

## MARALAND WEBS

*Maraland on the webs*

---

### Maraland

#### Maraland – Introduction

Maraland is one of the three autonomous district councils within Mizoram covering 1442sq.kms of the southern tip of Mizoram State of the Union India. The inhabitants are mainly isolated from the rest of their countrymen geographically and in many ways due to mal-communications and transportations. Their immediate neighbours are the Lais(Pawis as known to some) – who are the inhabitants of another autonomous district council(L.A.D.C) within Mizoram State, are in the north and in the West; Myanmarese in the East and in the South. Thus, she shares an international boundary with Myanmar(formerly Burma) for about 450kms in the east and in the south.

Maraland is inhabited by five different dialect speaking people, who called themselves the Maras. The five are Tlosai, Hawthai, Zyhno, Chapi and Vytu. But outsider, mainly the Mizo-Lusheis called them as ‘The Lakher’; by this very name an Englishman by name N.E Perry, an I.C.S in British-India had penned a book about the Maras. It is the sole book published so far relating to the Mara people. But much of his writing was influenced by the interpreter who were the Mizo-Lusheis, and may not valid in all aspects.

The Maraland-within-India would be a better word to describe as a larger section of the Maras are also living in the neighbouring country, i.e. Myanmar(formerly Burma). In fact, when we referred to the word ‘Maraland’ it covers the Maraland in India and in Myanmar. The Maraland within Myanmar is a more fertile land and more populous as well, but the junta government in Yangon never gives any interest and it remains unexplored, un-touched land till today...(for more info. please refer Indo-Myanmar Maraland Maps).

By religion the Maras are cent percent Christians. For more detail please go to ‘Churches’ section.

Out of over 100,000 Mara people, around 46,000 Maras are living in the Mara Autonomous District Council in India. The rest comes under the government of Myanmar.

Though the partition was a bitter experience for the Maras, who have chosen to part with India or Myanmar purely on the communications and transportation factors as there is the biggest river- R. Kolodyne flowing in the middle of the land. The people in the East of the river choose to part with Myanmar as it will be more accessible for them to get their daily necessities from Haka township and Sittwe township, so also the Maras who lives in the west of the river also choose to part with India as getting salt 😊 will be easier from Tlabung town.

It may sound silly to have chosen two separate countries on the basis of mal-communications and transportations. But the reality is that during rainy season starting from May to mid-September, people from the other side could hardly manage to cross the river as there was and is no proper bridge and boat to ferry people across the river till today.

Nevertheless, the Maras have happily adjusted themselves with their adopted countries. They have never rebelled against the power and the authority of the central governments in their adopted countries.

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO MARA DISTRICT OF SOUTH MIZORAM INDIA

BY DR. K. ZOHRA  
LECTURER, GOVERNMENT SAIHA COLLEGE  
MIZORAM, INDIA.

The Maras occupy the southern portion of Mizoram, the hill tracts situated in the areas of Indo-Myanmar border. The whole region inhabited by the Maras is commonly called "Marara" in the local language meaning the "land of the Maras" or "Maraland". In the early British period, it was popularly known to the Britishers as "Lakherland" as the Maras were then designated as "Lakher". In 1922, the whole region occupied by them was divided up into different parts among the three districts viz the Lushai hills, the Chin Hills and the Arkan Hill Tracts. From 1924, the Maras villages which had fallen to the Lushai hills had been administered as part of the district under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. In 1953, the Mara area of the erstwhile Lushai Hills was loosely amalgamated with the Lai area to create an autonomous region under the name "Pawi-Lakher Region" under the Sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Capt. T.H. Lewin used the term "Lakher-Pawi" in his account while he visited the southern Mizoram in the year 1865-66. Under the same context, in 1972, the Mara area was again separated from the Lai area to form an autonomous district under the name "Lakher District" which was again rechristened into "Mara District" in 1988. Saiha, locally known as Siaha is the capital town of the Mara Autonomous District, and also the headquarters of the Chhimituipui District, which is now changed into Saiha District. Tuipang also known to the Maras as "Tipa" is the sub-headquarters of the Mara autonomous District.

The Mara Autonomous District lies in the loop of the Kolodyne river between the latitude 21'.50' and 20degree.35' North and between the longitude 92degree 55' and 93degree 35' East. Situated in the southern part of the Mizoram, it covers an area of about 1445 square kilometres. It is flanked on the north and east by the Lai Autonomous District of Mizoram and on the east and the south by the Chin State of Myanmar. Geographically, the Mara Autonomous District is isolated from the rest of India both its distance and forbidding nature of hills terrain. Steep hill ranges running in different directions pludge the features. Hills ranges are separated from one another by ridges and forrows. The average height of these range is about 900-1500 metres. There are a number of high peaks. The Mawma with a height of 2050 metres is the highest mountain in the Mara district. There are more prominent mountains like the Tliatlu 1941 metres, the Kahrie 1918 metres and many others hill ranges. In almost every dimension numerous summits, valleys and huge precipices of every description are noticed but there is only one plateau, the Pala-Khaikhy which covers an area of about 180 hectares.

Several rivers run through the land. The more prominent rivers are the Beino, otherwise known as Kolodyne, the Tisi, the Pala, the Lakie, the Sarau, the Titlao and the Salyu. The first named river is the biggest, and is also known as Kolodyne or Chhimituipui which means "the big rivers of the south". This river has its source in the Lai lake of the Chin State of Myanmar and after a course due south it makes abrupt turn in the Indo-Myanmar bordering areas and then after running south it joins the Bay of Bengal. There are also many small rivers, brooks and streams in every rugged valley. Besides, there are also Lakes, the more important remarkable lakes are (1) the Pala Tipa (Pala lake) is the biggest lake situated in the southern part of the Mara Autonomous District and the lake has a depth of twelve metres, covering an area of about one square kilometres. (2) Beihlo Tipa (Beihlo Lake) is also located close to the Pala Tipa, and is locally known to the Maras as "Tipa Ataw". (3) Chhohmo Lake is also situated near the Pala Tipa, and this lake is also locally known as "Tipa Apino". (4) Hmolai Lake is also situated near Khaikhy village of southern part of the district. Some of the rivers drain towards the north-south directions. These rivers are abound with many varieties of fish of which the biggest is the cat fish. Even crocodiles are also found in the Kolodyne river, a fact indicating its size and connection with the Bay of Bengal.

Lying below the striking point of the Tropic of Cancer, the Mara District is bestowed with a pleasant climate enjoying cool in summer and temperate winter. There is, therefore, no extreme variation of temperature throughout the year; the temperature averaging 18 degree C in winter 31 degree C in summer. Due to the variation in altitudes and features, some places are subjected to tropical and sub-tropical climate whereas the rest has temperate and sub-temperate climate. Monsoon period which falls from May to September brings heavy rain with violent storm, average annual rainfall is 240.6cm. During the monsoon season the rain water rushes down the hill sides causing landslides and soil erosion, and some rivers swell up with great concussion, while in winter they dry up quickly. The most remarkable flood occurred in 1989 and in 1995.

The Mara District is very rich in forest resources. The entire area is covered with thick forest which is a continuation of Mizoram hill system. About 289 square kilometres of the area is under forest of which reserve forest occupies above 82 square kilometres the protected Reserve Forest covers 20.5 square kilometres, and Riverine Reserved Forest 72.5 square kilometres. The hills are covered with tropical jungles with evergreen enchanting. Several kinds of trees including flowering ones and variety of bamboo are in great abundance. The scenery of the jungle throughout the land is very picturesque, the hill and valleys are densely covered with boundless forest. Large areas of the forest have, however, been destroyed by the Maras over the years without any attention to the plantation. However, in late years, due to the efforts of the Mara Autonomous District Council, the hills are regaining their old picture with new plantation of many new species of trees.

The tropical jungle with its favourable climate makes the land an ideal sanctuary for wild animals. Large varieties of wild animals are found in the forest. These include elephant, mithun, tiger, bear, deer, varieties of monkey and ape. At present there are two Asian elephants. Recently, on 24/8/2001 by 9:30PM one elephant killed a young man Mr. Jacob J. Chahnei, 34 years old of Mipu village of the Mara District. This is the only incidence committed by the elephants. Formerly, rhinoceros were also found in the Pala area, southern part of the Mara Autonomous District, but they are now completely extinct. It has been reported that Mr. H. Hmokha of Zyhno village had killed one hundred rhinoceros. This is rightly recorded in his memorial stone laid near Siatlai village. Several varieties of bird, jungle fowl, black pheasant, partridge, etc. are also found. In the past wild animals were extremely numerous but their number has been fast decreased due to the devastation of forest and indiscriminate killing of wild animals and birds. According to the office records of the Deputy Commissioner, Saiha, there are 1289 arms as on the registration made upto 2001.

### **MARA PEOPLE:**

The Maras were in early period known to the outside world under different tribal names such as Mara, Lakher, Shendu or Shendoo, Maring, Zyu or Zao/Zho, Tlosai, Khongzai, etc. They constitute a distinct tribal group lying in Saiha district of south Mizoram. They called themselves "Maras".

The word "Mara" is used as a generic term for the whole Mara people. And as such the different tribal sub-groups or clans of the Maras who inhabit the entire perimeter of the present Mara Autonomous District of Mizoram and the hill tracts of the erstwhile south Haka sub-Division of the Chin Hills of Myanmar and whose culture, traditions, dialect, etc. being closely similar are commonly designated as "Mara".

The generic term "Mara" includes several territorial sub-groups namely the Sizo-Chapi, Hawthai, Hlaipao - Zyhno, Iana or Vytu, Lochei and Tlosai. The Hlaipao has a number of sub-groups such as the Heima, Lialai and Zyhno. The Sizo sub-group are the Aru, Chapi, Khihlo, Lialaira, Ratu, Saby, Sosai, Taikua, Tikei, Tisi, etc. The Tlosai sub-group are the Saikao and Siaha. The three territorial sub-groups such as the Hawthai, Lochei and Iana had no sub-groups.

The Maras are widely distributed but the greater number of them are found in the Mara Autonomous District. According to the 1971 census, the total population of the Maras in Mizoram is 24,365. The District Census of 1987 puts the figure at 24,365 and the Census record of the Mara Autonomous District Council puts it as 37,112. According to 1998 Census Report of the Mara Autonomous District is 47,984, female 23,202, male 24,782. At present there are 50 villages, and 59 village councils within the Mara Autonomous District.

The Maras belong to Mongoloid, the eastern third mankind. They belong to central Chin sub-groups of the Kuki group of the Assam-Burma branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. Some writers have classed them as a number of the Kuki section.

In Mizoram, the word "Kuki" is not like by any tribe. Other writers also class the Maras as Chin people. The Chins are a group of hill tribes speaking various dialects of the same Tibeto-Burman speech and calling themselves by various tribal names. All are, however, placed in the Kuki Chin group. All tribes do not recognise the name "Chin", but call themselves "Yo" or "Zo" in the north, "Lai" in the centre and "Sho" in the south, besides many other tribal names.

However, the Maras do not call themselves "Chin" or "Kuki", but designate themselves as "Mara". The ethnological classification made by various linguists and anthropologists brings out clear picture of about the tribal groups living in the North Eastern India.

### **DISTRIBUTION:**

The Maras are also found in considerable strength in the south Haka sub-division of the Chin state of Myanmar. At present there are 61 villages and the total population is 29735. The majority of the people are Evangelical Church with its headquarters at Sabypi. The following is the Church report of 2001 taken from the office of the Mara Evangelical church. (details to be shown shortly).

### **SAWLAKIA : THE TRIBAL FOLK DANCE OF THE MARAS**

Dr K. Zohra.  
Senior Lecturer,  
Government Siaha College  
Siaha, Mizoram 796901

The Sawlakia, which means, 'The dance of the spirit of the slain' was a war-like dance performed over the heads of the slain killed in the war. It was usually performed only at the Ia ceremony. The warriors danced the Sawlakia round the heads to please the evil spirit of the slain for total subjugation and transfer of the soul substance of the slain to the slayer when the latter died.

The Sawlakia dance was mild and enjoyable accompanied with the regular beats of the different GONGS (Dawkho), Viadaw, and Baotla. It was simple, customarily performed by the warriors who brought the triumphant trophy, marching around the head in a circle movement. Capt. Lewin described it as "a stage to triumphal march". The warrior or "Riapaw" who had taken the heads customarily led the dance, and he wore topical regalia, a plume called "Chhytli" or "Rabo" in his hair. He held a ceremonial dao "Vaina" in his right hand, and other men dancers bore other different weapons, which were clanked together as the dancers moved. Spearman called "A wild sort of war-dance with Dhas and shields".

The Sawlakia Dance has Three steps:

1) Sawlakia

- 2) Chaochhipa
- 3) Dawlakia

### **ORIGIN:**

Local elders says that the Sawlakia dance was performed first by the 'Sizos' of the Mara subgroup in honour of their first appointed chief MAHLIE – 1 of the Chozah clan, who belonged to the Thathla Chins. Then, he held the post of the Village Chieftainship, and occupied his big house "Opi" in the later part of the 15th Century A.D. Thereafter the dance became more popular among the Sizo sub-groups and other sub-groups of the Maras. It was originally danced only at the 'Ia' ceremony, and later it was also performed at "Opichho" ceremony.

The local elders and scholars believed that the Sawlakia was originated from the head-hunting practice which was traditionally practiced by the early Maras since the time immemorial. It is however, difficult to give the chronological date of the origin of the Sawlakia and the practice of the head-hunting.

Regarding the origin of the Sawlakia dance, there is a legendary story, which says that long ago while the Maras were living in the south Thlatla of the Chin Hills, the Tiger-men known as Hraila were frequently hunting men in the village forest, and spare no one who left outside the village fence. The villagers remained in the village for many days to save their life from the Tiger-men.

One day, the chief's wife sent one of her female slaves forcibly to collect firewood in the villge forest. The slave women went out alone at last, she reached a spot known as Teisaiby, where she met the Tiger-men. The Tiger-men performed a sort of dance, and tha girl then by imitation learnt such dance. After going back home, she narrated the whole incidence and started performed the dance.

The Sawlakia was the most primitive Folk-dance among the early Maras, handed down from generation to generation since the time immemorial. The Sawlakia was originally a simple war-like dance, but gradually developed through many generations by making remarkable improvement in its significance from time to time.

Later, it was improved and enriched by the development of Burman civilization, which brought about civilized goods like Gongs, Swords, Ceremonial Dao, etc., which made the dance more enjoyable and beautiful.

### **References:**

1. Hlychho Mylai : Mara History, ( Mara version) LLM Press, Saikao, 1962
2. Hlychho Pachi : Mara Folk Dance And Song, ( Mara version) Spectrum Publication Guwahati, 1992
3. Lewin T.H : Wild Race Of South Eastern India, Firma KLM(Pvt) Ltd. Calcutta-12, Reprint, 1978
4. Lorrain, R.A. Rev. : Five years in unknown Jungle for god and empire, Lakher Pioneer mission, London, 1912
5. Parry, N.E : The Lakhers Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta, Reprint, 1976
6. Spearman, H.R : British Burma Gazetteer, volume II, Rangoon, 1880
7. Zohra, Dr. K : The Maras of The Mizoram: A Study of their History and culture, unpublished thesis, Guwahati University, 1994

8. Zohra, Dr. K : The Maras : Their Indegenous Tribal Traditions And Folk-Culture, unpublished manuscript, pp.22

Source: Maraland.net

### Sponsored Content



**Si necesitas pasar el tiempo, este juego clásico es imprescindible. Juega sin instalar.**

Forge of Empires | Sponsored



**Próstata: un simple gesto diario para aliviarla**

Laboratorios Cell'innov | Sponsored



**Precios cómodos en laptops modernas.**

Portátiles | Anuncios de búsqueda | Sponsored

MARALAND WEBS

*Blog at WordPress.com.*