

A REPORT ON THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE MIZO PATRILINEAL SYSTEM

Among the Mizos, there is clear distinction between kinship by descent and kinship by marriage.

- As a patrilineal society, the rule of descent is strictly based on the male line only
- In the traditional system, woman was recognised, even after marriage, by her patri-clan name.
- Thus, all children acquired membership in their father's clan group
- Thus, recruitment to any clan among the Mizo has been strictly based on descent through the father's line only.

Inheritance

- Among all the clans, the rules of succession required that the youngest son should be the proper heir
- Other male children also had a share in the family property.
- Demands a split of household non-durable goods and properties.
- This forced them to split from paternal family soon after marriage esp. after the first child was born

Status of women

- Women did not have any legal claim on the family property except a small share at the time of marriage (eg. Dowry)
- Even in the absence of a male child, a daughter could not claim the family property
- It goes to the nearest male relatives.
- Thus, women enjoy low status in Mizo society

Choice of marriage

- Choice of marriage was governed by the cultural norms connected with and attached to agricultural work and bravery.
- Usually cut across village boundaries but within a clan
- For instance, Sailo's and other chiefly clans would like to limit their marriage alliance within their own clan or within the families of the chiefly clans.
- This was done to afford reciprocal help and support in time of war and feuds.
- For this reason, marriage among the Sailos mainly confined itself within the clan or with members of the chiefly clans.

- However, there was no rule prescribing clan exogamy or clan endogamy.
- Any mizos might marry with members of one's own clan or outside of one's own clan.
- Apart from the Sailos, normally marriage took place with members outside one's own clan
- Because of general tendency to view endogamous marriage as incestuous even in the absence of formal taboo against it.
- The incestuous relations resulted in social disgust but there was no physical punishment accompanying such incest act.
- Marriage with members of other villages was a common phenomenon which bound members of neighbouring villages together and narrowed the chances of blood feuds between villages

Marriage proposal

- Young men of marriageable age went about in villages and started courting girls of their choice at the advice of older people.
- If he is satisfied with the girl, a go-between, an ambassador called "palai" would be sent to make the marriage proposal to the girl's family.
- If the girls family agreed to the proposal, the actual date would be fixed for the wedding
- In most cases, the girl was hardly in any position to make her own decision against the will of her parents
- If the girl's parents did not agree to the marriage proposal, they might put an exorbitant bride-price beyond the means of the boy's family.
- This would be understood by the Palai's as a sign of disapproval to the marriage proposal
- Else they might politely tell the Palai's that their daughter was not yet of marriageable age
- There would be no further talk regarding the bride-price

Bride Price

- The bride price was a contractual agreement between the two parties and might widely vary between clans and in different occasions.
- It is observed that the higher the social status of the girl's family, the higher the bride-price.
- Eg- as agriculture was the main source of wealth, those who could appropriate agricultural wealth were accorded higher position in the society
- However, members of the Lushai clans, irrespective of economic position, were accorded a higher status and that a higher bride-price demanded for their daughters

- Bride price usually consisted of valuable possessions like guns, spears, and other war weapons and ornaments, domesticated animals like mithun.
- Bride price were usually stated in terms of mithun ranging from three to ten mithuns.
- With the british rule and the accompanying commercialisation, cash payment became gradually common instead of other valuable possessions and stated in terms of rupees.
- In general, bride price directly reflected the social status of the contracting parties.
- Bride price was distributed among the members of the clan chosen by the girl's parents for the occasion.
- The girl's maternal uncle received a portion of the bride-price called "pusum".
- This was normally the only recipient outside the girl's natal clan.
- If the maternal uncle, for whom the same term "Pu" as the grandfather is used, did not share his portion, he might call off the marriage.
- He was the only man entitled to such right.
- Other important recipients of the bride-price were the
 - girl's fathers brothers
 - One member from one's own clan without immediate blood connection whose share of the portion was called "palal"
 - Sister of the bride who must have married and had children whose portion of the bride-price was called "nau paukpuan man"
 - Aunt of the bride who portion was called "ni ar"
- The whole amount of the bride-price went to the father or the nearest male relative in case the father was dead.

Change and Continuity

- In recent years, the traditional values have been modified and a new value scale based on education assumes precedence in marriage choice.
- In the modern setting, clan division does not follow variation in education level.
- Since education, Christianity and economic wealth represent the new scale of value and since no clan has a preponderant position over the others in the scale, there is a wide range of choice which cuts across clan membership.
- Thus, clan membership gradually loss its traditional significance in the choice of spouse where a class structure plays more and more significant role.

- Nevertheless, the traditional rule of succession to family property has assumed significant change in actual practice in recent times
- It is no longer the exclusive monopoly of the youngest male child to acquire the right to inherit family property.
- Any male members who gain the favour of his parents and is loyal to the family tradition may become the inheritor.



St. Edmund's College

**A NATIONAL WEBINAR ON
A SOCIOLOGICAL
UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIZO
PATRILINEAL SYSTEM**

BY

**DR. T. KIPGEN
(IIT, KANPUR)**

ORGANISED BY

**THE SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT IN
COLLABORATION WITH IQAC, ST.
EDMUND'S COLLEGE, SHILLONG**

ON THE 4TH OF AUGUST, 2022

AT 3PM

GOOGLE MEET LINK:

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St. Edmund's College, Shillong

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

This is to certify that Finley E. J. Syngai,
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was the **Program Coordinator** for the Webinar
“**A Sociological Understanding of the Mizo Patrilineal System**”, delivered by,

Dr. Thanggoulen Ripgen,

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The webinar was organised by Sociology Department, St. Edmund's College,
in collaboration with IQAC, St. Edmund's College, Shillong
held on 4th of August, 2022.



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A screenshot of a Google Meet grid with 8 participants. The participants are arranged in a 3x3 grid with the bottom-right cell empty. The participants are: Thangou Kipgen (video on), William lynrah (purple circle with 'W'), Mangcha Baite (video on), Dikshita Phukan (video on), Shubhankar Sarma (video on), Monotosh Chakravarty (video on), Ridabiang Sungoh (brown circle with 'R'), and 42 others (green circle with 'T'). A 'Turn on captions (c)' button is visible below the grid.

A screenshot of a Google Meet grid with 9 participants. The participants are arranged in a 3x3 grid. The participants are: Thangou Kipgen (video on), William lynrah (purple circle with 'W'), Mangcha Baite (video on), Dikshita Phukan (video on), Shubhankar Sarma (video on), Monotosh Chakravarty (video on), Ridabiang Sungoh (brown circle with 'R'), 43 others (green circle with 'T'), and You (blue circle with 'F').

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Paused

Thangou Kipgen

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Mangcha Baite

Dikshita Phukan

Shubhankar Sarma

Monotosh Chakravarty

Ridabiang Sungoh

46 others

You

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