. He further advised them to collect the grains, clothes that they spread out in the sun. The villagers then did according to his advice. Because of his prayer towards afternoon before sunset, the fair and clear weather suddenly turned into a dark sky followed by a roaring thunder and consequently resulted into continuous rainfall. From that very day, there was torrential rain for three days and three nights. Since the rain was too heavy, the elders of the village were afraid that the rain would not be able to stop. They came to Khulu Malang and implored him to stop the rain. However, Khulu Malang boldly replied that he could not stop the rain, but could halt in time. The rain became stop after three days and three nights. U Khulu Malang preached the gospel to the villagers and left for his village Sutnga. The villagers of Lura were greatly astonished at such unnatural episode in their life.

Many of the villagers believed that the god of Khulu Malang was a living God, but they still refused Christianity. This miracle was noteworthy in the history of the Biate Church. This wonderful work of God had a far-reaching impact on the people in the later part of 1890 and 1895. After this miracle at Lura village, Khulu Malang went back to Shangpung, and narrated all the incidents to the English Missionaries. After hearing all the happenings, in response to Khulu Malang's report Rev. Robert Evans decided to visit Lura village and the other Biate area. After seven months of Khulu Malang's report Rev. Robert Evans accompanied Khulu Malang and came to Lura village in the month of December in 1890. On reaching the village, they were affectionately received by the Biate chief Toichonlura who was the leader of the Biate people. Khulu Malang and Rev. Robert Evans inquired from the people whether they were willing to become Christians. But the Biate chief Toichonlura informed them that no one was willing to embrace Christianity. After hearing this, Khulu Malang and Rev. Robert Evans went directly to Saipum village where they were also warmly welcomed and received by a man Pu Thiaichongngola Thianglai. Pu Thiaichongngola Thianglai hosted them as special guests. He cordially received them because of the fact that he saw a vision of these missionaries

prior to their arrival. It is said that Pu Thiaichongngola saw a vision of a piece of wood floating in the sky and thereby brightening the atmosphere as it flew from west to east. To his utter surprise, the phenomenon halted just above Saipum village and then mysteriously disappeared¹⁶.

Rev. Robert Evans and Khulu Malang stayed for three days and three nights at the house of Pu Thiaichongngola. During that period Pu Thiaichongngola and family embraced Christianity. Consequently, they took baptism from Robert Evans on 18th. Dec. 1890. After having baptized them, Rev. Robert Evans and U Khulu Malang went back to their mission-centre at Shangpung. Later, Rev. Robert Evans appointed U Khulu Malang to be an evangelist cum teacher to the Biates, especially to look after the first Christian family and to preach the gospel in the surrounding areas. Accordingly, U Khulu Malang came to Saipum and began the mission work in the beginning of 1891.

Because of his new faith, Pu Thiaichongngola and his family faced many trials and tribulations like tortures, hatred from their own villagers for many years. However, through all the tribulations the family patiently endured and remained firm in their new faith. The more they faced suffering the more the gospel popularised among them. In this way in the year 1897, the first Church among the Biates was established in Saipum village. However, the first Christians were only 13 in numbers, but within a short span of time in 1912 all the Saipum villagers were converted to Christianity. After the Pentecostal blessing of Mairang Assembly in the Khasi hills of 1906, in the same year the Biate areas of Jaintia Hills were influenced by this revival movement, consequently, the numbers of believers increased and some other Churches were also established in the area.

The second wave of the revival took place in 1924. To mark the coming of the gospel in their midst in 1890, the Biates of N.C. Hills, and Jaintia Hills celebrated Centenary in

¹⁶ Rev. Lianpuia Saipum, *Upa Roichongkhupa Hatlong*, Rev. Chongsena, Saipum, "Biate Kristian Centenary" Souvenir 1890-1990, p-5.

the year 1990 at Saipum (Meghalaya). Majority of the Biates are under the roof of one Church congregation i.e., Presbyterian Church of India. In spite of their centenary in Christianity, interestingly, I am lucky enough to witness the rites and ritual performances of the last group of the follower of Biate traditional religion in the year 1994 at Jahai village of N.C. Hills. It was mainly of that traditional creed Pu Darkunglalla and his followers I have materialized for this book especially in the religion section.

The work of Gospel among the Biate in Jaitia Hills & North Cachar Hills :

As far as Gospel work among the Biates is concerned, there is no account so to say until the outbreak of Revival in the Assembly of Mairang Khasi Hills in 1906. Practically, the great revival that broke out in the Assembly meeting in 1906 at Mairang has made a tremendous impact in the socio-cultural life of the Biate Church and the Society. A delegation, comprising four members from the Biate community of Jaintia Hills attended the Mairang Assembly in March 1906. They were namely : 1. Elder Thlinga (Renglallapa), 2. Pu. Haite (Lalipa) Thuruk, 3. Pu. Roipuilliana, Thuruk, 4. Pu. Thianga (Hovilapa) Zongria. All the delegates were immensely blessed with the Holy Spirit during this meeting. Upon their return to their respective churches, they shared the wonderful love of God with their families and friends. As a result, the small Christian families of Saipum, Zongria, Thuruk and Saizol of Jaintia Hills received shower of blessings tremendously. This made the infant Christians grow from strength to strength and thereby had great zeal to spread Good News to their animist brethren, whose main principal of religion is sacrificing animals to the different deities of the rivers and hills. While spreading the gospel of Jesus is love, many persecutions are met by the early believers. The more they face trials and tribulations the more the gospel spread among them.

The early leaders :

When the District Council of Haflong, N. C. Hills was constituted in the year 1952, alongwith the other District councils of Garo Hills, The Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Mikir

Hills, in the first general election to the North Cachar Hills District Council, Late C.T. Thanga, who was elected from the Kamphai circle, was the first member from the Biate community. He was also made the first Deputy Chairman of the District Council, Haflong N.C. Hills. At that time, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) John Parry was made the Chairman of the Council C.T. Thanga was the first literate man among the Biates. He was also the first translator of Biate hymns. During the British regime C.T. Thanga had received his general and theological education in Cherapunjee, Meghalaya.

It may not be out of place to mention here another gentleman from the Biate community, late Jamchonga (J.C. Nampui) who was a very brilliant student. He had passed his B.A. with distinction in 1954 from the Gauhati University, and had passed his IAS in 1955 as the first IAS from the Assam cadre among the tribals. He was very sincere, intelligent, active, and faithful in his official work throughout his whole life. He retired as the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam in 1986. After his retirement, this veteran IAS Officer was called by the Govt. of Assam and offered him the post of Vice Chairman of Hills Planning Board, and served this job for sometimes.

Late Jamchonga was born in 1924 at Thuruk village in Jaintia Hills and brought up at Mualdam village N.C. Hills, Assam under Kharthong area. He had received his education at Haflong and Shillong. He expired at his residence in Shillong on the 24th November 1988. The author of this book has also attended the funeral ceremony of Late Jamchonga at his Ivory Cottage Mawkhar Shillong. As Late Jamchonga was member of All Saints Church Anglican, his mortal body was laid to rest in the quiet and beautiful Anglican Cemetery in Shillong.

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 18. Arngoite Phung.
 19. **Sura Phung (Fables of Sura)**
 1. Sura the cook
 2. Sura loses his whistling
 3. Sura the surgeon
 4. Sura defeated his gang of enemies
 5. Sura overcomes the lion
 6. Sura and Haifinga exchange houses
 7. Sura's crab hut
 8. Sura and Haifinga exchange jhum
 9. Sura's *dalkong* meat
 10. Sura and Haifinga's trapped
 11. Sura with his precious pot.

1. FAPI-TE (Grandmother of the paddy)

Once upon a time, in the hill country of *Siset* there lived an old woman named Fapite meaning 'grandmother of the paddy' or 'Queen of the paddy'. She was just and humble Queen of the hill country who, when, estimating people's worth, did not see whether they are rich or poor as long as they had kind hearts.

She was so famous in that hill country that her name was even familiar to the children of the remotest hilly villages.

One day, she was planning to visit a distant village, which she had never been before. Prior to her visit, the villagers were being informed that Fapite, a Queen from the *Siset* country would pay a visit to their village. On hearing this, the villagers were very happy that they would now see such a famous queen that too, in their own village. They were very excited by thinking that the queen with all her grandeur and royal attires would be in their midst in a little while. The villagers began preparing themselves to welcome the queen by cleaning all their respective houses, courtyards, village paths and gave their village a fresh look. They put on their finest clothes and eagerly waited for the Queen in high spirit.

In the meantime, a just and humble Queen who valued people's worth not by their richness or poverty, but by their kind heartedness, wanted to test their virtue. So, dressed herself shabbily with unkempt hair and a stick in her hand and entered their village. As she entered the village, no one knew her. Everyone thought that she was just an ordinary clumsy old woman; hence, no one cared for the old shabbily dressed woman.

After a short while, she begun to approached their houses one by one serially from the top row to bottom of the village by saying in quivery voice; "Masters, would you please allow me to pass a night in your house?"

"No, we don't have any room for you, we are awaiting Fapite, the Queen of the paddy" replied the householder and rejected her appeal.

She again set off to another houses by asking the same question, but she received the same reply as usual. After approaching many houses, finally she now reached the last hut of the poorest boy in the village Liandoia and his brother whose hut was situated at the bottom of the village. "Masters, would you please allow me to pass a night in your house?" asked the old woman as her usual plea.

"Oh granny, definitely you can stay with us but we have nothing good food to offer you," replied poor orphan Liandoia, and further said, "We have only a little mixture of coarse rice and yam cover the way we used to take; you are welcomed to what little we have."

"Thank you my sons, thank you for your hospitality" said the old woman and she gladly stayed with them for the night. Ultimately, Liandoia and his younger brother prepared the only food they stored which contained a boiled mixture of coarse rice and yam peelings and offered her generously, and showed her a place to sleep near the hearth where it would keep her warm and comfortable. The old woman learnt that the food, which she had taken, was the only foodstuff Liandoia had. Now, from all of the villagers, she recognized that Liandoia and his brother were the only one who had kindness, love and compassion. Due to this, she made up her mind to bless Liandoia and his brother.

At night, Liandoia worried a lot, thinking as to what he would offer his guest in the morning. By thinking so, he could not sleep well. On the other hand, Fapite could not wait to bless Liandoia, since she clearly knew what he was worried about. All on a sudden, Fapite got up from her bed, fetched an empty paddy basket, and began her magic power by pinching her nail with a porcupine quill. There came out a squashy sound of 'krit; krit; krit; krit...' followed by another sound of 'drill, drill'. This in fact, was the sound of the grain of rice being poured into the basket. Liandoia heard the sound and asked the old woman what she was doing. "Kind man, I bless you, God bless you" replied the old woman. She continued her work and in no time the entire baskets of their house was filled with paddy overnight. Liandoia did not believe his eyes as his hut became full of grains and his joy knew no bounds.

The old woman subsequently advice Liandoia and his brother to select a plot of land, where termite mounts are most housing for their jhum. And when if their jhum would produce excesses grains, they would put their empty basket in reverse on a tree stump of the jhum and make a whistling for a minute or so, then and there the paddy would become spoiled."

Subsequently following the advice of the old woman, the two brothers successfully harvested a bumper crop. After collecting seven granaries in the east and seven grannaries in the west, the rice field was still rich with grains and they

could not collect any more. Remembering the advice of Fapite the two brothers put the empty basket in reverse upon the tree stump, and makes their whistling. All on a sudden the jhum field which was full of crops became spoiled and devastated wholly.

The old woman further assured them not to worry for paddy grain in future and promised to help them whenever they called her name for help during the harvesting. Eventually the poor but kind and generous Liandoia and his brother realized that their guest was none other than Fapite. So they faithfully began to call on the Fapite every harvesting season and thus the poorest of the poor Liandoia and his brother became the richest in their village. Due to that outstanding advice, in the society of the Biates whistling during the harvesting is taboo. From that time onwards, the Biates remember FAPITE as queen or grandmother of the paddy who once showed her miracle power to the kind Liandoia and his brother. The simple song is sung in the following way : -

*Fang zuong o, fang zuong o,
Saka fang zuong o, thlanga fang zuong o,
Sima fang zuong o, mara fang zuaong o,
Ri li chmaphaia fang zuong o.*

(Come grains, come grains,
Come from the above, come from the below;
Come from the east, come from the west,
Come grains of Ri-li Champhai).

Ever since, the Biate regarded Fapite as the Queen or deity of the paddy, remembered, and intone her in the above mentioned chant or song in every ritual ceremony of the harvest.

Moral : *The kind and just would reap in time/Kindness and justice do not go in vain.*

2. Khuansianglai Thurchi. (Legends of the earth creation)

Long long ago, there lived an old supernatural being by the name Khochultenu, meaning the old lady leveler of the earth. As her name signifies, one day she was leveling the earth unceasingly. However, the earthworm Richalpa gave no

attention and consumed up her tiresome work continuously. As this continued for many years, the land could not be expanded, but was still empty. Therefore, the woman Khochultenu was angry and warned Richalpa to stop at once. As Richalpa did not obey her advice, Khochultenu then mercilessly beat Richalpa black and blue. On the contrary, the more she beats the more he produced the soil which he had consumed. She then said, "Ah, what a creature, let him take as much as he likes; he can multiply the soil, let him live in this earth for a better cause." By saying this, she continued leveling the earth with ease and ecstasy and the Richalpa too resumed his meal to his hearts content.

After many days, she inspected the earth. She learnt that the earth was not tight and strong enough. Therefore, in order to tighten the earth she sowed seeds of grass and plants everywhere and every place on that planet. This was how earth originated. In the meantime, a man called Manmasite came into being. He was regarded the first man on earth. A woman named Nupangnu came followed by two men named Thlanrokpa and Thaltongpa accordingly. When Thlanrokpa and Thaltongpa made a *khuang* (drum) for themselves, Sahapa (baboon) made the *meiri* (indigenous fire making article). The monkey (Izongte) picked up the drum and played while the root beaver (Buimongte) played a *rosem* (flute). They assembled in one place and began to play their musical instruments with great fun and frolic. They danced and hip-hopped all day and night as they wished.

This made Khochultenu, the builder, leveler or smoothen of the earth very angry. She was afraid that they might spoil the earth, which was not yet fit for the dancing ground. She warned them to stop their dance at once since, the soil was not yet tight and hard. However, they did not pay heed to her advice; instead, they continued dancing. On the other hand, Khochultenu had a cherished dream to make a perfect earth. As the hip-hop dancers were still continuously dancing, the leveler of the earth Khochultenu fervently pleaded them not to continue their dance, as some part of the earth was loosely fitted and yet to be in shape for a dancing ground. However, they did not listen at all to her advice. Out of rage, all of a

sudden, Khochultenu smacked the earth with her large *kutpar* palm and as a result, the land became uneven. From this incident, the earth became unlevelled and thus originated the lower and higher hills, plains and valleys, rivers and deserts up to this day.

3. Parual Sari, (The seven Borthers)

Once upon a time, there was a family consisting of seven brothers and a sister named Sorlaili. They lived together in happiness and contentment until one day the wrath of a tiger-man befell on them. All seven of them caringly loved their sister who was a young maiden of exquisite beauty and clothed her with valuable clothes, ornaments, necklaces and all the beautiful things, which one can obtain from this earth. They found nothing precious and befitting enough for their beloved sister, so they now have to look towards the sky. They eventually decided that the moon in all its shining glory would make the ideal gift and bring their sister the greatest joy and delight. They thereupon made a plan to climb up and bring the moon down for their sister's necklace.

And then one day the seven brothers began to build a tower of ladder towards the sky in order to bring down the moon for their sister. Their youngest brother Tlumtea was engaged in delivering their daily meal from their sister who was looking after their home and hearth. In the meantime, there was a satyr tiger-man by a name Pharvomtepu in that land, who had been eyeing Sorlaili for his wife. As the seven brothers were afraid that Pharvomtepu would steal away their beloved sister in their absence, they therefore, kept their sister Sorlaili in their strong built home which had seven folded metal doors.

Their only sister was now and then preparing their daily meal and doing the household chores liberally under such secured house. Whenever Tlumtea would go home for fetching their ration of foodstuff, he used to call her sister in a secret code by saying— "*Ki u Ki u Sorlaili, vi ve ei thir inkhar thua sari ne ong roh.*" (My sister my sister Sorlaili, vi ve open our seven folded metal door). The secret code is keeping in order preventing the tiger man from gaining entry into their house.

As usual, on hearing the secret code, Sorlaili would open the gate and hand over the packed rations to Tlumtea. Gradually the work was progressing day by day and their youngest brother regularly delivered their foodstuff to his brothers accordingly.

Now the structure of the tower grew soaring and stood far above the ground. Since it already grew high and tall, it took a lot of time in delivering their food. Taking advantage of this, Pharvomtepu (tiger man), one day went to their house quietly and knocked at the door saying, "Sorlaili, open the door, open the door". However, Sorlaili did not open the door, since she knew that it was not the voice of her brother.

The disappointed Pharvomtepu was now loitering sadly. He was walking down a path with broken heart. In the meantime, a widow by name Numeitenu came across his way and asked him the reason for his grief. Pharvomtepu narrated all his problems to her in a sad mood.

"Oh, this I can do myself, I can imitate the voice of Tlumtea" said the old widow proudly.

On hearing this, the depressive Pharvomtepu, in his uplift spirit pleaded her to tell him the secret key to success. The proud widow, on the other hand hesitated to do so. Pharvomtepu now in his true color arrogantly said to her that if she would not tell him, he would eat her up. At this juncture, the frightened widow advice him saying, "Go near their home and lick the soil where used to urinate and plantain leaves in which they had taken their meal, if you do so your voice will become like that of Tlumtea and speak like that of Tlumtea".

Now, Pharvomtepu in high spirit went near their house and followed the instructions of Numeitenu. In no time, he was well versed in imitating the voice of Tlumtea. Ultimately, he approached the door of Sorlaili, pretended to be Tlumtea, and imitated his voice by saying, '*Ki u ki u Sorlaili vi ve ei thir inkhar thua sari ne ong roh*'. Then Sorlaili, thinking it to be the voice of his brother Tlumtea, opened the door and thereby, Pharvomtepu caught Sorlaili and took her away to a far away country. He also cleverly locked the door of the house as if Sorlaili was inside.

After some days, Tlumtea came for ration to Sorlaili and as usual said- 'My sister my sister Sorlaili, vi ve open our seven folded metal door.' Alas, there was no reply at all. Then, Tlumtea realized that Pharvomtepu had stolen away their beloved sister. He went immediately to his six brothers and informed them about the matter.

On hearing this news, the seven brothers started casting lots saying. "If we are to get back our sister, let our seven folded metal door be opened automatically." By saying this, they threw themselves to the door one by one. By doing this repeatedly, they died one after the other. Finally, the last brother Tlumtea turn came. Tlumtea said, "If we are to get back our sister, let our seven folded metal door be opened automatically." By saying, he threw himself to the door, and eventually the seven-folded metal door opened and he got inside the house in the form of a dove abruptly. Tlumtea then flew round and round in search of his sister, and began to cry *Tik ti ki kik kik*.

As he began to search for his sister Sorlaili, he flew miles and miles away. On his way to the far unknown land he met two men working in the paddy field and asked them by saying, "Masters, have you seen my sister Sorlaili?"

'We have seen her but she has gone far away beyond the hills' replied the two farmers.

He went further, met three workers in the field, and asked them the same question but received the same answer. Again, he went further and met five men and their reply was the same as usual. Again, he went further and met ten workers in the field. He then asked the same question to the ten farming workers, 'Oh definitely, we saw her at the village beyond that hill, she was weaving in the backyard platform of the house in which a giant tree of *Niaipui* (a specie of giant tree) is close by" replied the ten workers.

Soon, Tlumeta arrived at the tree near the backyard platform. "Have you seen my sister Sorlaili?" asked Tlumeta to a woman who was weaving. At this Sorlaili came to her senses. "Ah your voice seemed to be that of Tlumeta," said Sorlaili. "If you are really Tlumtea, come down and sit on the

railing in front of me." Then the dove (Tlumtea) came down and sat on the railing just near her. She once again pleaded him that if he really was Tlumtea, he would come down and drink a little drop of *buapep* (water which is used in the weaving) which was kept near her. When he came down and drank the water, she caught hold of him in her hand. Meanwhile Tlumtea pleaded her to release him else, her husband Pharvomtepu would devour him. However, Sorlaili promised him that they would wait a good time for a good escape from the bondage of her Tiger-man husband.

In the absence of her husband, they planned a trick, out of which they made tiny holes in all the bottom of *tuithei* (water bamboo tubes), so that it could not hold water. This is made in order that Pharvomtepu, when sent to fetch water from the spring could waste the time.

When the time of her husbands' return from the jhum was near, Sorlaili now cast a spell, "If we and all our brothers would be together again, let this bamboo post be split in two pieces" By saying so, one of the bamboo posts of the hearth spaced out into two parts abruptly. Thereby her brother who was in the form of dove now became a bee and she kept him in it. She cast a spell again to rejoin the two parts and thereby, the post looked natural in its shape ultimately. This was done in such an order that her tiger man husband would not be aware of it. At last, her husband arrived home. "*thim rim tham ram a nam* there is fishy smell, fishy smell" said the tiger-man and looked every nook and corner.

"If it smell fishy, then eats me up," replied Sorlaili sternly.

"Ah, never, you are not to be eaten up, how could I? You are precious to me; I would even like to put back your fallen hair from your body" said Pharvomtepu coyly.

On hearing this very sweet and comfortable speech, Sorlaili hit the plan and asked her husband to draw water from the spring. Like a good husband, Pharvomtepu began to carry all the water tubes and set off to the spring to fetch water. He took long time to draw the water since no water tube could hold water properly as it was leaking.

Immediately, Sorlaili let out his brother Tlumtea who was in the form of a bee from the bamboo post, and now in his

true form (human being) took advantage of Pharvomtepu's absence and began to mount firewood in the house and finally burned it up. While the blaze was on its height, Sorlaili hid herself in the jungle near the house. He brother, who now again turned into a dove landed near the spring and sung a song of attention, "*Pharvomtepu tuithei pin pep hip, Sorlaili mei kang ta huam huam.*" (Pharvomtepu's water tubes is leaking drip drop, drip drop, Sorlaili is in blazing burning). On hearing this cuckoo-dove bird's call; Pharvomtepu realized that something had gone wrong. So, he at once left the place and went home. Then and there in search for his Sorlaili, he jumped over the burning house, and said, "Aiiiah Sorlai, aiiiah Sorlai" and died instantly.

After the tiger man Pharvomtepu had died, Sorlaili and her brother set off to their home, a house that has seven-folded metal door situated beyond many miles. Finally, they arrived home. However, they found nothing except the skeleton of their six brothers. Immediately, they collected all the skeletons of their brothers and laid them down upon the plantain leaves. Very soon, they all became alive and then lived together in great happiness and prosperity ever after.

Moto : Over concern that plunder the life, but sacred love that never dies.

4. Urnaika fangma zong. (The two sisters who searched for cucumber)

Once upon a time, two sisters were searching for a cucumber in their jhum. The elder sister did not get anything, while the younger got enough to carry them in her basket. As the sun was going down, they returned to their home. On their way home, the elder sister became thirsty and said to her younger sister, "My sweet little sister, I am thirsty, would you please give me at least one cucumber?"

"No, never will I" replied her younger sister.

On hearing this, the elder sister became very angry. However, as she was very thirsty, to quench her thirst, she asked her repeatedly. But, her younger sister again and again flatly refused to do so. The elder sister who was now so weak to walk stood still on the old termite mount and recites,-

Rithlung ne vol roh, ne vol roh, ki unaiin fangma pumka lua ne pe nuamak, Rithlung ne vol roh, ne vol roh." (Swallow me, swallow me up, termite mount, my younger sister does not want to give me even one cucumber, swallow me). While repeating the chants, she begun to sink inch by inch and finally the mount swallow her up completely.

When the selfish younger sister arrived home, her mother asked her where her elder sister was. She then told her mother about the sorry state of her elder sister. The mother scolded her and sent her back to call her elder sister. She went back to that place and reciting repeatedly, "My elder sister, come out, sister, come out, father and mother call you to come out for a great feast." On hearing the unceasing chants, she gradually came out bit by bit from the soil of the mount and in no time, she appeared completely, except her feet. At that moment, her sister forcefully pulled her up and as a result, the sole of her feet broke and was left on the termite mount. Although they reached home, the elder sister had left the sole of her feet on the termite mount. After the younger sister learned that her elder sister had lost her sole, she was so disappointed and regretted for what she had done to her sister. But it was too late to cure.

For this reason, a giant white tasty mushroom called *Parthlung* that usually grow at the old site of termite mount is also traditionally considered as the sole of the human being (the sole of that unfortunate girl). And thus some used to abhorrence to take the same. Although the particular *Parthlung* mushroom is edible and is very tasty, but there is some look alike of that kind which is deadly poisonous.

Moral : Selfishness brings only but destruction.

5. Zolchongi neh Kulzopa :

Long ago, there were two young girls in a certain village. Their friendship was so sweet that they hardly spend time without each other. As they had attained a marriageable age, one day they decided there was nothing else to do but make the best of things in the future by marrying off their children if they had been blessed with a boy and a girl. After some days, both the two girls got married to two boys of the same

village at the same period. Both the girls now became pregnant but sometimes they suffered a lot due to the babies in their womb longing for each other. At times, unless they sleep with their belly touching each other, they could hardly get a good sleep. As per their wish, one day, one of them was blessed with a boy and the other with a girl. The boy was named Kulzopa while the girl was Zolchongi. The two persons had been said to be in love with one another even from their mother's womb. They were very friendly from their childhood and were very obedient to their parents; so when they grew up they naturally began to love each other dearly.

One day, a festival was being celebrated in their village, in which all the girls and boys of marriageable age were assembled to witness the events of selecting their future life partners. With great fun and frolic, boys and girls participated including Zolchongi and Kulzopa. The boys and girls were allowed to sit in two rows by facing each other. After letting to look to each other for sometime, either from each row, a person was made blindfolded. They were let to choose their future partner by pulling him or her out of the row. Everything went fine until Zochongi's turn came. When her turn came, as usual, they blindfolded her, but just after that some of the boys and girls who were jealous of her, pull the hairclip of Kulzopa and let it fall down on the floor. While Kulzopa was away in search of his hairclip below the platform floor, the ugliest bachelor of the village named Vansekula, was replaced to the seat of Kulzopa. Zolchongi who did not know anything about their trick, now pulled out Vansekula taking him to be his boy friend. Now, the helpless Zolchongi got married to Vansekula as per tradition. Meanwhile the true lover Kulzopa and Zolchongi had no alternative but vowed to each other to remember each other in time of need. By saying this, they exchanged the handle of their hoe, "Let this exchanged gifts become the indicator of our health" said Kulzopa and whisper her beloved "When I am unwell you would notice a crack on the handle of the hoe which is with you, and when you are unwell I would notice a crack on the handle of the hoe which is with me."

"May it happen" said Zolchongi. A broken heart Kulzopa bid farewell to her beloved and slipped away to far away country for a better cause. Meanwhile, the villagers were celebrating the wedding ceremony of Zolchongi and Vansekula with much pomp and gaiety.

After some days, Kulzopa noticed a crack on the hoe handle which was with him and realized that Zolchongi was unwell. Immediately, he went to Zolchongi's house and found that she was seriously ill. No sooner he told her that he had arrived, she died in a peaceful sleep. Now, the villagers blamed Kulzopa for the death of Zolchongi. They thereby, asked him to pay a heavy fine of seven mithuns for that issue. The bereaved Kulzopa, now in a dilemma took rest for a while in the relative's house. Meanwhile, as there was no one who dared to bathe Zolchongi for her last rite as her death was considered bad omen, the villagers now approach to Kulzopa for the said purpose. For the sake of love, he agreed to bathe her and because of this act the villagers decided to reduce his fine by paying them three mithuns only. Moreover, since they also did not dare to perform the remaining death rituals of Zolchongi, Kulzopa again performed the remaining rituals and for doing that, the villagers terminated all his fines.

Now, Kulzopa returned to his village and reaching there, he planted a flower in memory of his beloved Zolchongi. When he planted the flower, he said, 'Let this flower grow well in the name of my beloved Zolchongi.' The flower later grew and was very pleasing to the eyes but an elf by name Sazilzalte used to steal them every morning. Kulzopa with the intention of catching this thief red handed decided to hide and wait for the culprit. He was successful to catch the Sazilzalte (elf). He asked the elf, "Why do you steal my precious flower which I have planted in memory of my beloved Zolchongi?" To this, the elf replied, 'Set me free for I am Zolchongi's messenger.' On hearing this, Kulzopa requested the elf to take him along with him to Zolchongi. The elf said that it would not be possible since she is beyond seven layers of lights and seven layers of darkness. The elf had ultimately relented due to Kulzopa's constant pleading and asked him to hold on to his tail firmly. By doing so, the elf along with Kulzopa reached the place

where Zolchongi was. In that place, fleet of spirits of the dead swiftly flew time-to-time from one corner to another in the form of wild green pigeons. Unlike the spirits of the dead, Kulzopa, however, have much fear of the height, which made him so scared that he used to make a growling sound like a dog. Hence, the spirit of the dead saw Kulzopa and regards him as Zolchongi's dog. In the spirits world, human beings were seen as dogs and leaves as fishes. When Zolchongi and her fellow spirits took Kulzopa along with them for fishing, whatever they caught from the river were leaves in the sight of Kulzopa. While Kulzopa was fishing, a leaf fell in his creel accidentally to which the spirits said, "Ah the caught one."

The news of Zolchongi and Kulzopa were the talk of the spirits' abode. One fine evening, he had a desire to stroll around, but his wife warns him not to go out at night as he would be scared of the dead bodies. But he does not pay heed to her advice and stroll around and finally met the unwelcome citizens one after another. As he was extremely frightened, he made a quick retreat and called his wife by saying, "Zolchong open the door, quick, and open the door." Instantly his wife opened the door and let him in, but he started feeling unwell due to the fearsome figures he happened to see. So Zolchongi sensed that it would be best to send him back to the living world. 'Take this *Lailen* bird (a small black bird stripped with white, generally descended on the ground during the autumn, and it is also regarded as the fowl of the God) with you and if you fall sick, sacrifice this bird and you would regain your health' advised Zolchongi.

Kulzopa thus returned with the precious bird and reaching his house, he was questioned by his parents as to what the bird was for. After narrating all his experience at the abode of the death, he also explained the purpose of the bird. On hearing the story his parents asked, 'There are so many other big animals, but why a tiny bird for sacrificial purpose?' He then thought it over and set it free and the bird flew away. Because of his defines of Zolchongi, a spinning wheel, which was kept on the shelf of the house, fell and struck Kulzopa's head, killing him instantly. Kulzopa was then translated to the abode of the dead and his spirit once and

for all happily reunited with that of Zolchongi.

The spirit of true love cannot be separated.

6. Irungnu neh Lingthite. (The dove and the lizard)

One day, a woman named Irungnu (a dove) and a man named Lingthite (lizard) had a competition to make zollei or ri-zol, (paddy threshing floor). In no time, Irungnu successfully made a beautiful threshing floor. This made the cruel and nasty Lingthite full of envy and asked her to exchange their floor. However, Irungnu refused to do so. This made Lingthite angrier and ended up in hacking the head of Irungnu which eventually made the poor woman weep in frustration.

A bear happened to pass by a little later and enquired from Irungnu why she was in tear. "Because Lingthite hacked my head," she tearfully replied. "Ah, do not worries at all, call him and I shall teach him a lesson by beating him. But you will have to offer me a nice meal first," said the bear.

Irungnu prepared a meal and offered him according to his wish. She now called on Lingthite sarcastically, "*Lingthite hong ro, ni nu Laikhin ni pa Laikhin, hong la roh*" (Come Lingthite, your mother a lizard, your father a lizard, come and take that).

On hearing this, Lingthite replied, "*Zuang rek ning fe rek ning, Irungnu lu rikil fit fat fat, irung ul ul.*" (I may come and go, but you shall be hacked and hooked to moan and howl). On hearing this, the coward bear took to his heels as fast as he could and the furious Lingthite quickly came and hacked Irungnu once more and left her crying bitterly.

A deer then pass by and asked Irungnu why she was crying. To which she gave similar reply as she had given to the bear. He tendered her same advice and promised protection but later he too ran away, which resulted in Irungnu being badly thrashed by Lingthite again. Several other denizens of the forest came that way and told her the same thing but none of them ventured to remain and protect her from the wrath of Lingthite.

At last, Fomchoiriaite (mantis) came along and he too offered her the same advice and protection. By this time, however, the helpless Irungnu's body was black and blue

from the numerous beatings she had received from the cruel Lingthite. "A great many animals also advice me likewise, but then took to their heels when I got beaten; I dare not call Lingthite and be beaten again" said Irungnu sorrowfully.

"Oh! Irungnu, I am the helper of the helpless and not at all like the other craven beasts. Rebuke him, I repeat as I shall surely protect you" sternly replied Fomchoiriaite.

Irungnu plucked up her courage in getting this assurance from Fomchoiriaite and called Lingthite in a bolder tone. '*Lingthite hong ro, ni nu Laikhin ni pa Laikhin, hong la roh*' or (Come Lingthite, your mother a lizard, your father a lizard, come and take that).

Lingthite became furious on hearing this and came quickly. But this time, Fomchoiriaite was hiding beneath the door. When Lingthite was about to enter the door, he met his match; fomchoiriaite caught hold on his penis as much as he can. Lingthite was now groaning in pain. "Fomchoiriaite please release me, please release me" pleaded Lingthite.

'*Fikkin fakkan ma tamak.*' (No way out from my strong hook fingers shall I free you. I would hold you more tightly and press you more). As a result, Lingthite died instantly.

Irungnu was now celebrating her freedom from the envy of Lingthite. She along with her fellow villagers then beheaded Lingthite and took out his skull, out of which they made Rosem (piper flute). When they played, unlike the other flutes it was so melodious that everybody in the jungle liked it. They thereby played without ceasing. Gradually, Irungnu, the owner of the flute began to play in her leisure without any disturbances from anyone. The music of the flute was so melodious that who ever heard that music would not like to be a mere.

One day some group of monkeys heard the music and come forward to the house of Irungnu. All of them liked it very much, so they could not contain to be only a listener but wanted to be the player of the flute. They therefore, planned to steal away from her at the earliest convenience. One day, while Irungnu was asleep in her hut, they came stealthily along with wax gum in their hands. They applied the wax gum upon the closed eyes of Irungnu and quietly stole away the

Rosem flute. In the meantime, a Tukoi (woodpecker) came to the house of Irungnu, who was also an admirer of the flute. "Irungnu, would you please let me play your Rosem flute?" said the woodpecker.

"Try to open my eyes with your strong beak and I will let you play" replied Irungnu. As soon as the woodpecker opened Irungnu's eyes, she searched for the Rosem flute here and there. But it was to be found nowhere since the monkeys had stolen away.

Meanwhile, the monkeys who were sitting upon the logs on the other side of the deserted jhum played the Rosem flute by repeating their monkey's tune, "*Zongkhangpa ek thlornon thlornon*."

Now the Vamim (quail) heard it, and pleaded them to let her play. "Master Monkey, would you please let me play the flute just for a while! requested the Vamim.

Some of them (monkeys) did not like to lend it to her, but the majority agreed. After they gave her, she played near them in the tune of quails' songs, "vik, vik, vek vek."

"Ah what a beautiful song" they said.

"I can do better in the hearth" replied the quail proudly.

"Then let her play in the hearth" said the monkeys.

Now the quail played the flute with the Quails tune of "vik, vik, vek vek." But while she was playing the flute she fetched the ashes powder of the hearth as much as she can in her wings. "Oh what a wonderful tune and dance" the monkeys applauded, "I can do better in the railing" the quail replied proudly.

"Do it, do it" they replied.

She then flew to the railing with a handful powder of ashes in her wings. As soon as they widely open their eyes and ears for the drama, she flapped her wings and the ashes fell into their eyes. They tried to stop her but could not see as their visions were disturbed. In that course of action, somebody pulled down her tail. Hence, to this day, the quail are devoid of long tail and weak in flying like other birds.

The quail somehow managed to reach a bamboo branch. On reaching there, she played again in celebration of her success. Again, this music reached the beaver's ear that was

in his burrow under the bamboo plant. The meek beaver wasted no time to possess the Rosem flute for himself. He began to gnaw at the roots of the bamboo. As soon as the bamboo fell, the shocked quail let go off the Rosem flute and it fell to the ground. Now the beaver took the Rosem flute and walked away triumphantly into his burrows. There he began playing his flute to mark the grand success.

One day when an old villager and his two sons were passing by, they heard the songs of the beaver. On hearing the song, they unearthed the hole and burrows of the beaver, but they could not find the beaver since the beaver had many colonies and underground holes. Finally, they tried to kill him by inserting a stem of flower plant called *Zamzoi* into his burrows. As the gel of the *Zamzoi* plant was red in colour they assumed it to be the blood of the beaver. They said themselves, "Ah, so much blood has oozed out, let it die in his burrow". Saying this, they left for their home. On the other hand, the beaver was not hurt at all but was in good health. He continued playing his music day and night and in his leisure. Thus, the music of the Rosem flute can still be heard in the home of the meek root beaver up to this day since no animals of the land could disturb his underground habited.

Moral : Jealously, covetousness, greedy, envy ends nowhere but graves.

7. SAKHI LUNG DARTENU. (Maid from the shoulder part of the deer)

Once upon a time, there lived an orphan young boy. One day he went to lay a deer-trap in the forest. To his luck, he caught a deer and distributed the meat to all his villagers except the shoulder part, which he left it for himself. As he preferred to have a smoked meat, he hung it one good height above the hearth. Every morning he went out to his jhum field and return late in the evening. One day coming back from the field, he saw to his surprise that all his meal was prepared. He was very happy. He returned home each evening to find everything done for him in spick and span. But he wondered as to who his kind helper was.

One day the orphan young boy pretended as if he was

going to his field and hid himself outside his house. After sometime, he peeped inside his house from the hole on the walls. To his surprise, he heard the sound of Kret, Kret, Kret, and when he focused it carefully, he saw that the particular smoked meat, which he had hanged above the hearth, was slowly opening by itself and it finally turned into a beautiful young girl. Then she lighted the fire, cooks the dinner, did the household chores and kept everything neat and clean. The young boy was very surprised and could not believe his eyes and he let her complete the task deciding to catch her the next time she appeared.

The next day, the young boy again hid himself with the intention of catching the unusual girl when she appears before him. As per his plan, when the smoked meat turned into a maid and was about to prepare the meal, he finally caught her. Upon being caught the girl pleaded, 'Please set me free and kindly do not tell anyone about me for I am doing all this because of my love for you.' The young boy and the girl soon got wedded and were blessed with beautiful children. In the meantime, the villagers got curious as to know who really the beautiful wife of the orphan boy was.

One day, his friends hit a plan by inviting him in a sumptuous beer party particularly for himself with the intention of knowing about his beautiful wife. After consuming many generous cups, he became intoxicated and by now, it was already evening. In the meantime his wife sent his children to call him as it was already time for evening meal. 'Father, father, come soon, said our mother' said their little children. To this, their father replied, '*ki zu khon alar lak*' (wait, wait, My cup is yet to be over). After this, the children went up to their house and narrated to their mother that their father's cup was yet to be over. However, the cup of their father was far from finishing, he continued more and more and was still in his party. The children then again called for their father to return back home, but got the same reply. After calling him many times, their father in frustration, replied, 'Your mother, shoulder of the deer (Sakhilungdartenu), why is she calling me repeatedly? Hearing this, the children went and told their mother what their father had said.

Thus, the villagers came to know the truth about the orphans' wife. This made Sakhilungdartenu very angry. 'I told you so, you would not keep your promise' said Sakhilungdartenu heatedly to her husband and abandoned her family and left for the woods. From that day on, the eldest daughter of the orphan would carry her youngest sister to the woods to meet their mother since the baby was still at breastfeeding. She would call out to their mother saying, '*ki nu, ki nu, Sakhite nu, ram changa bei sai noia bei ni om e*'—(Mother, mother, shoulder of the deer, where are thee in woods?) On hearing this, their mother replied, 'pong hok' and would nurse her infant. From then on she nurse her infant every day.

One day, the villagers decided to kill Sakhilungdartenu. The children however, learnt that the conspiracy of their mother. Ultimately, they went to their mother and narrated to her what their villagers had planned. Their helpless mother advice them saying,—"If they happened to kill, ask for a piece of my meat which you have to throw secretly in a deserted place in a forest. On that very spot, you will notice that I shall grow up as Pang tree (specie of giant tree— Simali tree). Saying so, she bid farewell to her children.

In due course, the villagers went to the jungle to hunt the unfortunate deer and thereby killed her. While they began to distribute the meat to each household, the poor children had also fervently begged for their share. They then gave them a tiny piece for their share. Remembering their mother advice, they went secretly to the jungle and threw that piece of meat to the valley. As a result, that very piece of meat began to grow into a huge tree. When the children went near the tree, they found out a protrusion on the bark of the tree somewhat resembling their mother breast which led them realize that it was their mother. The children thereby let their infant baby to suck that object of the tree and thus the tree begun to nurse her infant.

As days passed by, the villagers had learnt the relationship of the tree and her children. The villagers again decided to cut down the tree. Her children went immediately to their mother tree and reported the matter. The mother had

advised them once more. "When they fall me, take a slice of my cut portion and throw away to the river and observe it for a while" said the tree to their children and bid them farewell.

In a few days, the villagers went down to cut down the tree. After the tree was fallen down, as per their mother advice, the children, without the knowledge of the villagers took one piece of the tree and threw it into the river. On observing it for a while, the small wooden piece turn into *Ngalengte* (small species of fish) and began to wade swiftly here and there in the water. In the meantime, out of thirst and longing for her mother, the infant baby began to cry sullenly. The children once again began to call their mother by reciting, - "*ki nu ki nu Ngalengtenu tui dop tiang bei tui der tiang bei ni om e?*" (My mother Ngalengtenu, are you in the upper or lower part of the stream please do come). On hearing the call of their children the mother fish used to come to her children and nurse her infant.

Few days passed, the villagers again heard the news and decided to kill Ngalengtenu by poisoning the water with the toxic herb root called *lru*. After the children heard about the conspiracy of their mother, they then went to their mother and reported the decision of the villagers.

"Now go to our hut and fetch our two spoons, the food spoon and the curry spoon" asked their mother urgently. Immediately they bring down the two said spoons. In the process of handing these items to their mother, she pulled all her children to the water with those spoons for a better cause. As a result, the Ngalengtenu and her children began to swim up and down the stream happily ever after.

Moral : A promise breaker breaks the foundation of his life.

8. TEKA BEREISUANTE (Son of the lightning)

Long long ago, there was a man who had seven sons and daughter. One day, the seven sons and their father went to the jungle to fell down the trees and bamboos for their paddy field. As they have come across a gaint creeper called *poirang* they have decided to have a competition as to who could cut down that giant creeper in one blow; and resolute

that whoever failed to do so would have to lay himself down on the path of the tiger. The day before the event, all the brothers sharpened their dao for the cutting event. As their father also wanted to participate in the event, he requested his sons to sharpen his dao too. However, as the treacherous sons did not want their father to win the event, they cheated him by sharpening only the sides of his dao and not the edges. When the day for the competition arrived, all the sons could cut down the giant creeper with a single stroke. However, their father failed to do so. Hence, they laid him on the track of the tiger. The tiger soon came on that path and seeing the old man, asked him as to what he was doing there. The old man then told the tiger about his fate. The tiger spared no time in killing and devouring the old man.

After some days, the sons now realized their mistake. They now decided to go for Paphunbala Sangal Daithiam (Revenge for the death of the Father). They then set out for their task and while on their way, they came across a man who was carrying a bundle of bamboo who asked them as to where they were heading. The seven brothers replied that they were on their way to Paphunbala Sangal Daithiam (Revenge for the death of the Father). The man told them if they could cut the bundle of bamboo with a single stroke and join them back together only then would they be successful in taking the revenge. The seven brothers tried their best but were unsuccessful. The man gave the seven brothers a sarcastic remark- 'You will do much', to which they misunderstood it as a compliment. As they proceeded further, they met another man who was carrying a load of sesame seeds. He asked them the same question to which they gave the same reply. He then told them that in order to be successful in their venture, they should be able to pick every single sesame seeds that they will pour out on the ground and collect them as exactly as they were. The brothers tried this new task but ultimately were not successful. To this, the man let them off wit the same ironic remark- 'You will do much.' From there they went ahead and met a widow in a certain village. The old widow asked them as to where their destination was, to which they gave the same reply they had given to the

previous two men. In order to complete their task the old lady ask the seven brothers to shoot down her giant pig with a single shot. The brothers again failed, as they could not even pierce the skin of the pig with their arrows. Hence, the old woman gave them the same remark— 'You will do much'. They now reached the house of the tiger who later served them a meal including the meat of their father. As the brothers felt that something was not right, hence they did not consume the meat they were offered, but instead secretly dropped it below the bamboo floor. This meat in the meantime was being eaten by a cock and since he disliked it he crowed instantly, "Thou guest shall perish but success shall come to the host." Later when they were all asleep, the tiger asked the mice to bite and cut the great part of all the strings and bows of the brothers which they did so.

The next day, in the morning the seven brothers challenged the tiger to have a competition in a particular location. When they set off for the location, the tiger carried with him a basket and the brothers asked him what it had meant for, to which he replied that it was meant to carry back food for the pig. As they reached a place where a giant *Zafang* tree (species of a giant tree) stood, the brothers all hurriedly climbed the tree. They all took positions and began shooting the tiger with their arrows but since the strings of their bows were not working they were unable to do so. The tiger said, 'Is that all you can do?' He now attacked and killed them instantly and carried their dead bodies in his basket to his house for food.

The seven brothers were now all dead and the lone sister was left to carry on their legacy. One day there was a bizarre incident fell on their sister, while she was taking a bath in the stream she surprisingly became pregnant by a rapid lightning struck from the above. And whenever she left for her jhum her child from her womb would advice her to take a pot of water whenever it rained heavily in the morning. But the lady said, 'I don't believe a child's advice from the womb's. Since she never heeded the advice, she always had to go thirsty at noon. Whenever it was bright and sunny in the morning the child from the womb would advice her mother

to carry a *soldang* (traditional umbrella) along with her, but in the same way, the lady always dismissed those advice and had to return back from the jhum drenched in the rain. On the day the child was born, the child fell through the floor and pierced the ground, since he was son of the lightning. The child was later named as Tekabereisuante (son of lightning) who was a fine and healthy boy. The newborn child then asked her mother a hoe for his toy. He now desired to have a top to play with like his other fellow friends. His mother told him to go and get himself one from under the house of his uncles. He went and got the special one, which was made of metal, and this let to jealousy by his friends. As a result, no one wanted to play with him. He soon desired a bow, an arrow, and his mother again asked him to get it from the same place. He went to look for it and to his surprise; he found a special bow and an arrow which was made of metal.

Tekabereisuante now decided to avenge his uncle's death after learning of their fate from his mother. He constantly asked his mother to let him go to Puphunbala, (take revenge for his uncle) but his mother refused saying that he was still too young. Due to his constant request, his mother had to ultimately relent and let him go on his quest.

He then set out his task and while on his way, like his uncles he came across a man who was carrying a bundle of bamboo who asked him as to where he was heading. Tekabereisuante replied that he was on his way to Puphunbala Sangal Daithian (avenge his uncle's death by killing the tiger). The man told him if he could cut the bundle of bamboo with a single stroke and join them back together only then would he be successful in taking the revenge. Tekabereisuante tried his best and was successful. The man told him— 'You will surely succeed.'

As he proceeded further, he met a farmer who was carrying a load of sesame seeds. He asked him the same question to which he gave the same reply. He then told Tekabereisuante that in order to be successful in his venture, he should be able to pick every single sesame seeds that he will pour out on the ground and collect them as exactly as they were. Tekabereisuante tried this new task by asking every

birds present in the woods to help him collect the sesame seeds. All the birds did their best but a single piece of seed was missing. The farmer questioned Tekabereisuante as to why the seeds were not complete and Tekabereisuante summoned all the birds for an explanation and finally found out that a *Va-riit*- (a tiny paddy bird) had swallowed a single piece of the sesame seed. In order to retrieve back the seed, Tekabereisuante forcefully opened the *Va-riit's* esophagus and got back the single piece of the sesame seed. This is the reason that till date, the *Va-riit* still has its esophagus on its back while the other birds have it on the front. As his task was already complete, the man then told Tekabereisuante, 'You will surely succeed.'

From there he went ahead and met a widow in a certain village. The old widow asked him as to where his destination was, to which he gave the same reply he had given to the previous two men. In order to complete his task, the old widow asked him to shoot down her giant pig with a single shot. Tekabereisuante was more than successful in his task, as his spear pierced the seven layers of the earth while striking the giant pig. Hence the old woman gave him the same remark- 'You will surely succeed' and gave him a jar of the oil-fats and a handful of dry-fried meat of the same pig. She advised Tekabereisuante to smear the oil on the trunk of the trees after climbing up, on which he was supposed to have the event of the competition with the tiger. She also advised him not to take the meat offered by the tiger but instead to take the fats of the pig as to make an impression as if he was having the meat offered by the tiger. Keeping in mind those advices, he then proceeded further and now reached the house of the tiger who later served him a meal including the meat of his uncles. As he felt that something was not right, Tekabereisuante did not consume the meat instead secretly offered his puppy. In the meantime a cock crowed instantly, "Thou host shall perish but success shall come to the guest." one hearing this, the tiger went and forced down a piece of stale rice onto the cocks' throat thus stopping the cock from crowing. Later as he was asleep, the tiger asked the mice to bite and cut the string of the bow of Tekabereisuante, which

they tried but could not do so and they uttered in pain, '*Sarthai, Sarthai*', since, it was made of metal.

The next morning, Tekabereisuante and the tiger proceeded towards the competition ground. The tiger again carried a basket with him saying to Tekabereisuante that it was meant to collect food for the pigs. When they reached their destination at a place where a giant *Zafang* tree grew, Tekabereisuante wasted no time in climbing up the tree. As soon as he reached upon the branches, he peeled out the barks by tearing from it and began applying the oil. As the oil flowed down the tree trunk, it became very slippery. Tekabereisuante then provoked the tiger to make his move first. The tiger made many attempts but was unable to climb the tree and became very exhausted. Tekabereisuante then asked the tiger if that was all he could do. The tiger thinking that the strings of his bow were already spoilt by the mice replied, 'Yes, definitely.' Ultimately, Tekabereisuante struck his bow that pierced through the tiger instantly killing him.

In order to confirm the tiger was dead, he summoned the *thoitolnongpa* (a type of fly) to enter the tiger's ear and come out from the other. Learning that the tiger was positively dead, he chopped off the tiger's head to show it to his mother as a gesture that his mission (*Puphunbala*) was completed. When Tekabereisuante reached his house he called, 'Mother, mother, I am home with a trophy. Please open the door.' However, his mother thinking him to be one of the youth of the village mocking him again as usual refused to open the door. As he was not allowed to enter despite his many request, he hung the tiger's head on the courtyard of the house, saying that even when the lightning strikes, she should not realize her mistake and touch the whisker on the tigers' head hanged as a trophy outside. But despite his warning, when it was raining and there was lightning, his mother in her emotion forgot the advice given by her son and she went and touched the whisker on the trophy and she died at once. As his name signifies, Tekabereisuante, which means Son of the lightning, returned to his abode.

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Motto : A family who does not love his parents must surely ends in doom.

9. CHEMTATTEPU (The old dao sharpener)

Once upon a time, there was an old man named Chemtattepu who was sharpening his dao on the pebbles by the riverside. As he was busy sharpening his dao, a prawn came along and pricked his testicles. In his state of shock and anger, he chopped off the bend bamboo nearby.

This led a creeper fruit called *Kha-um* (look-alike pumpkin) that hang in its twigs of the bamboo fell down and strike the nest of the Varung (partridge) bird.

This led the partridge in his shock and anger run over the dome of Thaivang (giant ant) and destroyed it.

This led the angry ant to go and bite the Sangal's (wild boar) testicle that was sleeping nearby.

This led the wild boar in his rage knock down the Nachang (Wild banana tree) which was the home of Ibakte (a bat) who was peacefully sleeping on its leaf.

This led the blind bat so angry that he flew straight inside the giant Saipui (an elephant's) ear.

This led the elephant, who was in great pain and anger trample down the hut of Tarte (an old poor woman) residing by the side path of the village spring.

This led the helpless old woman in her frustration and anger to relieve herself a nature's call at the source of the village spring well.

Now the village people young and old alike who had come to collect water from the spring sensed the unpleasant smell and soon the whole village was troubled over the odour at their spring site. The village, which was once peaceful, has been now turned into a chaos and confusion. There was no tranquility, no harmony and no peace at all prevailing in the village. Now the village wore a wrecked look.

This led the angry village Chief to call upon his villagers for a general meeting. Everyone was angry and tried to figure as to who the culprit could be and were asking each other, 'who could it be, who could that be?' Meanwhile, some of the village girls said that it was none other than the old woman who was by the stream. The Chief then ordered to summon

the old woman to the meeting and upon arriving there, she had been asked as to whether she was the one who littered the stream; eventually the old woman confessed.

Now the villagers were shrieking and shouting, 'Fine the old woman. Fine the old woman'; they questioned her why she chose to litter at that particular place. She replied, 'it was not me but elephant, why has he destroyed my hut, I being a poor woman, why upon me?'

Now the villagers were shrieking and shouting, 'Fine fine the elephant'; they asked him why he had to destroy the old woman's hut. 'It was not me but the bat, why does he have to enter my ears?' replied the elephant.

Now the villagers summoned the bat who confessed his crime; the villagers started shrieking and shouting again, 'Fine the bat, fine the bat'; they asked him why he had entered the elephant's ear. 'It was not me but the wild boar, why did he destroy my home?' replied the bat.

Now the villagers summoned the wild boar who confessed his crime; the villagers began to shriek and shout again, 'Fine the wild boar, fine the wild boar'; they asked him why he knocked down the banana tree. 'It was not me but the ant, why did he bite my testicles?' replied the wild boar.

Now the villagers summoned the ant who confessed his crime; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the ant, fine the ant'; they asked him why he bit the testicles of the wild boar. 'It was not me but the partridge, why did he destroy my colony?' replied the ant.

Now the villagers summoned the partridge who confessed his crime; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the partridge, Fine the partridge'; they asked him why he destroyed the colony of the ant. 'It was not me but the creeper fruit, why did he destroy my nest?' replied the partridge.

Now the villagers summoned the creeper fruit who confessed his crime. The villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the creeper fruit, Fine the creeper fruit'; they asked him why he destroyed the partridge's nest. 'It was not me but the bamboo, why did he drop me down on the ground?' replied the creeper fruit.

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Now the village people young and old alike who had come to collect water from the spring sensed the unpleasant smell and soon the whole village was troubled over the odour at their spring site. The village, which was once peaceful, has been now turned into a chaos and confusion. There was no tranquility, no harmony and no peace at all prevailing in the village. Now the village wore a wrecked look.

This led the angry village Chief to call upon his villagers for a general meeting. Everyone was angry and tried to figure as to who the culprit could be and were asking each other, 'who could it be, who could that be?' Meanwhile, some of the village girls said that it was none other than the old woman who was by the stream. The Chief then ordered to summon

the old woman to the meeting and upon arriving there, she had been asked as to whether she was the one who littered the stream; eventually the old woman confessed.

Now the villagers were shrieking and shouting, 'Fine the old woman. Fine the old woman'; they questioned her why she chose to litter at that particular place. She replied, 'it was not me but elephant, why has he destroyed my hut, I being a poor woman, why upon me?'

Now the villagers were shrieking and shouting, 'Fine fine the elephant'; they asked him why he had to destroy the old woman's hut. 'It was not me but the bat, why does he have to enter my ears?' replied the elephant.

Now the villagers summoned the bat who confessed his crime; the villagers started shrieking and shouting again, 'Fine the bat, fine the bat'; they asked him why he had entered the elephant's ear. 'It was not me but the wild boar, why did he destroy my home?' replied the bat.

Now the villagers summoned the wild boar who confessed his crime; the villagers began to shriek and shout again, 'Fine the wild boar, fine the wild boar'; they asked him why he knocked down the banana tree. 'It was not me but the ant, why did he bite my testicles?' replied the wild boar.

Now the villagers summoned the ant who confessed his crime; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the ant, fine the ant'; they asked him why he bit the testicles of the wild boar. 'It was not me but the partridge, why did he destroy my colony?' replied the ant.

Now the villagers summoned the partridge who confessed his crime; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the partridge, Fine the partridge'; they asked him why he destroyed the colony of the ant. 'It was not me but the creeper fruit, why did he destroy my nest?' replied the partridge.

Now the villagers summoned the creeper fruit who confessed his crime. The villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the creeper fruit, Fine the creeper fruit'; they asked him why he destroyed the partridge's nest. 'It was not me but the bamboo, why did he drop me down on the ground?' replied the creeper fruit.

Now the villagers summoned the bamboo who confessed

his crime ; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the bamboo, Fine the bamboo'; they asked him why he let the creeper fruit fall to the ground. 'It was not me but Chemtattepu, why did he chop me off?' replied the bamboo.

Now the villagers summoned Chemtattepu who confessed his crime; the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine Chemtattepu, Fine Chemtattepu'; they asked him why he chopped off the bamboo, which did him no harm. 'It was not me but the prawn, why did he prick my testicle?' replied Chemtattepu.

Now the villagers summoned the prawn who confessed his crime' the villagers shrieked and shouted again, 'Fine the prawn, Fine the prawn'; they asked him why he pricked the testicle of Chemtattepu.

Now the poor prawn had nothing to say but just said hmm, hmm, hmm. The villagers said that now they have caught the real culprit. They wondered as to how they should kill him. As they decided to kill him by fire, the prawn on hearing this said cheerfully, 'Oh! How nice that would be, I would become red and attractive and your children would be fighting as to who would have me.' The villagers then thought that since he was not afraid of fire, may be he would be afraid of water. As they decided to kill him by water, the prawn on hearing this said weeping, 'Oh! Please do not do that, please do not do that'. The villagers now thought that he was scared of the water and decided to drown him in the water. As they placed the prawn in the water, he joyfully glided backward through the water and with great joy said, 'Ha, ha, ha, I am safe now', and bid them farewell with a big smile and entered his home between the rocks. On seeing this, the villagers were very enraged and decided to kill him by inserting a *Luangthir* grass (a tall grass having a strong stalk, mainly found in the riverside). When they inserted the stalk of the grass quite a number of times between the stones and rocks, the end of the stalk became brush-like and left them assuming that the prawn was dead. Due to his, till date, the prawn has a brush-shaped head.

Motto : *The root of unnecessary conflict, battle, communal clashes and war is nothing but an insignificant*

minor reason.

10. URNAIKA VA RUNG. (The two paddy guard sisters)

Once upon a time, there lived two sisters. They lived with their parents in happiness and contentment, until one day their mother died and their father took a new wife. Their stepmother mistreated them harshly, and usually sent them both to the jhum for guarding the crops from the birds and animals. Hence, they usually spent their days in the Jhum hut. One day, the rope attached to their *Songbok* (a scarecrow made from dry gourd or empty vessel placed on a tree which when pulled to and fro, makes a noise, which scares the birds away) snapped which disappointed the girls. They were sadly wondering as to what should be done and they eventually said, 'Whoever could join back together the cut-off ropes, if she is a woman, would become our friend and if he is a man, would be our husband'. These words were overheard by Khuangthurlite, (an elf of a palas tree, whose true form is a giant snake) who was on the other end of the jhum. He came happily towards them and asked as to what they were saying. The girls repeated, "Ah! Whoever could join back together the cut-off ropes, if she is a woman, would become our friend and if he is a man, would be our husband." Then and there off went Khuangthurlite and tied the rope accordingly. Eventually, Khuangthurlite and the elder sister fell in love with each other and made love to each other. Meanwhile, the younger sister was extremely scared and feared her sisters' lover because she could see Khuangthurlite in his true form, as a snake. She was so scared that she did not sleep in her hut anymore but passed the night usually on the roof and the mosquitoes bit her brutally which made her ears even tattered. In spite of all this, whenever her elder sister needed her boy friend, she would ask for him through her younger sister by saying, "*ki rala Khuangthurliva, ki un hongro nang ati*" (Khuangthurliva who is at the other end, my elder sister is calling you.) On hearing this, he would come saying, "*tai sam ki zel, zel lai lai, tuanlu ki khui, khui lai lai*" (I am combing my hair and dressing my head). Then he would reach and make love to his girlfriend. However, the younger sister silently bears

out such untold suffering for many days.

To her luck one day, some of the hunters visited their jhum and asked her the reason of her tattering ears. She then told them everything about the love affairs of her elder sister and Khuangthurlite. The hunters, on reaching their village, thereby inform the matter to their father. Immediately the next day their father went to the jhum and took his two daughters home. On reaching home, he asked the elder one to go to a day's journey village to fetch some rice for the next day. On the next morning, the elder sister went to the neighbouring village accordingly. Taking advantage of this situation, the younger daughter narrated about her sister's secret affair with Khuangthurlite to her father honestly. Her father was enraged and he sharpened his dao, which was said to be so sharp that even a fly sitting on it would be cut into two. He then made a plan with her and when they reached the jhum, she sang out her usual call to Khuangthurlite. On hearing this, he replied again, "*tai sam ki zel, zel lai lai, tuanlu ki khui, khui lai lai*" and came out immediately as usual. When he was just about to enter their hut, her father who was hiding behind the door chopped Khuangthurlite into three pieces. In his anger, he threw the middle portion near the front door, the head portion into the hearth and the last portion into a swamp.

On the next day, the elder sister who now returned back from her journey saw the blood stains by the door and said, 'Whose blood is this?' Her younger sister instantly replied that it was the blood of their father sucked by the leech. Then as she tried to prepare the *Chang-al* (alkaline water, a liquid prepared from ash used in cooking) and collected the ashes from the hearth, she noticed the head portion of her boy beloved. And when she went to collect the piggery fodder, she came upon the middle portion of her boy beloved. Now being sure of her husbands' death, she said 'I thought so, you have killed my husband'. In her grief, she would spend her time in the gallery of her hut. One fine day, unexpectedly she noticed an extremely beautiful flower and thought what a beautiful flower it was. She asked her little sister to go and pluck it for her and when she approached the flower, it slowly

withered away. But when the elder sister went near the flower it bloomed more and more. Then she realized that the flower was the image of her husband. In fact, that very place was the site in which a major part of her husband was thrown. Thereafter, she stood still and refused to leave the flower and she called upon her sister and gave her a *Sontarai ru* (Seed of the Sontarai palnt). She further advised her to keep the seed with her safely and when she would be no more, she should sow the seed at the mouth of the stream and say these words, "*risono risono. sunka zingkan rison roh.*" The elder sister now requested her little sister to call for the rain. She then called for the rain saying, "*Ruo zuongo, ruo zuongo sim a ruo zuongo mar a ruo zuongo, tuipui sen zel zul chungma mai rua kim thiag kim thiag kan.*" It soon started raining heavily. The younger sister then asked the elder one, 'How much has it rained till now?' Her elder sister replied, 'The rain has come up to my knees'. As the rain was continuously falling, the younger sister asked again, 'how much has it rained till now?' to which the elder one replied again. 'The rain has come up to my waist.' Soon after, the younger sister asked again, 'How much has it rained till now?' her elder sister replied, 'The rain has come up to my chest.' After some while she asked once more, 'How much has it rained till now?' But, alas! There was no more reply as the water already devoured her.

Now, the little sister remembered her elder sisters' advice and sowed the *Sontarai ru* at the mouth of the stream by uttering the words, "*risono risono. sunka zingkan rison roh.*" All of a sudden, the plant grew into a giant tree and she found herself sitting on the branch of the tree. Now the roots of this very tree blocked the flow of the stream which made the kings' water source dry. The king's servants told the king that the well has dried up and the king immediately ordered them to find out the source of the stream. As per the king's order, the servants surveyed the source of the stream and found that the roots of a giant tree have blocked the flow of the stream. They went back to the king to report whatever they had seen and the king on hearing their account ordered

them to fell down the giant tree.

Once again, the servants set off on their mission to cut down the giant tree. When they began to cut the tree for sometime, the young lady whom they were not aware of her sitting on the branch of the tree applied her magical power by spitting on the tree trunk which made the cut marks rejoin again. They went back to the king again and reported the matter to him. He ordered them to go back once again and investigate each and every part of the tree properly. The servants set forth towards the tree again and when they carefully looked above the branches, to their surprise, they saw a beautiful young lady sitting on it. They also saw that she was spinning with her legs, weaving with her hands, playing a flute with her nose and singing with her mouth. They then returned to the king and reported whatever they had seen to him. He ordered them to go and ask the girl to climb down from the tree, as they would cut it down. When the servants went to the lady and told her to climb down the tree, as they would cut it down, the young lady replied, "If I am really to come down you must spread down a bronze plate covering the whole road up to the king's palace. The bronze plate should also be covered with a seven layered cloth." On hearing this, the servants went back to the king and told him whatever they had heard and seen. Now the king ordered his servants to provide the young lady with whatever she had asked for. Now the young lady climbed down the tree and headed straight to the king's palace and the king welcomed her as his queen. In no time, the queen became pregnant, the time for her delivery arrived, but the king was on a journey.

When the queen was complaining that her stomach was started paining and the time of delivery is near, the servants refused to let her delivery in the palace and said, "*Reng ikun, Rai ikun*" (its Kings' chamber, its Queen's chamber). The queen requested them again to let her deliver her baby at least on the verandah and they again said, "*Reng tual, Rai tual*" (Its Kings verandah, it Queens' verandah). This was how they treated her, as they hated her very much. Finally, they told her that in their kingdom, one can deliver a child only at a place called *Kumithider* (riverside) and they

took her to that very place. On reaching that particular place, she was blindfolded and she gave birth to healthy and good-looking twin boys. However, unknown to the queen, the twins were killed by the servants and were thrown into the river. After they removed the blindfold from the queen's eyes, they showed her two stones, told her that it was her children and proceeded towards the palace with her. When the king returned from his journey, the servants took the two stones and said to the king, 'These are the sons of your queen'. The king got furious and asked the servants to make her blind and make her handicapped. So the helpless queen was made handicapped by the servants.

In the meantime, the twin boys who were thrown in the river were rejoined back to life by the river deity who was none other than the lady's elder sister who was previously devoured by the water. After some years, the twin boys grew up and merrily played about to and fro in the river by singing, "*Phai-O-bom bom, Tana sarengte laia tanbang kilriding*" (merrily merrily, little kings were cut into pieces). Due to their playful activities now and then, the water of the river got spoiled and polluted. Then the king's servants again reported the matter to the king who told them to bring the two young boys to him.

On the other hand, the river deity had already learned what was about to happen and advised the twins that when they go to the kings' palace, they should not eat and drink anything unless served by the disabled woman. She also advised them that they should tell the king and the queen about their origin from Sontarai seed as well as how the servants cheated the queen and how they were once killed and thrown into the river and was being revived by the river deity. The servants soon brought the two young boys to the palace. As soon as they reached the palace, the children told the king the story of their mother and their sufferings in the hands of the servants. On hearing the children's account of their fate, and how the servants dared to cheat their own king, he became furious and killed all his servants at once. The royal physician later on cured the queen and she returned to her normal self. From that day onwards, the twins as well as the king and queen lived happily ever after. Hence, from

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the two sisters, one became the Queen of the earth and the other became the Queen of the water.

11. ARSI CHANG NEI (The stars that have wings)

Once upon a time, there lived seven beautiful maids in the sky. Whenever the moon hid her face to her children, the seven beautiful maids (seven stars) who lived in cluster exposed all their beauty to the fellow beings by shining like diamonds in the sky. Sometimes, these seven maids would come down to this earth for taking bath in the calm river where no one had ever spoiled the water and its surroundings. They would come down there and would remove their wings and put them aside. After taking bath, they would put on their wings and fly away. As the river was located in the middle of the virgin forest, hence no one, except nature was witnessed them. The flowing water was fresh and calm so do the golden sands and its majestic pebbles. At the same time, seven brothers lived on this earth.

One fine day, the seven beautiful maids of the sky as their usual schedule, descended down by the river side. In the meantime, the youngest of the seven brothers who was coming for hunting accidentally saw them clearly. He was awestricken when he saw such beautiful young girls at the riverside in the deep forest. He hid himself and observed them carefully one by one. As they were so beautiful he wished he would marry one of the most beautiful girls among them. When the girls were removing their apparel, he noticed the apparel of the most beautiful one. He finally came closer and took away the apparel of the most beautiful one, who was also the youngest of the seven maids. He did himself quietly under the bush and watched them play in the water. After taking bath, they came out from the water, put on their attires one by one and returned to their original abode, i.e., sky. However, the youngest who was the most beautiful could not find her apparel (wings). She wept bitterly. At this moment, the young man who was hiding nearby the bush came out and asked the reason for her crying. "I have lost my apparel, how can I join my friends again? See, they are crying over me" replied the young girl, by saying this, tears rolled down on her face.

"Young girl, I love you, so I keep here your apparel. But unless you marry me I will not give you," said the young man.

"You are from the earth and I am from the sky, how can I marry you? Please give me my apparel, all my friends are crying over me" Replied the young girl.

However, the young man did not change his mind and refused to give her apparel. "If you would not marry me, I would cry over you more than the cires of your friends, I do love you more than they love you," said the young man once again to her.

Now, there was nothing else the young girl could do, so, she had to marry the young man and stay with him. Meanwhile, out of the seven maids as only six of them arrived their original abode the six could then again show their shining glory.

The young girl of the sky and the young man of the earth were later blessed with many children. But one day, as she was grinding *an-ibai* (the rice powder for the substance of the curry) there was a petty fight with her husband. When her husband left for the jhum, she quietly opened the rel (heirloom basket) and took out her apparel (wings), which her husband kept at the bottom of the basket. She said to her children, "Children, today I am going to my original abode in the sky, but when I go up do not look at me at all." So saying, she wore her apparel and flew away. In the meantime, her children said, "Oh, look up at our mother!" On hearing this, the mother threw a handful of *an ibai* or rice powder on their eyes so that they could no longer see her. Due to this, every human being has a white part in the eyes. In due course, she arrived her abode and joined back her six friends, but as she did not arrive in time and had children with man of the earth, so her light was weaker than the other stars. Henceforth, a cluster of the seven stars appear as six as one of them is much weaker and less shiner than the other. That is why the seven stars is now known as *Si-ruk* meaning six stars.

12. NUNVANGI NEH RANGSUNA.

Long long ago in a certain village, there lived a young beautiful girl from a rich family called Nunvangi and a young boy called Rangsuna, who was from a poor family. In spite of

the two sisters, one became the Queen of the earth and the other became the Queen of the water.

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their family background, they were very much in love with each other from their childhood. They were pondering over their future lives when they would come to marriageable age. However, the father of Nunvangi who was antagonistic by nature, one day made an announcement as to whoever could submit to him seven *sial* (mithuns) in his court yard would marry off his daughter. Being a poor lad, Rangsuna who was unable to do so kept mum. In the meantime, a rich young man by name Leikhengkherekte (squirrel looking ugly man) heard the news, he ultimately drove his *utok* (his mithun were also ugly as frogs) to the courtyard of Nunvangi's father. When Nunvangi's father saw the seven animals, he married off his daughter away to Leikhengkherekte. This left Rangsuna broken hearted and migrated to a far away country for good, where he could forget his lover and live in peace.

Days, months and years passed until one day, a great famine broke out in the country where Nunvangi resided. As they were on the verge of starvation, young and old alike went out now and then to different villages in search of foodstuff. Nunvangi, although from a well to do family too could not escape from the wrath of this famine. In the meantime, she had learnt that Rangsuna was blessed with bumper crops and had been one of the richest men in his country. Therefore, she had no other option but to proceed to the country of Rangsuna in search of foodstuff for her family. When she reached the village, she first happened to meet the wife of Rangsuna and enquired where Rangsuna's house was. The woman replied that she did not know who Rangsuna was. On hearing this, she again proceeded to the next house and asked the same question. But everybody denied that they knew Rangsuna. After enquiring the whole village, none of them told her that the house of her ex lover Rangsuna.

She was now exhausted and the sun was setting down beyond the horizon. So, she took rest for sometime in the house of a blacksmith of the village, which was in the corner most part of the village. In the meantime, Rangsuna, who was returning from the jhum, had also arrived home. After his wife informed him about the stranger woman who enquired about him, he asked his maids to bring her at once. When they

brought her, he was surprised to see his ex lover Nunvangi in such a state after many years. Rangsuna was very happy to meet his ex lover, but at the same time he felt sorry for her fate. As a mark of honour and welcome, he prepared a great feast for his villagers for seven days and seven nights. After the feast was over, their dancing arena became muddy.

On the next morning, Rangsuna let Nunvangi carry the paddy as much as she could, and presented her a brass plate, a hoe and a dao, when Nunvangi was ready for her village. Rangsuna who was about to see her off for a few distance, took a clay pot and breaking it down into pieces carried them with him. They then proceeded towards the village of Nunvangi. On reaching a place where the path was rough and uneven. Rangsuna threw away the pieces of clay pot and chanted a charm. As a result, the paths turned into clear ways and bid her farewell. He sang the following farewell song for his beloved—

*Ki ram ki ram Leituk zol ram
Nunvangi tha sailungnemnu,
Lei ton ngan no rei;
Nunvangi tha sailungnemnu,
Lua loi lungkhamnu, fe ta roh dua.*

(My land Leituk zol ram
Where come forth my diamond Nunvangi
Let no one hurt her,
My Nunvangi as beautiful as diamond,
Farewell! Whom I love, yet wed not)

After chanting the charm, the rough pathway turned into smooth and broad way and Rangsuna was about to return back home. But as Nunvangi earnestly requested him for a few more walk, he again followed her. After covering many miles now, Rangsuna said, "Now you may go." But Nunvangi replied, "A few more walk." This continued and they found it difficult to depart from each other.

After attempting to depart many times on the way, they could not do so. They could only revive their bygone days and found it difficult to wipe away their memories. The more they walk, the more they found difficult to depart. As they were in that state of dilemma, a pair of hornbill was sitting

pleasantly on a tree just above them. When Nunvangi noticed the birds, she asked Rangsunā to see how free and lovely they were. As soon as Rangsunā saw the bird, he turned into a bee, flew away, and Nugvangi could not find him. Now, sad and lonely, Nunvangi proceeded to her village. Finally, she arrived home late in the evening. At first, she laid down her load of paddy at the front platform and asked her husband Leikhengkherekte to open the door. But, her husband did not do so. After many request, he opened the door and checked the load basket. On seeing the gift items, he angrily threw the brass plate at Nunvangi which made her death instantly. In no time, she also turned into a bee and flew away to meet her lover Rangsunā.

Moral : True love never dies.

13. TUISANG LIAN THURCHI (The Great Flood)

Once upon a time, in a certain country, an old widow had a little daughter. The little girl was called Naitaii, hence her mother was known as Naitaiinu, meaning the mother of Naitaii. One day it so happened that the little girl Naitaii and her mother went to the paddy field. While her mother was working, the little girl Naitaii was so thirsty that she began to cry bitterly since that very day it was exceedingly hot and scorching. In spite of her bitter crying, her mother could not provide her a single drop of water as the water spring had already dried. So, the little daughter kept on crying and weeping continuously. On seeing such fate befalling on her dear child, poor Naitaiinu now could not remain silent. So, she cried out loudly to the sky by chanting. "*Rua zuango, e sima mara rua zuango.*" (rain, rain come at once from the south; rain, rain come at once from the north) After chanting for sometime, it began to rain heavily, dry lands became flooded and the full spate of water was here and there.

The mother thereafter, began to collect the water and drank it to her hearts content, but she had forgotten her little child who was now quiet, weak and feeble due to much thirst. So, the rain could not stop but continually poured down. In no time, the land became awampy and there was water everywhere

and at every place. By this time the ranges, hills and mountains became flooded, hence human beings and every description of wild and domestic animals ran for their life helter skelter in search of higher ranges. Finally, they all ended up gathering on the range of *Inzusip*, which had been the highest and largest mountain in that country. Since the little girl was not yet offered the water, it continued to rain. Now all the ranges and hills of that country were under the water except the highest range *Inzusip*, where they had taken refuge. In the meantime, one of the villagers incidentally offered a few sip of water to the little girl. As soon as she drank it, the rain came to a halt, the floodwater decline, and the more he offered the more it decreased. On learning this, they said, "Ah! what a strange thing, only by offering a sip of water can decrease the torrential flood; if she would be thrown in the water then the land would be back to normal again." By summing up this idea, the villagers then ultimately threw the little daughter in the great flood. As soon as they threw the girl, the rain and floodwater stopped.

Meanwhile, Naitaiinu began to cry for her little daughter Naitaii. She was searching for her little one here and there in the remaining watery stream by saying, "*Nangma limnga leng changin la; Ni pa tlang mercha chang ata; keima alchi chang kita; Khenglai zol a lar tong rei.*" (Turn thou into a fish; your father a chilies, and myself a salt; thus shall we meet in the place). Thus saying, Naitaiinu wept profoundly and search for her little daughter Naitaii here and there unceasingly. By way of doing this, she died a tearful death. For this reason, the place where her body was lying became a salt-water spring. In addition, the song which was for the reminiscence of this event was called "Tuisang lian la" (song of the great flood) which was believed to have been first sung by Sinlunga, the Biate legendary hero.

The Song :

Tuisanglian la (song of the great flood)

*Hi ro o kumpui van ten a,
Sangtui zuang lian mual adil,
Sinlunga'ns choi khua rel lai a;*

*Sang an rual a lungdai,
Di nu oi di nu lenkol dong hai kan,
Ei di le lo ar chai no rei,
Sang an rual a lungdai.*

*A tui zuang lian zuang lian a,
Sangtui zuang lian zuang lian a;
Thangvan zuarnu tui sang ang;
Son ang a zuang sen e,
Khi sak tianga a sumpui zuar,
Khu thlang tianga barei zuar;
A laia soto lan dai rei,
Sang an rual a lungdai.*

14. LERSIA, ZINGTHLOIA neh LUAPUIA (The three Chiefs)

In ancient days, when the Biates were settling in the southeast hills of Mizoram, there lived among them three Chiefs namely— Lersia, Zingthloia and Luapuia. They were famous for their prosperity. Their wealth was the talk of the country. They had great number of necklaces, brass gongs, mithuns-gayals and storehouses of rice paddy. Hence, the people of the three respective regions boasted of their respective chiefs as to be the riches of the three. However, in the heart of hearts every citizen of that country had a great desire to know the wealthiest of the three.

As usual, every morning the three chiefs performed *fa-arthat* rites (Ritual connected to rice paddy). The invoking of the sacrificial rice was measured with the mithun horn called *Serki*. When performing the rite, the measurement cup became full during the moonless night. But during the moonlight month the cup became empty. Due to this outstanding experienced, the villagers one and all begun to perform a *fa-arthat* rites only during the moonless month. Although their ritual performance did not provided the positive result, i.e. contest, however, the people came to know proved the positive result, i.e. contest however, the people came to know that the best times of *fa-arthat* rituals has been moonless week.

In course of time, one day Lersia collected all his amber

necklaces and put it in a basket and showed the two chiefs Zingthloia and Luapuia by singing a self praise song—

"Sim a an chon Lersia" (In the southern Lersia is the wealthiest). After he sang a line, he could not sing further since he did not know what to say more. This took a challenge to Zingthloia. He showed them to basketful of amber necklaces to the two chiefs and sang as follows—

"Mar a an chon Zingthloia" (on the northern Zingthloia is the riches). After singing a single line, he too did not know how to continue his verse and stuck in ending. Finally, Luapuia who demonstrate nothing replied in the following verse—

*Sima and chon Lersia,
Mara an chon Zingthloi,
A khua laia Luapuia an chon,
Luapuia manin ne zalung in chon chung si-ar zaka.*

*Pem khuā ki zuke e zaia' m sen mei,
Ni sulnung som fang tha dum miaia,
Raikhua ki zuk thlafam rilipui van sang.*

*Luapuia manin thing len buang va phun
Thlanga pual rang rualin
Alai ona vakul in thlanga
Ami'n izum sertan bal.*

Lersia, the wealthiest in the south,
And in the north Zingthloia
In between Luapuia the wealthiest;
Luapuia's gongs are as much as stars in the sky
The reminiscence of your track is like that of young paddy

Yet the village are that of dead mans' village,
Luapuia even plant a banyan tree,
Flock of Hornbill of the northern
In that, middle branches rows of kings crow
Feed on its sweet figs.

(Hornbill signifies the beauty and prosperous village life of Luapuia, which the villagers enjoyed under his wealth and guidance)

The song of Lersia spread far and wide in the whole

country. As a result, the humble Lersia became the famous one among them.

15. LIANDOIA HEI URNAI (Liandoia and his brother)

Once upon a time, there lived Liandoia and his brother in a large village where every household were well to do and proud except the two orphan brothers. They were extremely poor so much that they had neither food nor relative and friends. They lived a life of bare existence. However, they brotherly loved each other dearly and even shared a single millet seed.

One day, as their custom, all the adult men of the village went hunting and the brave and rich men led the hunt. The orphan brothers were the last to follow. On the way, the party crossed a big log and when the youngest brother was about to cross it, he noticed that log was slowly moving and recognized that it was actually a big python. Then the python was killed and the flesh was divided among the huntsmen. However, to their expectation, Liandoia and his brother were given the worst part of the serpent, namely the stomach. Furthermore, the brothers were not even allowed to wash and clean their share with the others in the stream but were made to go down the stream. At the same time, a small bird was also singing "Down stream, down stream." The brothers felt that even the wild bird was looking down on them and felt despised. The brothers sobbed out bitterly at this ill treatment, but to their shock when they cut opened the stomach of the serpent, they were overjoyed at finding precious ornaments like diamonds, amber necklaces and brass gongs. The two brothers who, a little time ago was very upset, now joyfully carried their treasures home.

To their luck, it so turned out that their newly acquired brass gong produces such beautiful notes, which impressed all the villagers. Some days passed by and the Chief of the village announced that his beautiful daughter would be married off to any young man who possessed a huge quantity of valuable ornaments and gongs. To the amazement of the villagers, Liandoia was the only young man who could meet with the demand of the chief. Thereby, the chief had to give

his beautiful daughter in marriage to Liandoia and the two brothers ultimately were joining the family of the Chief.

After sometime, a stranger happened to visit their village and finding no place to stay, decided to sleep outside. But Liandoia felt pity for the stranger and invited him to stay in their house. The traveler was very happy at their hospitality, revealed to them that he was Lersia the rich Chief of the far away village, and promised them to give a *Sepui* female mithun as a gift. When Liandoia and his brother reached the village, they consulted an old woman in selecting the best female mithun. The old woman advised them to select a lame one, which they did accordingly. To their amazement, the mithun, which they have taken home, produced a calf thrice a year and soon they became the owner of a great number of mithuns.

At this point of time, the Chief of the village again announced his second daughter would be given in marriage to any young man who could pay him the greatest number of mithuns. The younger brother again turned out to be the young man in the village who could fulfill the demand and thereby married the Chief's daughter. The two orphan brothers who loved each other dearly and kind hearted thereby became the most coveted members in the village.

16. SAITUAL RAM

Once upon a time, when the Biate were living in the Saitual region, one of the villagers used to appease the Rulpui (a giant snakepython) by offering domestic animals. But, after many years they made obeisance to the Rulpui not only by sacrificing animals but by sacrificing human being. The villagers then use to appease by offering a child annually in a rotation system from each family accordingly. The rotation system was known as "*Naichoirual*" meaning, contributing the child equally. At a particular time there was a widow with her only daughter. When the day comes closer for her turn to offer her daughter, she wept bitterly. In the meantime, a young Poi traveler, who heard the news of the old woman's cry, asked the reason of her cry and he was told that it was the day for offering her only child to the Rulpui (giant snake). This moved the heart of the young Poi traveler and promised

to save her child by killing the snake. He accordingly sharpened his dao and being provided with a goat, slew it and wrapped its flesh round his dagger and offered it to the Rulpui. In no time, the widow was saved from offering her daughter and lived happily ever after. At the same time, the villagers triumphantly celebrated the freedom which they had attained. This was the end of the worshipping and appeasing of the Rulpui by the villagers, so said the legends. This took place in the present *Rulchawm khua* in the Saitual region of Champhai Road. Interestingly, in a particular hill of Rulchawm village, there still exists a hole, which is regarded as the hole of the legendary python.

Legends has its saying that while they were in the region, the descendants of Kuangpui lived in that land. The name of the village administration was known as "Tlaikuangdan", meaning people's consensus or law of equality in which every citizen live with peace, prosperous and contentment.

After many moons had pass and gone, the descendants of Kuangpui shifted their village on the spur of the distant range. The range was called Biate tlang meaning range or hill of the Biate. They were more prosperous and flourishing ever than before in their new village. And thus they lived a happy life in that village for many generations. The reminiscence of the region or village is sung in the following way :

Chiteraka rel ka pel a,
In chon sum sua rel ka pel a;
Ei rual hei neh ei rual hei neh;
Tui kang kin koia, hui i, kui i, Saitual ram.

Free translation :

In my tender age, I carry a basket,
A basket of my ancestors' heirloom;
Along with my friends and all,
Like a twisted stream, marching on, oh! Saitual ram.

The above song is one of the oldest cradle or lullabies of the Biates. However, it is generally considered as the original farewell song of their ancestors abode called Saitualram.

17. NUAIMI NEH CHUNGMI RISUAL (The war between land animals and birds)

In the days of yore when animals were gifted with the power of speech, *Rimu* (an eagle), one day caught the *Satel* (tortoise). Due to this reason, there was a heated argument between the animals that live on the land and birds (all that that could fly). Then and there the birds held an emergency meeting on a huge banyan tree, whereas the land animals met under the shade of that same tree. After both the groups had long discussion from each side, they took resolutions to have war between the Birds and the Animals. The leader of the birds was *Rimu* (eagle) while the land animals selected Rulpui (Python) as their leader.

As soon as both the parties had decided to fight, the python stood up and stroke the twigs of the banyan tree where the birds were gathering. As a result some twigs were broken down. However, the birds in spite of their terrifying spirit had narrow escape by flying to the other side of the twigs. On seeing the scene of the terrifying birds, the animals laughed at them and applauded the strength of their leader Rulpui. Out of boast and show off the Rulpui again stood up and beat once more the twigs where the birds were sitting. This time also the twigs and branches of the tree were fallen down, but the birds again made narrow escape on the other side. Now all the birds were sitting wordlessly in frightening spirit. At this point of time the Bat, who was the denizen of the above and who was in the midst of the Birds on the branches of the tree was afraid that the birds were losing. So, he came down to the animals and showed his tooth at them and said, "O my fellow friends accept me as yours. I am also a denizen of below like you, see I have tooth like yours." Since the Bat had tooth, they accepted and welcomed him as their denizen as he pleaded. For the third time the proud Rulpui once again stood up and hit again the twigs where the depressed birds were sitting. Unlike the previous time, the twigs did not break but only some leaves fell down since Rulpui was now tired and worn out. But the birds somehow, again escaped on

to save her child by killing the snake. He accordingly sharpened his dao and being provided with a goat, slew it and wrapped its flesh round his dagger and offered it to the Rulpui. In no time, the widow was saved from offering her daughter and lived happily ever after. At the same time, the villagers triumphantly celebrated the freedom which they had attained. This was the end of the worshipping and appeasing of the Rulpui by the villagers, so said the legends. This took place in the present *Rulchawm khua* in the Saitual region of Champhai Road. Interestingly, in a particular hill of Rulchawm village, there still exists a hole, which is regarded as the hole of the legendary python.

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the other twigs. On seeing them the animals including the Bad laughed at the Birds and applauded their leader Rulpui. Now the Birds too recognize that the hero of the animals, Rulpui was tired enough and had no more strength.

As a result, the tiny denizens from both groups openly challenge to each other in their capacity. The *Rifol* (Rock snail) tried to kill the *Vasin* (Rock bird) with pellet ting by its body. On the consequences, the *Simbu* (owl) also tried to kill the *Izu* (Mouse). The outraged war of the small groups once again went from bad to worse. The leaders of the birds', a giant quiet eagle, silently watch the movement of the Rulpui (Python). Ultimately, the *Rimu* (Eagle) dive down and attacked the Rulpui (Python) on its head and pulled him up above the ground with its sharp claws. Eventually, the *Rimu* bit the Rulpui spinal code and killed him instantly. The denizens of the above (Birds) were happy now by the scene which they were watching. They joyfully shouted in exhilarations for their victory over the land animals. Meanwhile, the land animals were in great shame and grief. At this point of time, the Bat who was now the denizens of land regretted of being his citizenship. So, he again flew towards to the trees where the birds were celebrating their victory and said to the Birds, "Oh friends, see I have wings and fly like you" Since, the Bat had wings, they accepted as their denizens of the above.

After short while, the two groups, i.e., *Chungmi* and *Nuaimi* (the denizens of above or birds and below or land animals) made peace. Now, there was no distinction of classes among the two groups, they all were living in a common land. However, the Bat who was now in great shame, would not dare to come out during the day, goes out only at night.

18. ARNGOITE PHUNG (a story of white fowl)

Once upon a time there lived Sangrate (wild cat) and Arngoite (white hen). One day Sangrate intended to eat Arngoite. "Where will you sleep tonight?" he once asked her to which the white hen replied, "I shall sleep in the *Kongkoloj* (the outer porch)". But when night fell she slept in the *Phak-ilaia* (the roof beam). The wild cat came in the night expecting to find the hen in the *Kongkoloj*, but as she was not there, he returned home. On meeting the hen the next day, the wild cat asked her, "Arngoite, where did you sleep last night?"

and the hen replied, "I slept in the *Phak-ilaia*". So he asked her again, "Where will you sleep tonight?" "I shall sleep in the *arribu*, (coop) where I have laid my eggs," said the hen; but actually she slept in the *Sumkola* (pitcher) which was put on the *raprikal* (shelf). So the wild cat came again during the night, and not finding the hen in the *ar-ribu* he got very angry and began to search for her. While he was searching for her, the children of Arngoite farted. "Do not fart or else he would hear your fart and know our hiding place," said Arngoite to her children. But it was too late for her to warn them as Sangarte has already heard the fart of Arngoite's children.

Sangarte knowing the hiding place of Arngoite and her children soon caught hold of Arngoite and threatened to kill her. At this, Arngoite pleaded, "*Ne fa no roh, ne fa no roh, ker tui nang peng kiti*" (Please do not eat me, I shall give you my egg). Sangarte took the egg and asked Arngoite, "*Ing kanim ki fak rang?*" (How shal I eat?). At this point of time, Arngoite suggested Sangarte to burry the egg under the hot ash of the hearth and told him to open his eyes widely and repeat the following—

Min o min o,

Ar ngoite ritui min o, min o.

While chanting the words and eagerly waited with widely open eyes for the egg to get cooked, instead of getting cooked the egg burst and hurt the eyes of Sangarte. "Hurry, hurry, give me water to wash my eyes" requested Sangarte. But Arngoite gave him alkaline water instead of water. When Sangrate washed his face with that alkaline water he got unbearable pain in his eyes and pleaded at least to tell him the way to the stream. Arngoite then showed him the way to a pit of excreta where on going Sangarte fell down and died.

FABLES OF SURA :

Of all the tales of the Biates, Sura's fable, one of the oldest tales could be considered as the commonest favourite tales. However, one can hardly memorize the whole volume at a stretch.

Tradition has its saying that Sura's fables alone had seven sections. Interestingly, unlike the other tales, the seven sections have several chapters and each chapter or part

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alone despite a full episode with a moral. But the seven sections have a linkage right from the beginning till the end. Hence, whosoever could recite the Seven Sura's fable serially without a break is considered a wise man. However, no one can recite till date.

Generally, it is assumed that Sura was a middle aged man with a stout short stature, little pot belly, idiotic yet active. At the same time he was intelligent, hard working, humble, compassionate and kind. However, his younger brother Haifinga was wise and intelligent as his name implies, but was lazy. Such was the characteristic in this tale. The outstanding character of Sura is his perseverance and kindness towards his younger brother. From this tales one could see the two sides of Sura-his stupidity and so also his cleverness. Such was the quality of Sura.

1. Sura the cook.
2. Sura loses his whistling.
3. Sura the surgeon.
4. Sura defeated his gang of enemies.
5. Sura overcomes the lion.
6. Sura and Haifinga exchange houses.
7. Sura with his precious pot.
8. Sura and Haifinga exchange jhum.
9. Sura's crab hut.
10. Sura and Haifinga's trap.
11. Sura's *dalkong* meat.
12. Sura the cook.

One day, Sura was idling in his hut. But his wife was preparing herself to go to their jhum field. So, she told him to do the household chores such as pounding rice and cooking. "When the afternoon sun has its rays upon the tree of our yard, pound the rice. And when the late afternoon sunray falls down to our door, it would be the time for cooking, do not forget dear" said his wife.

"Oh! Do not worry, definitely I shall do it" replied Sura. His wife left him for the jhum filled with ease and relieved by his promising response.

Finally, evening had approached and the sunray now had fallen upon the said tree, Sura in his hustle and bustle began to carry the mortar, pestle, sieve and a basket of rice

entirely loaded on his back and tried to climb up to that mentioned tree. He thought that he was supposed to pound the rice on that tree. But what his wife had meant was the time of the day. He tried time and again to climb up the tree with his load in difficulty. In the process, the wooden mortar and pestle fell down and broke. Subsequently, he then collected the mortars and pestles of his neighbours one by one and had broken down all too.

While he was in such a mess, the time of the sun that waits none now had fallen its rays on his doorways. By seeing the late afternoon sunrays at his door, he realized that there were other household chores to do i.e., cooking. He at once moved to the door and began to build a *lungthu* (a three stone for seating a cooking pot) at the particular spot which his wife had mentioned at the door way. By doing so of seating a cooking clay pot at that very door, he had broken down one by one and damaged all the pots of the family. He then set off for pots to his neighbours, damaging one after another and broke them all too.

In the meantime, his tiresome wife, who expected to have a delicious prepared meal soon, had returned from the jhum field. Nevertheless, alas! She did not find any meal. Therefore, she asked him, the reason of not pounding and cooking the rice. "Sure, I did it but not the single pot is spared to cook, they all had broken down" replied Sura bluntly. He then and there showed her the broken mortars, pestles and pots that were in all shambles in two locations. One was under the tree and the other on the door. But Sura did not realize what he had missed to understand by the time of the day i.e., pounding time and cooking time.

2. SURA LOST HIS WHISTLING :

Sura's wife was angry because her foolish husband had broken all their mortars and pots. so, one day Sura had been sent up to his neighbouring village to bring *ahoizin bel* or the unbroken pot, by his wife. However, when he reached the village he forgot exactly what his wife had told him to fetch, he could remember only the word *hoizin*. So, instead of *ahoizin bel* he asked for *hoizin* (an egg). The villager thereby gave him an egg. He returned home with an egg happily. But while he was walking down the path, he was attracted by a young man coming towards him in melodious whistling tune.

alone despite a full episode with a moral. But the seven sections have a linkage right from the beginning till the end. Hence, whosoever could recite the Seven Sura's fable serially without a break is considered a wise man. However, no one can recite till date.

Generally, it is assumed that Sura was a middle aged man with a stout short stature, little pot belly, idiotic yet active. At the same time he was intelligent, hard working, humble, compassionate and kind. However, his younger brother Haifinga was wise and intelligent as his name implies, but was lazy. Such was the characteristic in this tale. The outstanding character of Sura is his perseverance and kindness towards his younger brother. From this tales one could see the two sides of Sura-his stupidity and so also his cleverness. Such was the quality of Sura.

1. Sura the cook.
2. Sura loses his whistling.
3. Sura the surgeon.
4. Sura defeated his gang of enemies.
5. Sura overcomes the lion.
6. Sura and Haifinga exchange houses.
7. Sura with his precious pot.
8. Sura and Haifinga exchange jhum.
9. Sura's crab hut.
10. Sura and Haifinga's trap.
11. Sura's *dalkong* meat.
12. Sura the cook.

One day, Sura was idling in his hut. But his wife was preparing herself to go to their jhum field. So, she told him to do the household chores such as pounding rice and cooking. "When the afternoon sun has its rays upon the tree of our yard, pound the rice. And when the late afternoon sunray falls down to our door, it would be the time for cooking, do not forget dear" said his wife.

"Oh! Do not worry, definitely I shall do it" replied Sura. His wife left him for the jhum filled with ease and relieved by his promising response.

Finally, evening had approached and the sunray now had fallen upon the said tree, Sura in his hustle and bustle began to carry the mortar, pestle, sieve and a basket of rice

entirely loaded on his back and tried to climb up to that mentioned tree. He thought that he was supposed to pound the rice on that tree. But what his wife had meant was the time of the day. He tried time and again to climb up the tree with his load in difficulty. In the process, the wooden mortar and pestle fell down and broke. Subsequently, he then collected the mortars and pestles of his neighbours one by one and had broken down all too.

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Sura stopped in surprise, for he had never heard before any one whistling. Sura stopped in surprise, for he had never heard before anyone whistling. He asked the young man to exchange his whistling for an egg. The young man agreed and taught him successfully. Sura became very happy and started whistling all the way through his village, thinking how his family and villagers would be pleased about the melodious music he has found. While walking happily whistling and dreaming about his fellow villagers, all on a sudden he walked on a tree stump, stumble down, and stopped his whistling.

Hoping that he would hit upon the tune once again, he attempted to make the sound by humming his lips back and forth for many times, but could not bring it again. He then began looking on the ground where he had stumbled, searched in and around the pathways for the tune. He could not find it, so he scrabbled about on the ground just like a dog scratching on the ground for a hidden bone. In the meantime, a Poi traveler happened to pass by saw Sura and asked him what he was looking for.

"If I knew what I was searching for, I would not have troubled myself to look for it" said Sura in despair.

The puzzled Poi traveler wanted to help Sura but he did not know what in the world to look for. At length Sura became tired, exhausted and began to say 'sshheeeeeeee' as in hopelessness. But while saying 'sshheeeeeeee' he had again recaptured his whistling tune, "I have found it, I have found it, that was what I have been searching for so long. I have found it!!! That is what I lost" said Sura in exhilaration.

The puzzled Poi traveler looked at him in amazement. Meanwhile, Sura proudly whistling the tune again went merrily on his way.

3. Sura the surgeon

Once upon a time, Sura's wife went down to the jhum. So, she appointed Sura to look after the infant at home.

In a short a while, the baby out of thirst and hunger cried bitterly. Sura, who for the first time was working as a baby-sitter could not understand the reason behind the unceasing cry of the infant. In order to keep him away from crying, he carried the baby on his back then on his front and again kept it on his lap but happened to no good. He wondered

as to what to be done.

Finally, he examined the child's head in order to find if anything wrong was happening there, that could be the reason of the child's cry. When he found the pulsating fontanel part of the child's head, he thought that it was a large boil. Without much delay, he operated the child's head in order to remove the boil but instead removed out all the brain of the child. The child was now dead. When Sura saw the child crying no more, he thought that the child had slept and he was successful in his operation of boil.

When late afternoon arrived and the sun had gone down, his wife returned home. All the way long to home she was thinking of her child, as mothers' do to their child. At last, she arrived home and enquired Sura about the child. "Oh! our child had a boil on its head and I have removed it successfully" said Sura with poise and showed his wife where the child was lying.

When his wife went to see her child, she found her child now cold and dead. With tears rolling down her face, she cried out broken hearted, "What on earth have you done to my child? Its ears and its body is all cold now, it's dead." Having no other option, she asked him to bury it for a better cause at the place where dead men are buried, after rolling the child with the hide of the deer so as the baby would get warm in its grave.

Immediately Sura spread the hide of the deer on the ground, upon it he laid down the child and rolled it. He then carried the body of the child on his shoulder to the grave for burial. But on the way to the grave his dead child slipped off from its roll since the hide was slippery and fell down on the pathway. However, Sura who was unaware that his dead child has fallen from his shoulder continued carrying the empty roll hide to the grave and then buried it properly.

On his return, he saw the body of his dead child on the way but thought it to be other's child. He looked and looked at the child and said, "I thought only my child could die, but others child also can also die." At this stage he sternly and forcefully kick the dead child at great force. Sura then resumed his walking by touching his ears time to time. He now confirmed that the ears of the dead are cold, which his wife said to him,

on the death of their child. But when he touched his ears again this time he found that his ears were cold. It was due to wintriness but Sura did not realize it and thought that he was now dead. Therefore, he went back to the dead man's place and sat quietly on the ground thinking he was dead.

At that very moment, a bereaved old woman also came to the cemetery for consolation of her loneliness and paying her last respect to her departed ones. Tears rolled down her face by recollecting her departed near and dear ones.

"Oh, my beloved ones of dead men's ground how are you all and how did you spend your time today?" said the old woman.

"We spent our time here as we like it" replied Sura in a raucous voice from the tomb where he was quietly sitting.

This frightened the old woman so much that she ran back helter skelter. Sura knew what the old woman was afraid of. So he ran after her and asked her to wait for him. But this made the old woman run faster than before. The two ran as fast as their heels could carry them. Soon the old woman arrived at her home with no more longing for the dead souls. At the same time Sura, the dead man also arrived home ruefully.

4. Sura defeated his gang of enemies :

One fine day, Sura went to his paddy field. While he was about to enter his field, he smelt something fishy in his jhum hut. In fact, his enemies were hiding in his hut waiting to capture him. As he was curious to confirm the matter of his suspicious hut, he stood on the gateway of the field and talked to himself loudly. "Anyway, all those years when I enter my field, my hut used to welcome me by shouting 'Uuuuuiini', but today it is quiet and calm. It seems something is wrong."

Soon after he had spoken out, he listened and watched his hut carefully from a good distant. As soon as his enemies heard what Sura had said, they replied immediately by shouting 'Uiiii' as to show nothing was wrong in the hut. But as foolish Sura could be, he in turn got terrified by hearing such a voice coming out of his hut. The trick that he planned to clarify his suspicion worked, but, he instead got terrified when he heard from his lonely hut. In that calm jungle, he once more observed

his hut attentively. He once again heard the shouting from his lonely hut. "My goodness what a terrible hut" said Sura to himself and left the place all at once.

After walking a few distances, he took a nap under a giant dry log that was used like a bridge for common passage of the path. Now Sura had a good sleep like a sleeping dog under the log.

Meanwhile, gang of his enemies had begun to search for him here and there. After some time, they reached the spot where the log was. Sura was still in his sleep. While they were passing on the block of log, grains of sand from their feet fell down to the face of Sura, yet they did not notice him at all. Sura, who felt uncomfortable sleeping because of the grains of sand on his face, now woke up and began to shout at them. "What the hell are you doing there?" "You would dirt my eyes" How dare you?"

"Ah! Here is Sura whom we are looking for so long," said they. All at once, they cornered him and captured him. They tied a rope on his wrist and took him away pulling.

"Oh you fool! Don't you know that in ancient days people used to pull their enemies on their nose?" said Sura elegantly.

"Then let us try to pull him on his nose." Said they and begun to pull him on his nose. Meanwhile, all on a sudden, Sura blew out his nose as strong as he could and made their hands filthy. Now his enemies got angry and Sura again sprucely said, "In ancient days people used to pull their enemies on their penis. By this saying, the enemies again tried to pull him in his private part. As soon as they begun to pull him on his private part, he again urinated on their hands. Likewise, when they were trying to pull him on his waist, he passed out his excreta and dirtied them again. Sura was now a dirty item. So they tied thoroughly on his chest and pulled him with a long rope. After sometime, Sura managed to untie the knot of his chest. He then reef knotted the end of the rope upon the tree stump and ran away. The gang, who did not realize the matter, kept on pulling the tree stump with their might and thought that Sura was too tired to walk by now, so, he had become too heavy to pull. After they checked the end of the rope, they found a tree stump instead of Sura.

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In the meantime, Sura was relaxing in the swing of a

strong creeper rope at a good height of a tree upon the high cliff. He enjoyed his freedom by swinging to and fro in the air, singing the following song— "ahoi e ahoi e, a hoi e ahoi, ei pin kol thli'n a sem vong vonga, a hoi e, ahoi e" meaning "nice, how nice it is to have the fresh air of the horizon clamp my hip, ah, nice! Without hindrance to other's life, he merrily enjoyed his jungle life in its fullest form.

By now, Sura's enemies had reached him. They watched him enviously since they were tired and above that the weather was hot. Sura however, continued his swinging and singing. In a little while, the gang learnt that the strength of the rope was good enough for a set of people to swing at a time. They were tempted to do just for relaxation. Then they began to beg him for a swing. On the other hand, Sura allowed them only for one swing or else they would not be allotted to swing. The gang agreed as they were really in the mood to have a swing. In the mean time, Sura hurriedly climb to the tree through the swing rope and made a good position. He was again planning of a trick in order to take revenge. The gang never thought that the foolish Sura could ever take revenge on them. The entire gang thereby got hold of the swing rope all at once and began to take off their swing. They were enjoying such a swing that they could never think a foolish man like Sura could harm them. Out of a sudden Sura chopped off the rope of the swing which led to the end of his gang of enemies.

5. Sura overcomes the lion :

There was a lion which Sura had usually subdued at different places on different occasions. Due to this, the lion had decided to take revenge on Sura by any means. So, one day, the lion went quietly to the house of Sura and hid himself underneath the outer roof edge of the house for spying. From its skunk smell, Sura, clearly knew where the lion was hiding. So, Sura crop up again new idea to be applied to the lion. "I am not afraid of any one in this world, except the *chap chap rap rap*." said Sura to his wife loudly but in a frightful tone. (The *chap chap rap rap* in fact was not an animal but the sound of dew drops falling from the edge of the roof). Again and again he repeated the same word to his wife. By this time, the lion who was sitting attentively beneath the

their own houses until one day rain fell heavily. Now, Haifinga hardly had a dry spot in his own house. Meanwhile, Sura had a good sleep without any hindrance from rain and storm. After Haifinga had faced untold suffering in his own house, he made up his mind to exchange his house with Sura's earliest convenience.

One fine evening, Haifinga invited Sura and his family at his house for a proposal to exchange their houses. Ultimately, Sura, and his family members had arrived. "Sura let us exchange our houses," said Haifinga. "I and my children had good times sleeping on the bed of our house facing the sky and watching twinkling stars." "How beautiful the heavenly abode is and what a new experience it is observing the beautiful stars while sleeping!" continued Haifinga.

Now Sura and his children were tempted to observe the stars by sleeping leisurely on the bed. Meanwhile Haifinga cleverly offered their family bed to watch the stars so as to prove his words. Sura and his children then and there lied on the bed and began to watch the wonderful sky. "Ah! How beautiful the stars looked," exclaimed Sura. "Oh! How beautiful the heavenly abode is" exclaimed Sura's children. They all were happy and satisfied of their new venture. Sura then agreed to exchange their house as Haifinga had suggested. But he was completely unaware of the hailstorm and rain that would be coming soon.

After few days, Sura and his family could not gaze at the sky to see the stars as they expected since it had begun rainy season. Instead of watching beautiful stars, hailstorm and rains entered their hut, flashes of lighting flashed to the nook and corner of the house. Now they could neither sleep nor sit in their new house whereas Haifinga and his family had a good sleep in his new house.

Sura realized his mistake, but being a hard working person he repaired the roofs, walls and posts completely and gave up the foolish idea of watching beautiful stars while lying on his bed at night.

7. Sura's Crab Hut :

Once upon a time, Sura and his wife went to their paddy field. They worked under the scorching heat patiently, but

outer roof of the house heard it and was shocked at what Sura had said.

"Who could be that *chap chap rap rap* which Sura is afraid of?" the puzzled lion asked to himself. "I am lord of the jungle and who could be that *chap chap rap rap* who is greater than me?" By thinking so, the lion was in dilemma. Sura on the other hand repeated his word time to time. The lion, at this time was besieged with terrified spirit and cowardice. At that very moment, Sura gently went to the storeroom, collected the pestle and a handful of *sithu samthu* (an item of pickle made from fermented sesame and maze having a strong repulsive odour). Sura then pasted the *sithu samthu* on the edge of the pestle. He then quietly went outside the porch and all of a sudden with all his might, he threw the pestle as javelin at the lion. "Take it, take that, there the *sithu samthu* chased you." yelled Sura fiercely. The javelin hit the lion on the back. As the lion received unwelcome forced unexpectedly over his back, he ran leaps and bounds and reached the wood totally exhausted. In the meantime, there came the *sakhi* (deer). "Hello! My friend— red deer, what pungent odour on earth Sura had threw on my back? Would you please look at my back! requested the exhausted lion to the deer.

The deer then began to check the back of the lion and found a scrap of black gum on his back. When the deer began to smell it, he felt queasy, since the smell was too bad. Instantly the deer left the lion quietly and all along his way, he threw back his nose back and forth so as to emit the bad smell that he had smelt from the back of the lion. Hence, it is said that the deer frequently blow its nose till today, and also the lion had become unfriendly to man and deer.

6. Sura and Haifinga Exchange Houses :

Sura and his younger brother Haifinga live in the same village. One day, both Haifinga and Sura began constructing a house for their own. Sura, a hardworking person had built a strong house with posts of thingrildum (a special hard timber that cannot be eaten by termites). On the other hand, Haifinga a lazy man built a shed whose posts were merely bamboos and the roofs were so thin that one could even view the stars and the moon from inside.

Both the brothers lived happily and with contentment in

when they found the heat was too much to bear, they began to search for a resting place. On the other hand, the other farmers had a comfortable break in their respective huts. Sura and his wife had to suffer because, Sura, foolish as he was never thought of the necessity of such a hut in his paddy field. His wife then ask Sura to build at least *airiko* (crab shell which literally mean a small shed with one sided roof).

The next day, Sura went to his jhum for constructing the *airiko*. But, Sura did not know the meaning of *airiko*. So, he went straight to the stream nearby his field and caught a crab. He then removed its flesh and tucked its shell with a tiny stick in the middle of the field. "I have completed to build *airiko*," Said Sura to himself proudly. He returned home and gave a completion report to his wife. This made Sura's wife very happy and eager to go to their field.

The next morning, they set out of their field in great delight followed by their dog. When they were about to enter the field, Sura said to his wife, "Do not let the dog go first." However, as a free dog, the dog began to run ahead of them. Finally, when they reached the particular spot where he had supposedly constructed the shed, they found nothing, as a crab shell had been eaten up by their dog. "Where is the *airiko* (shed)? asked his puzzled wife.

"That is why I told you not to let the dog go first, he had already eaten up the *airiko*," replied Sura smartly.

8. Sura and Haifinga Exchange Jhum :

Long long ago, there lived two brothers in a village. The name of the elder brother was Sura and the younger was Haifinga. The elder brother was foolish, yet, hard working and the younger one was lazy but intelligent.

Both Sura and Haifinga practiced jhum cultivation. As Sura was hardworking man, his jhum cultivation was large and every description of crop was exceptionally good. However, Haifinga's jhum was small as well as full of weeds.

One day Haifinga went to his jhum for weeding. While he was weeding, he threw and hurled the sheaf of weeds down below his jhum. After weeding for sometime, an ugly witch called Nimkhortenu angrily screamed from the downhill saying, "do not throw anything this side or you would hurt us."

This made Haifinga so scared that he totally lost interest in his jhum and decided to exchange his jhum with Sura with by any means.

According to his plan of exchanging his jhum with Sura, next day Haifinga went to Sura's jhum and said politely, "Sura, your paddy field is smaller than mine but if you wish I don't mind to exchange our jhum." Then he let him to his field. As they were about to enter the jhum, Haifinga asked Sura to watch his jhum between his legs by bending down. On complying with the instruction of Haifinga, Sura bent down to look at the field of Haifinga, which now appeared to be very vast. Ultimately, Sura agreed to exchange his jhum with that of Haifinga's. At this, Haifinga advice Sura not to throw anything downhill the jhum at any cost and left.

On the other hand, Sura who was curious about the advice of his brother was tempted to know the reason behind that prohibition of throwing anything downhill the jhum. So, he instantly collected stones in his Chempai (men's basket for carrying dao and other articles) as much as he can and began to throw the stones continuously downhill the jhum.

At this a strange agitated voice of an ugly witch outside the downhill jungle cried out, "*Ki nai lu dengte ret,*" (You may hit the head of my children). This was the heatedly cry of Nimkhortenu.

"*Dengta hep, dengtea hep; adeng le hep adeng no le hep!*" (I may or may not stone, what does it matter), replied Sura bluntly and continued throwing the stones.

Ultimately, a raged Nimkhortenu and her children came out from their abode, moved towards Sura and starred at him in great astonishment. "*Ki ningkhorrin nang luak ning no?*" (Would you dare me to scope you up with my shovel body?), said Nimkhortenu angrily.

"*Ki chempai in nang luak ning mo?*" (Would you also dare to be scoped up with my basket?) Replied Sura boldly and ultimately scooped them up all in his Chempai basket. "What an ugly creatures you all are! When my villagers will see you, they would really enjoy laughing at your ugly structure. What an ugly creatures you all are! Oh, let my villagers have fun watching you!" said Sura and began to carry them all in his basket, heading for his village.

Out of fear and shame, Nimkhortenu began to yell,

"Please, Sura please, releases us from your basket, and if you release me I shall give you *Sekhibusuak* (a magic horn that grant all that they wish) beg Nimkhortenu to Sura earnestly.

Sura then released Nimkhortenu and thereby received the magic horn from her accordingly. Off went Sura uphill to his village with great fun and excitement. When he reached his village, all the villagers, young and old observed the magic horn. Now, every body wished to have it as their. Meanwhile, his younger brother Haifinga who also had heard the news of his brother's fortune was now in deep thinking how to snatch the magic horn from his brother.

He then planned for a trick of owning the magic horn for himself. As planned, Haifinga instructed his children to water their entire courtyard and made it slippery. He then called one of his sons to go to Sura's house to inform him that his father was not in good health and invite him for letting him show them his new item, since he was unable to go due to his ill health. As soon as Sura heard that his younger brother was unwell and wished to see the horn, he carried the magic horn with delighted heart and set off towards Sura's house. As Sura was about to reach the door of Haifinga's house, he fell down as the floor was slippery. At this the magic horn fell down from his hand, Haifinga on seeing this quickly picked up the magic horn without wasting any time as he was eagerly waiting that chance to snatch away from Sura. He then said to Sura, "Sura, the magic horn is mine." Then and there Sura also tried his level best to take back his magic horn. Both the brothers started fighting for the magic horn. They could only hold the magic horn at each end of the horn.

Sura acting smartly said to Haifinga, "Borther, let us divide the magic horn into two parts so that each of us could have." So saying that he instantly cut the magic horn in the middle into two pieces. Then and there, the magic horn that everyone's wishes to have, got damaged and turned to be useless.

Motto : Jealousy ends in ruin.

9. Sura dalkong sa (Sura's dalkong meat)

One day Haifinga was really in the mood to have meat.

So he made a plan. As planned, one night he went to Sura's house quietly and sat at the top of the roof. "*Sura, Sura, ni se pual rang ni that non chu thi tun, thi tun*" (Sura, Sura unless you slaughter your fat mithun, you shall die) said Haifinga in a low and strange voice repeatedly.

Next morning, Sura went to Haifinga and informed him about the strange voice that he heard last night. Haifinga then told Sura that it was the voice of the messenger of God, telling him to appease Him by slaughtering his mithun and throw a great feast. Sura believed his brother and did as he was told. At this Haifinga and his family enjoyed the feast to their hearts content.

After some days, Sura knew that he was fooled by his brother Haifinga. So, one evening, he cropped up to follow the technique of Haifinga and went to Haifinga's house quietly and sat upon the roof. He then said, "*Haifing, Haifing, ni se pual rang bopka ni that non chu, thi tun, thi tun.*" (Haifing, Haifing unless you slaughter your fat mithun, you shall die). At this, Haifinga, as his name implies wise and cunning, who do not have even a single mithun undoubtedly knew that his foolish elder brother had try to fool him as he did to him. In the morning, Haifinga went to Sura's house and narrated him that happened to him the previous night. At this Sura said, "Oh it was the voice of the messenger of God, unless you kill a fat mithun, you shall die." Then Haifinga who did not own any mithun invited Sura and his family to have a sumptuous feast the next day.

When Haifinga reached home he advised his wife to go at once to the jungle and fetch the *dalkong* (specie of arum root which look alike of cooked meat but that itch when eaten). Haifinga's wife thereby prepared the *dalkong* curry with the alkaline water on the appointed morning. No sooner Sura and his family arrived; they served them the prepared meal. Sura and his family taking it to be meat started having it. While having it Sura's children complaint by saying, "*Epa a thak athak*" (Father, it is so itching). At this Sura replied, "*Athak le fa thak thak*" (If it is itching, eat it as it is). Again Sura's children complaint, "*Epa vuaninta sa chu ahing*" (Father, today's meat is stinking). Sura then replied, "*Ahing chu fa hing hing*" (If it is stinking, eat it as it is). Then they continued

eating the *dalkong* thinking it to be a meat without realizing it. So, *dalkong* one of the jungle arum root potato is also known as Sura as or Sura's meat.

10. Sura neh Haifinga chang do

One day Sura and Haifinga went to the jungle in order to lay a trap for the wild birds. On the next day, when they went for inspection of their traps, they found out a varung (wild pigeon) in Haifinga's trap and a varit (partidge) in Sura's trap. Seeing this Haifinga proposed Sura to exchange their traps. Haifinga holding the neck of the Varit (which was Sura's trap) said to Sura, "Nangma varit te rit rat" (Your Varit's cry is small as rit ret) and again holding the neck of Varung said "Keima varung te reng rung" (My Varung's cry is big as reng rung). As the name and cry made by the Varung appeared to be much bigger than Varit, Sura was fooled by this trick. He said to himself, "O anit khat" (Indeed it is). Then and there Sura a simpleton agreed to exchange his Varit which was much bigger than Haifinga's Varung.

11. Sura loses his way

Sura and his family had become very poor. They had eaten all their rice and it was not yet time to gather new grains. So, they decided to sell their huge earthen pot, which was their only valued property.

The next morning, Sura prepared to set off to the nearest village, one day's journey away and there try to sell the pot in order to buy rice. Before he left, his wife strongly warned him to be very careful with the pot least it would break. She further told him that he was not to put the pot on the ground at all and when he was tired of carrying it on one shoulder, he was to change it to the other without letting it to touch the ground.

Off went Sura, carrying a huge clay pot on his right shoulder feeling very excited.

After a long walk, he felt that he load was heavy and his knees began to shake. But due to fear of breaking it, he went on his way without a rest.

When he had reached about halfway, he felt that his right shoulder had started getting sore. But he did not know how to put on the other shoulder without putting it down on

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When he had reached about halfway, he felt that his right shoulder had started getting sore. But he did not know how to put on the other shoulder without putting it down on

the ground. This made him puzzled and after thinking for sometime, he turned himself around and exclaimed, "Ah! Here the pot is on the other side now!" He then resumed his walking without realizing that he was going back to his own village.

As evening came, and the sun was setting, he got back to his own village thinking it to be the other village where he had to sell the pot.

When his little children, who were playing on the courtyard, saw him coming towards the village felt very happy and ran towards him. "Father, father, how glad we are that you have come back home!" said his children merrily.

But Sura merely said to himself, "These are such nice and friendly children who call me their father. I am glad I have reached such a friendly place after day's journey."

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