

## **“Where are the *tlawmngai* Zo/Mizo men?” Gendered living spaces and Masculinity codes**

Anup Shekhar Chakraborty

**Abstract:** *In order to address the gender disparities that exist in developing societies, it is necessary to have an understanding of gendered spaces. Institutions, both formal and informal, frequently play a role in determining how a society's resources, freedoms, and privileges are distributed among its members. This research investigates the matrices of men's public visibility in relation to the *tlawmngaihna* code in order to get a better understanding of the pressures that men face in societies that have strong gender norms. The research does this by looking at the world through the lens of men and masculinities. Both the machismo of politics and the edicts of the Nexus of Patriarchy place constraints on the naturalness of men and their capacity to connect with the natural world. The conventional masculine members of the Zo and Mizo ethnic group are reimagined as exemplars of ecologically responsible perfection. Despite this, members of the community and outside observers continue to question their visibility, asking, “Where are the *tlawmngai* Zo/Mizo men?”*

**Keywords:** *Tlawmngaihna, Nexus of Patriarchy, Zo hnahthlak, Tuai, Masculinity codes, Gendered spaces*

### **I**

#### **Making Spaces Gendered**

A society's distribution of freedoms, privileges, and resources is frequently shaped by formal and informal institutions. Due to the dominance of the *Nexus of Patriarchy*, women and other marginalized people are routinely pushed out of positions of power and authority. This phenomenon of women and other marginalized people being excluded from positions of political power and authority stems from the Zo political system's inherent sexism and forced subordination. This study looks at the world through the lens of men and masculinities, delving into the matrices of men's public visibility in relation to

the *tlawmngaihna* code to better understand the pressures men face in societies with strong gender norms.

Despite their noticeable absence from the realms of politics and higher positions in the churches, the public visibility of Mizo women in market places, public offices, and other “sites and spaces that matter” is interpreted by the larger audience across India as signposts of “empowerment” and social privilege (Chakraborty, 2008a; 2008b, 2009). As a result of the dominance of patriarchal institutions like Zo Churches and the *Nexus of Patriarchy*, women in Mizoram are paradoxically both visible and invisible. Language (spoken words) and symbols (dress code and colors) were and are often used as weapons to show Zo/Mizo women their spatial position and inferior status in the social hierarchy. For instance, men in the Zo/Mizo society consider ‘*puanfen*’ (skirts) to be the symbol of femininity i.e., inferior and make it a point never to wash ‘skirts’, whatever the situation be, this is true for male domestic helpers as well. Men in the Mizo society, usually try to dictate terms to their women, as to what they wear, whom to marry etc.<sup>1</sup>

Women in the Mizo society have been ascribed the role of an ‘out-let’ (thereby reduced to the position of the sexual organs) to creation but not the status of a procreator, for such a revered position is reserved only for the male—the vigor, the powerful *Pasaltha* (Brave Mizo Hero).

It was for this reason also that the men in the Mizo society consciously and unconsciously treated women as a sexual being whose urges need to be repressed and directed.

Politics’ machismo and the *Nexus of Patriarchy’s* edicts also put limits on men’s naturalness and their ability to connect with the natural world. Typical males of the Zo/Mizo ethnic group are transformed into paragons of eco-masculine perfection. However, members of the community as well as critics continue to question their visibility—where are the *tlawmngai* Zo/Mizo men?

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, wearing of trousers (men’s clothing) is scorned, so is the wearing of salwar kameez (‘*Vai kawr*’, Indian dress). Likewise marrying a ‘*Vai*’ leads to social ostracization and stigmatization of the children (‘*Vai fa*’).

## II

### **Putting Thoughts and Methods in the Forefront**

It was decided to employ a hybrid methodology (Caracelli & Greene (Ed.) 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie (Ed.) 2003; Brannen (Ed.)1992; Creswell, 2003; Malhotra & Shapiro, 1998) or a “scavenger methodology” (Halberstam, 1998, 2005; Sedgwick, 1990, 1993, 2003) to account for the muddled nature of Zo/Mizo social life. The study involved multiple personal interviews and prolonged conversations conducted in parts to suit the interviewer and interviewee’s timings and needs between 2010 and 2022. Information was gathered in bits and pieces through the decade. The ethnographic accounts of 19 Zo/Mizo informants were collected through snowball sampling. The sample comprised a range of native Zo/Mizo men (sexually ambivalent, sexually ambiguous; Top, Versatile, Bottom; Polyamorous, Single, never married, married and divorced) within 15-50 years of age. Few have migrated within regions of the northeast, and a few reside in major cities and urban centers (within India) for work or studies. The informants in this study were engaged in different professions. The names of respondents have been changed, and specific details are retained in parts not to ‘out’ the respondent but to show the sample’s complex ethnic, religious, and geographic representations. The snowball sampling method was used to collect ethnographic accounts from men who were regularly involved in environmental movements and cleanup efforts (at least three drives a year).

In contemporary times, the conceptions of “Social Welfare” promoted by the Church and its agencies, particularly the YMA (Young Mizo Association), the KTP<sup>2</sup>(Khristian Thalai Pawl), and the youth organizations, have been linked

---

<sup>2</sup> Pu Zaliana, (Senior Research Officer, ‘Tribal Research Institute’, Art & Culture Department, Government of Mizoram, McDonald Hill). Personal Interview. Zarkawt, Aizawl, Mizoram dated 22, 23 & 24 January 2008; Professor Thangchungnunga (Department of Economics, Mizoram University, Main Campus). Personal Interview. Tanhril, Aizawl: 24 January 2008; Professor F. Lalremsiama (Department of History, Johnson’s College). Personal Interview. Khatla, Aizawl: 26 January 2008; Professor Lalrinthanga (Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University, Chaltlang Campus). Personal Interview. Aizawl: 19 January 2008.

to the social norms of “*Tlawmngai*,” “*Huaisen*,” and “*Pasaltha*.” The Zo/Mizo persona is going through a lot of internal reflection. The idea of a progressive and enlightened Christian society is heavily encouraged alongside the nostalgia for a romanticized past filled with images of formerly valiant and honorable people who in “daily life” followed the code of “*tlawmngaihna*” in letter and spirit. A potent portrayal of the desire to establish and “belong” to an *Ideal Zo Christian State* has occasionally resulted in the church and its organizations interfering in both private and public affairs in a voyeuristic manner (Downs, 1983; Thomas, 1993; Chakraborty, 2008; 2009). The Zo code of ethics, known as “*Tlawmngaihna*,” is widely regarded “as the living principle of the Zo/Mizo civilization,” despite some hybridization over time. It continues to hold the “symbolic structure of community” together (Cohen, 1985). A conflict of interest between “archaic traditionalism/Christian ethics” and “the culture of individualism/globalized society” frequently comes from the compliance to what the *Nexus of Patriarchy* demands. The boundaries between the public and private spheres merge, and the *Nexus of Patriarchy* gains a lopsided hegemonic position.

The hybridization of the “*tlawmngaihna*” code in urban settings goes hand in hand with these numerous issues. The idea of *tlawmngaihna*, which predates Christianity, is still present but has been hybridized. Today, “*tlawmngaihna*” consists of neighborhood projects like “*Hnatlang*” (community service including cleaning drives, maintaining local roads, clearing forest fires, cleaning and maintaining drinking water sources etc.) and “*Thlan lai*” (grave digging) carried out by the YMA or KTP. The core of the code, which is currently being progressively destroyed over time, is utilized as a tool to demonstrate compliance with the *Ideal Zo Christian State-building* program’s rules. Social ridicule and, in more extreme circumstances, exclusion are used to punish people who choose not to participate in such a public exhibition of “*tlawmngaihna*.” The dynamics of Zo/Mizo economics and justice, on the other hand, are “based on the psychology of compensation” as opposed to social justice: they make every act in the Mizo society compensable in economic terms, i.e., a fine is the only remedy for any crime or misdeed (Stevenson 1943 (1986); Lehman, 1978; Awia, 1992; Chatterjee, 1995). You can make up for missing out on the *tlawmngaihna* public display by paying a forty rupee fine. The “*tlawmngaihna*” code serves as both a tool and a weapon for controlling “outsiders,” primarily the “*Vai*” (Chakraborty 2012).

### III

#### **Gender, Sexualities, Control, and Regime in the Zo World**

In Mizo society, there is little literature on homosexuality. However, silence does not indicate absence. Indigenous terms for sexual orientations and body-related vernacular slurs can be found in colonial writings. J. Herbert Lorrain, a Scottish Baptist Christian Missionary who had served in Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) from 1894 and a pioneer in the creation and development of Mizo script had mentioned in his Dictionary of the Lushai Language that *tuai-pheng* (noun) refers to a man who practices sodomy, cross-dresses and has a woman like gait; a sodomite who masquerades as a woman. *Patil* (noun) means a woman who behaves and dresses like a man, a sex pervert.

Superintendent of the Lushai Hills N.E. Parry (1924-1928) wrote in his book: *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* about the practice of *Mawngkawluk* (lit., sodomy) among the Zo people. All cases of sodomy during the colonial days were to be reported to the Superintendent to be dealt with by him. In the pre-colonial days the sodomized or his father had the right to kill the sodomite or have his nose and ears slit open. The father of the sodomized could shoot any *mithun* (gayal, sial/siel, se/sia drung ox; for the Zo people it was a measure of a family's wealth) in the village. The villagers would consume the meat, and the sodomite would compensate for the slaughtered mithun by paying a monetary fine. 'Sodomy, however, is rare in these hills' mentioned Parry. The penetrator was held accountable for sexual deviation and fined accordingly. The Zo society was silent on whether the act was consensual, the penetrator was ensnared into penetrating the sodomized etc. The silence seems to signal a culture of tolerance towards the *tuai* and the *Patil*.

The Colonial encounter resulted in the criminalization of homosexuality among the Zo people. In 1909, one of the Superintendents of the Lushai Hills, H.W.G Cole, issued a statute (Order No. 3 of 1909. 10) criminalizing homosexuality and cross-dressing. The order prohibited cross-dressing of the *tuai* and sought maleness in behavior. The order-imposed taxes on the *tuai* and labor services (coolie, porter). Reporting of any defiance of the order and display of sexual incoherence rested with the village chiefs. The chiefs were thus bound

to report all cases of unnatural offences that come to their notice, whether or not any complaint had been made to them. Failure to do so invited the possibility of severe punishment. What would interest the curious eyes while gleaning through the 1909 order of Cole is the ambivalence in the treatment of acts of defiance and sexual misconduct: "In future, all *tuais* (male, homosexuals) who are clearly of the male sex are to abandon wearing women's clothes and are to live as men and will pay revenue and do cooly (porter) work." The order is silent on *Patil* -a woman who behaves and cross-dresses like a man. This could presumably be associated with *Patil*'s unhesitatingly participating in communal labor, which would benefit the colonial demand for labor and investment in Raj building these borderlands.

The missionaries successfully won the confidence of the tribes of these borderlands. The Khasis were first among the tribes of the region to have converted to Christianity way back in 1812–1813. The missionary activities were initiated in the Naga Hills in the 1840s and the Zo/Mizo/Lushai Hills in 1894–1895 (Fuchs 1973). In this time frame, the Zos/Mizos were a late arrival to the Evangelical missions. However, the success rate in the Zo Hills has been the maximum in terms of mass proselytization. Awakening to a new sense of identity, political consciousness, proto-nationalism and ethnic consolidation within larger kinship groups, the tribal communities sought to differentiate themselves from the new sovereignties being asserted by rest of South Asia.

The encounters between the British and the '*Kuki-Chin-Lushai tribes*' and the expansion of territories by the Kuki, Chin-Lushais towards south and south-west from Hakka (in Myanmar) and towards eastern Mizoram from Tiddim Falam region of Burma (Myanmar) at the beginning of the 19th century and the gradual extension of the British Frontiers towards the Northeast led to the confrontation between the 'wild tribes' and the 'colonial world'. The British developed the ingenious method of protecting the frontier by establishing 'fortified posts in the hills'. Such a move would call for the import of human resources (Lewin 1912; Chakraborty, 2008). The expansion work at Aizawl and Lunglei in Mizoram, as well as the setting up of administrative machinery, required an increase in the inflow of immigrants, that is, 'the trusted Gorkhas', as mentioned by O. A. Chambers ([1899] 2005) and Col E. B. Elly ([1893] 1978). The colonial administration system required human resources such as *dak-*

runners, chowkidars, peons, cart drivers, traders, masons, etc. Since such work was unknown to the local people, it was advisable to introduce migrant labor. The migrant Gorkhas resembled the natives to an extent. Though the Gorkhas were not allowed to settle outside the allotted areas, many Lushai chiefs were eager to have them in their villages. They even entreated the Superintendent of Lushai Hills to permit the Gorkhas to reside in their villages (Shakespeare 1923; Pachau 1990, cited in Sunar *et al.* 2000).

The Queer has always been expurgated from the realms of ethnic constructions, nationalist discourses, and the like. All this geared strongly to make the 'Queer' 'Invisible', drive forward patriarchally driven images of the 'self', and inject images of 'sacred and profane' into the proselytized Zo/Mizo cosmology. Colonial encounters and the wave of proselytization threw open the process of 'Localization of the Gospel'. The assimilation and retention of the chauvinistic traditional Zo practices and the Judeo-Christian notions of original sin and sexuality went hand in hand.

In their zeal to build an *Ideal Zo Christian State*, the Churches and the *Nexus of Patriarchy* engage vociferously in controlling sexualities, especially 'homosexual' (In Mizo: (male) *Tuai*/ (female) *Patil*).<sup>3</sup> The overarching notion of 'Sin' and sinful acts inherited from the Biblical narratives of Sodom and Gomorrah continues to regulate the social imaginaries (Castoriadis, 1987; Zizek, 1991; Anderson, 1991; Shotter, 1993; Appadurai, 1996; Taylor, 2004) and vernacular slur among the *Zo hnahthlak*. The abominable sin of sodomy (anal penetration) began to define the homosexual man (*Tuai*) as '*mawngkuahur*' (lit. Insatiable rectum).<sup>4</sup>

(*c.f.* Post decriminalizing Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code by the Supreme Court of India.) The churches and the *Nexus of Patriarchy* fistedly began their policing regime in the 'this worldly' (lit. *khawvel*) activities through prohibition (lit. *Thiang lo*) in the real and the digitally configured virtual spaces.

---

<sup>3</sup> Zorampara (21 years, M, Versatile.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). *Personal Interview*. 12 March 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Lalsangzuala (25 years, M, Versatile; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). *Personal Interview*. 17 March 2010.

Cyberspace opens the possibility of disengaging the constrictions in the physical spaces and setting free the Zo queer towards a *khawvel* (lit. World) to way find survival, anonymity, and collective solidarity hinged on personal experiences of discrimination.<sup>5</sup> The Northeast as a region is markedly rigidified in practices that silence the amplification of questions concerning sexualities and gender and codified homophobia and transphobia in the name of ethno-national aspirations hinged on religiosity.<sup>6</sup>

Zo/Mizo modern women have broken through the glass ceiling and attained the position of determining their own agency through institutional initiatives. Over time, Zo/Mizo women have challenged patriarchal hegemony by forming women's organizations such as the MHIP- '*Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl*'; MHT- '*Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual*,' and PHP- '*Puitu Hmeichhe Pawl*,'<sup>7</sup> among others, to protect Mizo interests.

The MHIP's focus has shifted between reformation, empowerment, and protection of Mizo society's weakest links. For example, immediately following the signing of the Peace Accord and the formation of the State of Mizoram, the

---

<sup>5</sup> Zova (41 years, M, Bot.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Personal Interview. 24 February 2014.

<sup>6</sup> David. (33 years, M, Gay-Top.; Home Town: Lunglei, Mizoram). Personal Interview. 10th November 2011

<sup>7</sup> MHIP was formed on 6th July, 1974 at State Social Advisory Board office. The motive behind the formation of MHIP was that, when Mizoram was accorded Union Territory status, it was necessary to form a large organization in order to carry out various development schemes. MHIP was formed with the intention to include all women in Mizoram, when it was first formed, it was named "Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl" (United Organisation of Mizoram Women), which was later changed into "Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl" (United Organisation of Mizo Women) on 20th Aug, 1998. The change in nomenclature and the focus on 'Mizo' in place of the territorial name 'Mizoram' infused apprehension from fringe tribal communities and drove unease whether it encompassed all women irrespective of tribal divides in Mizoram or just the particular Mizo women. The MHIP continues to be the largest women's organization in Mizoram and all other women's organization such as Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl (MHTP) (Mizo Women's Organisation), Mara Chano Py (M.CH.P) (Mara Women's Organisation) from southern Mizoram are all affiliated to the larger umbrella of the MHIP.

MHIP declared 1987 to be '*Hmeichhe Kum*' (Women's Year), with the goal of bringing about changes in the existing patriarchies. 'Recognizing the Patriarchies' stalled response in the late 1990s, the MHIP shifted its focus to 'Women's Empowerment.' The MHIP designated 1997-2001 as 'Women's Year' in Mizoram in order to raise awareness about issues such as 'the low status of women in society' and 'to review Mizo customary law.' In this regard, the MHIP had toured the state, visiting remote and interior villages holding workshops, seminars, and group discussions.

The formation of these women's organization represents the second instance of rebellion against tradition in the Zo/Mizo society and also symbolizes the emergence of women from the spatial existence of the private to the public, and the creation of an external medium for women's voices to be echoed at the public level through '*Politics of Whispering Bamboo*'. These movements organized by women for themselves mark important multi-layered processes. First, the emergence of women from the spatial existence at 'the private' to 'the public' that is the flow of women's voices from the private '*Politics of Whispers*' to the public '*Politics of Whispering Bamboo*'.<sup>8</sup> Second, it reflects the attempt of women to be part of the socio-political mechanisms functioning in the society and thereby, become stakeholders in the state-building process itself. It is an attempt by women to create a space for their own voices and protect their rights as citizens and human persons.<sup>9</sup>

Through these organizations, Zo/Mizo women attempt to consolidate their 'positional order in Zo/Mizo society' and resurrect themselves from the patriarchy-scripted 'common disadvantages.' These organizations have fought for women's rights at various times and to varying degrees, ranging from reforms and revisions of Customary Rights, Property Rights, and Inheritance Rights, among others. These organizations also reflect the mobilization of women's voices in the Zo/Mizo society along the lines of 'common victimhood' and 'common disadvantages.' Women in the Zo/Mizo society have provided a breathing space for marginalized voices by constructing their own spatial zones. For example, an increasing number of Zo/Mizo women are turning to modern

---

<sup>8</sup> Chakraborty. (2008b). Op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Chakraborty. (2008b). Ibid.

sophisticated technologies to weave 'their cultures,' 'their identities,' into fabrics and handlooms. The traditional Mizo/Zo 'Puan' that women wear today is infused with cross-cultural patterns and colors. Similarly, an increasing number of rural women are becoming interested in horticulture and agriculture, and are striving for greater self-sufficiency through Self-Help Groups and organizational consolidation. Also, Zo/Mizo women have pursued higher education and entered male-dominated fields such as the bureaucracy, medical sciences, and the church. As a result, Zo/Mizo women have emerged as active participants in Mizoram's development. Though still a 'backbencher' in politics, Zo/Mizo women have discovered and carved out their spatial positions, actively challenging the traditional order of things. The emergence of women's organizations can be seen as an attempt to balance the skewed socio-politico-economic situation unique to the Zo/Mizo situation, and thus an effort towards women's empowerment through democratic mechanisms, as well as a move toward the realization of Human Development and sensitization of the patriarchy.

The mustering of empowerment through organizational initiatives of Mizo Women has come to meet its limits and dead-ends post 2006 with the compilation of *Customary Laws*.<sup>10</sup> The *Committee on Mizo Customary Laws (CMCL)* was established in 1980, and the Mizo Customary Laws Compiling Committee was established in 1982. The *Mizo Customary Law Committee* took twenty years to complete the task and produce the most recent version of *Mizo Hnam dan*, or *Mizo Customary Laws (2006)*. The Customary Board Committee was formed with the goal of revising/reforming Mizo customary laws and bringing them up to date with current needs. Surprisingly, those assigned the task

---

<sup>10</sup> N.E Parry compiled the Customary Laws in his book 'A monograph on Lushai custom and ceremonies' published in the year 1927. The authenticity of Parry's codified Lushai Customary Laws is densely contested for the reason that the colonial gaze could have injected prejudice and western ideas of jurisprudence, Christian ideas of morality, sin and punishment etc. In that sense the production of a codified 'Lushai Customary Laws' by a White person of privilege could have already transcended the notion of an "authentic", "true" interpretation of social order and customs of the Mizo society. In short, between the 'spoken word', the translation and codification in the form of a written text, much could have been affected by the colonial gaze, and missionary sanitization and the final 'filtered' product remotely distinct from the 'original'. Mizoram is the first state to have written customary laws among the states of North East India (ASC).

remained at odds on a number of issues. The 'Committee' appeared to be debating whether the committee's responsibility was to make changes and reform the laws or to compile and codify the customary laws.

#### IV

##### **Why did MHIP and the Rights of the Sexually Ambivalent disagree?**

Mizoram's religious authorities have taken a firm stand against homosexuality and other sexual orientations. Breaking off from its American counterpart, the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram is now officially independent. It was the latter that had allowed homosexuals to become priests. In 2011, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram's Synod Executive Committee circulated a circular to all of the denomination's local churches, outlining the Church's stance on sexual relationships and defending it with scriptural teachings of the Bible.

I locate the Gender Turn (G.T.)<sup>11</sup> in India, more to the ripples of the NALSA judgement. The Supreme Court of India in *National Legal Services Authority vs Union of India* on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014 passed a progressive judgement recognizing the Fundamental and Civil Rights of the Transgender person. The court ruled that transgender people should be treated as a third category of gender or as a socially and economically "backwards" class (Chakraborty in Upadhyaya Joshi, & Brassard (Ed.) 2020).

Communities in India have responded very differently to this G.T. Nevertheless, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram opposed discrimination and requested the church members to bring the *Kawngsual* (lit., those who strayed from God's teaching) to an alignment with the norms of Zo Christian ways of life. Inclusivity and accommodating diversity sans flamboyant visibility were

---

<sup>11</sup> By 'gender turn (G.T.)' I mean the vocality and visibility demanded by the ambivalent sexualities across an array of urban spaces and the Public Spheres (both real and virtual) in India, from the university campuses to public transport, sites of bonding and leisure, parks, museums, art galleries, art itself, fashion, memes, cinema, the creative realms and also institutional spaces which until 2014 were neatly hemmed and barricaded for those suffering from 'gender discriminations'.

mantras to overcome stigmatizing the sexually ambivalent.<sup>12</sup> The Churches wanted to tame the sexually deviant individuals and make them realize their sinful ways, bringing *mualpho*, *zathlak* (collective shame, disgrace) to the *Zo hnahthlak*.<sup>13</sup>

However, the message of accommodating the sexually ambivalent was met with some myriad responses. The Young Mizo Association, as an active component of the *Nexus of Patriarchy*, strongly condemned the Delhi High Court verdict scrapping Section 377. The women's organization MHIP aligned itself with the YMA and on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015, and expressed concern that the increased visibility of *tuai* (gay) and *Patil* (lesbian) in the Christian state of Mizoram would negatively affect society and the religion/church (*Vanglaini*, 15th September 2015).

The MHIP, on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, called a meeting with other NGOs, which was attended by the office-bearers of Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Upa Pawl (membership is for those who are 50 years and above), Mizo Zirlai Pawl and Mizo Students Union (MSU). They proclaimed that *tuai* and *Patil* (lesbians) are becoming bold and audacious in the city; therefore, they agreed on showing the sexually ambivalent their cordoned spaces in Mizo society. The *Nexus of Patriarchy* and the women's bodies, such as the MHIP, collectively invested in designs to regulate the lives of the sexually ambivalent men and women.<sup>14</sup> The hegemony of the *Nexus of Patriarchy* displaces women and other marginalized groups from positions of power and authority. Because of inherent sexism and forced subordination, this exclusively skewed phenomenon of displacement of women and marginal from the realms of politics - power and authority - is born. The MHIP has sought state intervention in order to have the *Indian Christian Marriage Act* (1872), the *Christian Marriage Bill* (1994), the *Christian Adoption and Maintenance Bill* (1994), the *Indian Succession (Amendment) Bill* (1994), and the *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence*

---

<sup>12</sup> Peter. (27 years, M, Gay-Top.; Home Town: Saiha, Mizoram). *Personal Interview*.05 November 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Ronny. (29 years, M, Gay-Top.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Telephone Interview.22 October 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Thara. (20 years, M, Gay-Bi-Versa.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Personal Interview.19 December 2015.

*Act* (2005) implemented, among other things. The *Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee* (ZKHC), a conglomeration of different churches, has strongly opposed the MHIP's demands. The *Nexus of Patriarchy* has expressed concern about these demands, claiming that they would undermine *Mizo Customary Laws* while also diluting the Zo People's local customs and ways of life. These interventions would also imply the infiltration of alien customs and ways of life into Zo/Mizo culture, which would pollute it. The State (Government of Mizoram) has evaded these demands citing that it cannot go against the *Kohhran* (Church) further affirming that the '*Kohhran* (Church) being '*thuber*' (final word)', the State (Government in Mizoram) could not uphold the proposals. Vanramchhuangi stated that "the Government feared that it would be ousted by the Churches, particularly the Synod, if it dared to bring institutional changes like 'marriage registration,' despite the fact that it felt perfectly comfortable openly undermining the Supreme Court of India's stand on 'marriage registration.'"<sup>15</sup>

An important question that has not yet been answered is: why did Mizo women and their largest collective the MHIP, despite being marginalized, not align with the sexually ambivalent and instead choose to agree with the patriarchal nexus to ban homosexuals from Mizoram? The answer could be gleaned from the Bible's influence on Zo culture. The MHIP's stance on the rights and representation of the sexually ambivalent in Mizoram is a microcosm of the difficulty of accommodating diversity in a deeply sexist society. This is an example of women conforming to, and acting in accordance with, the blueprints of gendered spaces and the normalization of gender stereotypes as outlined by patriarchy and biblical words.

## V

### **Varieties of Zo Masculinities**

The discussion in this section will complicate the degrees and variations in masculinities among the Zo people. The ethnographic accounts of Zo/Mizo men and masculinities in this study showed reluctance on the part of the sexually

---

<sup>15</sup> Pi Vanramchhuangi ('Ruafelanu') (Director HRLN Mizoram, Social Activist). Personal Interview. Chaltlang, Aizawl: 28 & 29 January 2008

ambivalent about participating in the Church service and religious gatherings. However, most informants continued to call themselves Christians and *the Pathian ring* (believers). Few respondents raised critical questions that require introspection on the part of the Churches. 'The Church says the *Mawngkuahur* who are out and proud are doomed to burn in *meidil* (fire in hell) after death.'<sup>16</sup> What about the closeted and those who indulge in same-sex in private? What about those who conceal their sexual orientation- the ambiguous sexualities, for instance, and are publicly active in the Church?<sup>17</sup> Does being a believer and being *Mawngkuahur* construct a sexually ambivalent lesser sin in the eyes of the Church?<sup>18</sup> Can the sexually ambivalent and the heterosexuals share the same God? Or does the sexually ambivalent Zo need to invest in a gay God?<sup>19</sup>

The prevalence of male effeminacy and "sissyphobia"—the fear or hatred of effeminate men— "fresh soft butt" (*mawng nau*) in a more comprehensive social, cultural, and political background adopts a culturally saturated and historically specific approach to queer masculinities in the Zo context.<sup>20</sup> For instance, Ziki mentioned that as a northeasterner in Delhi, she could pass off as a Thai Ladyboy and earn more clients. Her investment in skin care, beautification and concealment of native ethnic identity earned her stable clients looking for 'fresh meat' in the highly competitive, and youth centric gay prostitution market. 'The shelf life of fresh meat (here the youthful bottom) in the queer circles was short-lived. No one wants or desires an old/aged bottom. The *Tuai* as '*mawngkuahur*' is imagined to be a youthful insatiable rectum'.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to this the fresh meat (here the male genitals) in the context of the top/ the penetrator has an extendable shelf life. "The older tops were projected as experienced partners with the right positionality. The quintessential salt and

---

<sup>16</sup> Robin. (25 years, M, Gay-Top.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Personal Interview.05 March 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Kamlova. (47 years, M, Gay-Top.; Home Town: Kolasib, Mizoram). Personal Interview.09 February 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Hruiah. (15 years, M, Gay-Bot.; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Personal Interview.05 May 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Peter. Op.cit.

<sup>20</sup> Ziki. (46 years, M, Trans.; Home Town: Delhi/Aizawl, Mizoram) Personal Interview, 13 April 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Lalsangzuala. Op.cit.

pepper sugar daddies.”<sup>22</sup> The fresh meat image of young male persons explores the disjuncture between the culture of youth/being young and sexy, commodification of the male body, the queer gaze and desirability in Indian cities, and also, the Zo patriarchal attitudes. The tension between them tells us about gender roles and subjectivity in contemporary Mizo/Zo society. The *Mawng nau*, the lowest category of the *Mawngkuahur*, churns the standard of masculinities sparked by the images of the interplay between manhood and the assigned Zo male attribute of *tlawmngaihna*. For instance, Vanlalpeka mentioned that the very effeminate gays or twinks would be cornered and bullied in schools by the quintessential masculine Zo boys with *tilpawr aw* (coarse, broken voice).

These bullies would also be socially recognized active members and being *tlawmngaih* by organizations such as the YMA or the KTP.<sup>23</sup> These bullies would pass lewd comments on sissy boys and say that if oiled well and used passionately, in groups, the sissy boys could be impregnated.<sup>24</sup> The *mawng nau* was also stereotyped as the hungry butthole or the *mawng kham lo* (lit., untired ass/butt, or an ass that is not worn out, never satisfied). The sissyphobia inherent in the use of terms for degrees of maleness/ unmaleness and the fetishization of the body or specific parts of the male body reveals the deep-seated anxiety over the effeminate and how the younger effeminate is classed as ‘twinks’, ‘fresh meat’, ‘insatiable butthole). In either case, the effeminate male is reduced to the butt (*mawng*) and subject to stereotypes of anal intercourse.<sup>25</sup> The *Nexus of Patriarchy* and the Church bodies considered the *mawngkuahur* to be responsible for the high rates of HIV-Aids cases in Mizoram.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Kamlova. Op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> Vanlalpeka (16 years, M, Bi.; Home Town: Serchhip, Mizoram). Personal Interview. 26 September 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Hruiah. Op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Mimi. (17 years, M, Gay-Bi, Crossdresser; Home Town: Delhi/Lunglei, Mizoram) Personal Interview, 14 August 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Robin. Op.cit.

## VI

### **Ambivalent Masculinities: Leaving Home to find another Home**

This ethnography of the ambivalent Zo/Mizo conjures ambiguities and everyday interactions that could call into question and redefine existing gender, sexual stereotypes and spatial politics leveraging visibility. The northeast of India is marked by ostensible homogeneities amidst variegated heterogeneities (Chakraborty, 2021). 'Moving out' of the region into more secure spaces becomes one of the region's lived realities. As previously stated, push and pull factors have existed in the region for several decades. However, the trend of outmigration to megacities, primarily in search of job opportunities, did not occur quickly until the advent of globalization.

'Pink Migration'<sup>27</sup> within India to the metropolitan centers provides interesting insights into the trend of leaving 'home' searching for a newer 'home'. These cities become a gateway to survival, anonymity and a collective narrative of discrimination.<sup>28</sup> The queer Zo/Mizo negotiates its space through livelihood opportunities- a Pink economy/Pink market for any acquired skills and a chance to freely express choices and desire under the garb of anonymity.<sup>29</sup> Considering three critical underlying issues in the Pink economy/Pink market: 1) Gender perspectives on the urban labor market; 2) cities' role in ensuring social inclusivity; and, 3) public policy challenges and their gender ramifications, this discussion focuses on the urban labor market with a gender lens. Given

---

<sup>27</sup> Pink Migration refers to the flight/ migration of the ambivalent sexualities from their traditional home settings where prejudice against a sexual minority is high to elsewhere that is marginally safer. The relationship between sexuality and the decision to migrate is a severely understudied aspect of Migration, often assumed to be exclusively driven by income gaps between origin and destination countries. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/pink-migration-rising-tide-lgbt-migrants> retrieved on 01/05/2021

<sup>28</sup> Robertson (28 years, M, Versa.; Hotel in Kochi; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Personal Interview. 23 April 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Pink Economy/Pink Money/Pink Market or Rainbow Capitalism refers to the targeted inclusion of the gay community that has acquired sufficient purchasing power to generate a market-focused explicitly on the LGBTQIA.

Asia's rapid urbanization, urban dystopia visibly affects gender roles, frequently conjuring newer forms of risk due to migration for employment opportunities. In the context of inclusive growth, Asia's regulated and unregulated labor markets are rooted in the need for decent work and productive employment.

The sexually ambivalent Zo/Mizo workforce from the North-eastern borderlands has to negotiate numerous structural and socio-cultural hurdles in the urban spaces.<sup>30</sup> Simon, for instance, mentioned that his stepfather sexually exploited him during his childhood in Mizoram, and also later when he moved to Manipur to live at his maternal uncle's home. He was sexually abused both at home (by his maternal uncle/guardian) and in school (by his class teacher). Simon says, "I started enjoying being sexually used, I felt desirable, sexy. Boys and men found me sexy and sought my company".<sup>31</sup> Most of these men lived in larger families as *khual/awmpui* (lit., guests, household help) and engaged in unpaid household services. They were the subordinate males under a patriarch and lacked property rights. Being freeters and unsalaried/under paid, their positionality was that of subversion. In their aspiration to move out of their traditional family ties, they had to rely on sponsorships or loans for their travels without collateral from banks. This often resulted in being snared in the debt trap of high-interest rates from local moneylenders. Rural indebtedness, in this case, began before the take-off journey to find a pink sky. Few respondents also mentioned being sexually exploited by male relatives or men who hosted them in the urban spaces or at different turns of their migration network.<sup>32</sup>

Lower levels of education, lack of work experience, and linguistic unfamiliarity limit their opportunities in Indian cities.<sup>33</sup> The centralized nature of most institutions compel them to fall back on support networks in urban settings, so they are forced to rely on intermediaries to fulfill the requirements

---

<sup>30</sup> Simon (15 years, M, Top; Home Town: Churachanpur, Manipur). Personal Interview. 12th January 2019

<sup>31</sup> Simon. Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Lalhrualtuanga. (26 years, M, Bi; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram) Telephone Interview, 01 March 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Zoremkima (32 years, M, Top; Home Town: Shillong, Meghalaya). Telephone Interview. 27 September 2022.

and for information for a cost reduction.<sup>34</sup> Many of the Zo men could not move beyond the urban centers for work due to the limitations of language. These ethnographic accounts highlight the issues of increased 'invisibility' of migrants (Wilson, 2011) and the lack of data on them and the myriad forms of same-sex exploitations underneath.

Sexually ambivalent people have felt the guilt of being sinners and living in sin. Same-sex love and desires have been forbidden, and discussing homosexual desires is considered a sin. Being rejected, labeled a misfit, leaving 'home' in search of a newer 'home' becomes an indelible feature of the sexually ambivalent.

The sexually ambivalent's quest for 'Our Sky' manifests itself in the urban ecology to navigate liveability and sustainable urban spaces, as well as the dynamics within these spaces (Park and Burgess, 1925, Wirth, 1938, 1956). The urban spaces provide a visible queer movement's solidarity as well as avenues for community building and networking. The most visible form of solidarity are the 'Pride Parades,' which have taken center stage in India's urban spaces. In short, the sexually ambivalent are constantly looking for places to escape from their family and community.

Recent studies on cities have started to look at the city through the lens of processes and experiences within spaces and times, thereby making a case for locating individual experiences within a larger social context (Robinson, 2006; Srivastava, 2015). The growing preoccupation with understanding urban as a dynamic, processual social space (de Kooning, 2007) unraveled new forms of social interaction, hierarchies and segregation, creating its spatial regimes (de Neeve and Donner, 2006). One such interconnection was brought forth through the linkages between space and gender – 'city spaces as gendered spaces', limiting access to many sites creating new forms of gender inequality (Chakraborty in Upadhyaya Joshi, & Brassard (Ed.) 2020). The promises of the neo-liberal economic policies for a better future through newly available employment opportunities, financial independence, autonomy/freedom and

---

<sup>34</sup> Lalremruata. (22 years, M, Top; Home Town: Aizawl, Mizoram). Telephone Interview. 02 March 2022.

anonymity (including concealment of their sexual orientation) accelerated the migrations to cities from peripheral spaces. They heightened the emotional exasperations of the ambivalent persons.<sup>35</sup>

The promises of the neo-liberal economic policies for a better future through newly available employment opportunities, financial independence, autonomy/freedom and anonymity (including concealment of their sexual orientation) accelerated the migrations to cities<sup>36</sup> from peripheral spaces.<sup>37</sup>

## VII

### **Ambivalent Masculinities: Staying back at Home**

The *tlawmngaihna* code and “being Zo Christians” drives men to assume greater visibility during these cleaning drives locally referred as *Vantlang hnatlang*. Few Mizoram respondents shared their experiences with *Vantlang hnahtlang* (community service), mentioning that the overarching moral code-*tlawmngaihna*, implies that men will be in charge of community service. To meet the expectations of women and the patriarchy, men are forced to show chivalry and sacrifice their individual interests. As a result, men in the Zo/Mizo become activists and environmental healers. They do all of the physical labor and actively serve the community by digging graveyards, providing social services, maintaining drains and roads during landslides, clearing forests, and fighting

---

<sup>35</sup> Lalhruaitluanga. Op.cit.

<sup>36</sup> The urban spaces provide solidarity of a visible queer movement and avenues for community building and networking. The most prominent solidarity display is the ‘Pride Parades’ that have taken centre-stage across urban spaces in India. In short, the sexually ambivalent are constantly seeking spaces that provide an escape from one’s kin and region. Pink Migration refers to the flight/ migration of the ambivalent sexualities from their traditional home settings where prejudice against a sexual minority is high to elsewhere that is marginally safer. The relationship between sexuality and the decision to migrate is a severely understudied aspect of Migration, often assumed to be exclusively driven by income gaps between origin and destination countries. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/pink-migration-rising-tide-lgbt-migrants> retrieved on 01/05/2021

<sup>37</sup> Lalhruaitluanga. Op.cit.

jungle fires. Zo/Mizo men are transformed into the epitome of ecomasculine masculinity. However, the community and critics are constantly questioning their visibility—where are the *tlawmngai* Zo/Mizo men? In a technology-mediated world of hyper-reality and virtual reality, women and those in positions of authority, as in most other cases, hog the photo opportunity, reveling in exhibition-‘we did it’ and posing with brooms and props.<sup>38</sup>

Though neoliberal enterprise finds Pink capital an appealing place to invest, it chooses to remain silent in the Northeast precisely because the Northeast as a region is markedly rigidified in practices that silence the amplification of questions about sexualities and gender, as well as codified homophobia and transphobia in the name of ethno-national aspirations based on religiosity.<sup>39</sup> For instance, Vanlalpeka mentioned that the very effeminate gays or twinks would be cornered and bullied in schools by the quintessential masculine Zo boys with *tilpawr aw* (coarse, broken voice). These bullies would also be socially recognized active members and being *tlawmngai* (lit., unconditioned service to people or community, male honor code) by organizations such as the YMA or the KTP.<sup>40</sup> Few other ambivalent men from Mizoram shared their experiences of being teased by women for not being *tlawmngai* enough. Even gay men were expected to follow the *tlawmngaihna* code and act like men. *The Patriarchal Nexus*, interestingly, denied any possible role for ambivalent men within churches and, by extension, in broader spheres of social and communal life.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Some Closing Thoughts***

Zo Men’s lives can be significantly influenced by gendered spaces. The rules for reproducing gender roles in and out of the ‘home’ are outlined in the *tlawmngaihna* code of chivalry. It began as a set of guidelines for how men should treat women, but it has since broadened to include all aspects of male behavior. Those who leave ‘home’ and those who live in ‘home,’ regardless of

---

<sup>38</sup> David. Op.cit.; Vanlalpeka. Op.cit.; Simon. Op.cit.; Zoremkima. Op.cit.

<sup>39</sup> David. Op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> Vanlalpeka. Op.cit.

<sup>41</sup> Lalsangzuala. Op.cit.

how gendered the space is, are constantly “homing” themselves in their everyday situations. Those forced to leave their homes frequently engage in homing practices elsewhere, such as chiseling an identity in defense of the community in which they are now living. The “Zo Christian ways of life” and the collective ethnonational code of *tlawmngaihna* shape the nuanced practice of men’s and masculinities’ individual and collective performances among the *Zo hnahthlak* (lit., Zo people).

### References

- Anderson, Benedict. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun. (1996) *Modernity at Large*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brannen, J. (Ed). (1992) *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. New York: Routledge
- Caracelli, Valerie J., & Jennifer. C. Greene. (Ed.). (1997) 'Advances in Mixed-Method Evaluation: The Challenges and Benefits of Integrating Diverse Paradigms'. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*. No. 74. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass .
- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. (2012) 'Construing and Gleaning the Vexing Notion of the "Outsider" in Mizoram: Pre-Statehood to Post-Statehood Times.' *QUEST: The Journal of UGC-HRDC* 6, no. 2, pp. 297–304.
- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. (2008 ) 'Emergence of Women from 'Private' to 'Public': A Narrative of Power Politics from Mizoram' *Journal of International Women's Studies (JIWS)*, Bridgewater. Vol. No. 9, 3 May,a, pp. 27- 45. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol9/iss3/3/>
- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. (2008) 'Manufacturing of Spaces: The 'Others' in Zo/Mizo Politics.' *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS)*. Vol.9 No.1, July-December, b, pp. 39-43.
- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. 'Negotiating the Queer and the Politics of Sexualities in Urban Spaces: Sanitized Spaces, Vocality, Display and Visibility in Kolkata City' in Divya Upadhyaya Joshi, & Caroline Brassard (Ed.). *Urban Spaces and Gender in Asia*: Springer Sustainable Development Goal Series: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Cham: Springer. 2020. pp. 109-129. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-36494-6\\_7](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-36494-6_7)

- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. (18th February 2009) 'Regulating Citizenship: Politics of "Check-In" and "Check-Out" in Mizoram, India.' Refugee Watch Online (A Co-Publication of Refugee Watch).
- Chakraborty, Anup Shekhar. (2021) 'Social Imaginaries, Minorities and the Postcolonial History of a Region' in G. Amarjit Sharma (Ed.). *State vs. Society in Northeast India: History, Politics and the Everyday*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 3-25.
- Chambers, O. A. (2005) *Hand Book of The Lushai Country*. Reprint, Kolkata: Firma K.L.M./Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. (1899)
- Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Second Edition). London: Sage Publications.
- De Kooning A.(2007) 'Many degrees of separation: Coffee Shops and Social Segregation in Cairo' in R.S. Sandhu & J. Sandhu. (Ed.). *Globalising Cities: Inequality and Segregation in Developing Countries*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, pp.65-86.
- de Neve Geert., and Henrike Donner (Ed.). (2006)*The Meaning of the Local: Politics of Place in Urban India*. London: Routledge/Cavendish, p 1-20.
- Elly, E. B. (1978) *Military Report on The Chin-Lushai Country*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.M. Private Ltd. (1893)
- Fuchs, Stephen. (1973) *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*. London/Madras: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Halberstam, Judith.(2005) "Queer Temporality & Postmodern Geographies," in Judith Halberstam. *In A Queer Time And Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press. pp.1-21.
- Halberstam, Judith. (1998) *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lewin, T. H. (1977) *A Fly on the Wheel*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.M. on behalf of Aizawl. Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. (1912)
- Lorrain, R. A. (1988) *Five Years in Unknown Jungles: For God and Empire*, 262. London/Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. (1912) 23

- Malhotra, Valerie Bentz., & Jeremy. J. Shapiro. (1998) *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Pachauu, Thangvunga. (1990) 'Champhai Zawl Leilet Chanchin.' *In Champhai Centenary Souvenir*. Champhai: The Souvenir Department, YMA Champhai.
- Park, R., & E. Burgess. (2012) *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Parry, N.E. (2009) *A Monograph on Lushai Customs & Ceremonies*. Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl.
- Robinson, J. (2006) *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. London: Routledge.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky.(1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (1993) *Tendencies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (2003) *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Shakespear, L. W. (1927 , Reprint 1977). *History of The Assam Rifles*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.M. Pvt. Ltd., Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.
- Shotter, John.(1993) *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Construction, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Singh, K. S., B. B. Goswami, C. Nunthara, and N. N. Sengupta, (Ed.) (1995) *People of India: Mizoram*, Vol. XXXIII. Anthropological Survey of India. Calcutta: Seagull Books.
- Srivastava, S. (2015).*Entangled Urbanism: Slum, Gated Community, and Shopping Mall in Delhi and Gurgaon*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sunar, Pradip, Jeevan Kawar, and I. K. Subba. (2000).*The Gorkhas of Mizoram*. Vol. I. Aizawl: Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union (MGSU).
- Taylor, Charles. (2004) *.Modern Social Imaginaries*. Duke University Press,

- Teddlie, C., & A. Tashakkori. (2003) 'Major Issues and Controversies in the Use of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioural Sciences' in A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie. (Ed.) *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. London: Sage Publications, 24
- Wilson, W. J. (2011). *When Work Disappears: The World of The New Urban Poor*. Vintage.
- Wirth, L. (1938) 'Urbanism as a Way of Life.' *American Journal of Sociology* 44(1), pp. 1-24.
- Zizek, Slavoj. (1991) *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. University Press.