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## Therianthropes in Mizo Culture

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**Abstract--** A therianthrope is a mythological or folkloric being combining human and animal attributes, such as a werewolf. In modern sub-cultures, it refers to an individual who experiences an involuntary, personal, or spiritual identification as a non-human animal. Under Mythological & Historical Roots folklore and deities describes creatures that shape shift between human and animal forms, or deities with mixed anatomy. Examples include ancient Egyptian gods (like Sekhmet), the Greek Minotaur, and shape-shifting legends like the Japanese Hengeyokai. Another root is prehistoric Art which are cave paintings dating back tens of thousands of years depict composite human-animal figures, suggesting therianthropes have deep historical roots in shamanistic or spiritual practices.

Mizo tribes live in Mizoram, one of the states in northeastern India, Aizawl is the capital and the largest city within the state. It shares international borders with Bangladesh to the west, and Myanmar to the east and south, and domestic borders with the Indian states of Assam, Manipur, and Tripura. The term Mizo has evolved into a broad ethnic classification, encompassing various subgroups and clans inhabiting the area as well as clans from surrounding areas, historically known as the Lushai Hills. Many speakers of Central Kuki-Chin languages have also adopted the Mizo identity while others have not. The second component, ram, means "land" or "forest". So, Mizoram can be translated into "land of the Mizos" or simply "Mizo land."

Like many ethnic groups in Northeast India, the origin of the Mizo people are covered in mystery and intertwined with threads of oral tradition and linguistic analysis. There cannot be a definitive and conclusive historical narrative except through examination of folklore, linguistic connections, and anthropological studies which gives us a glimpse into the possible pathways of their ancestors. The article will study two keimi (weremen) who lives among the normal people. The story is a folktale developed from oral narrative.

**Keywords--** Therianthropes, Mizo, Keimi (weremen), Keimingi, Hlawndawhthanga.

The study of therianthropy is an area which deals with humanity, it can be a unique subject that may sound unusual to those who may not believe in it. Since ancient times the presence of man-human being exists which can be proved from evidences that prevails through generations. All countries of the world experienced these beings either in the form of an animal or spirits, a non-human form of beings.

The term originates from the Greek words thērion (wild beast) and anthrōpos (human being).

According to the Greek- thērianthrōpos means beast-man (from thēri- therio- + anthrōpos man, human being). So a therianthrope (or therian) is someone who experiences animalistic traits. Studies show that theriomys (mythical beasts such as dragons) are among these and it is an individual choice if they consider themselves to be therianthropes or other kin. There are many theories as to why therianthropy is experienced. Some believe their therianthropy to be caused through reincarnation or misplaced souls, while others attribute it to scientific or psychological reasons such as imprinting, an innate predisposition, abnormalities in neurological wiring, or any of a number of various other theories.

The existence of animals within the human psyche had been experienced by the upper Paleolithic men and visualized in either the San rock arts of Southern Africa or the rock arts explored in the districts of Nawada, Jamui, Nalanda and Gaya of Bihar and Giridih and Kodarma districts of Jharkhand in Eastern India. The Paleolithic practice of imaging therianthropes is also continued at present in the use of animal masks in different ritualistic performances done by the various tribes all over India like the Bison Horn Maria tribe at Bastar in Chattisgarh or the Rajbangshis at Uttar Dinajpur in West Bengal. The development of therianthropic gods like Dionysus, Echidna, the Centaur of Greek mythology, the Fauns in Roman mythology, and Narasingha and Ganesha in Indian mythology are archaic to heal the human world from Centaur of Greek mythology various diseases, and natural catastrophes.

In Southeast Alaska the complex nature of conflict, peace, and mutual accommodation between Tlingits and keystone predator species, including brown bear and wolf is evident from various studies. These relationships include inter-marriage, competition for resources and habitats, mutual tracking, stalking, killing and consumption, totemism, animism, and interspecies transformations. An indigenous theory of human-animal relations and conflict management is developed from these cases.

A therianthrope (often shortened to "therian") is a mythological or folkloric being combining human and animal attributes, such as a werewolf. In modern sub-cultures, it refers to an individual who experiences an involuntary, personal, or spiritual identification as a non-human animal.

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Hlawndawhthanga was a man who was accidentally transformed into a tiger along with his brothers. A man named Laizahrelina had three sons: the eldest was Hlawndawhthanga, the second was Laicherhnauma, and the youngest was Zahrama. They had a sister named Ngunchiangi, who was exceptionally beautiful and gifted in composing songs.

Ngunchiangi's beauty and poetic talent remain among the most celebrated legends of the Pawi (one of the Mizo clan) people. The three brothers loved one another dearly. They were strong, handsome, and admired by many young women. Their family was respected in the village for their prosperity and good reputation. Their only sister, Ngunchiangi, was deeply loved by her brothers. Since the family was well off, they rarely allowed her to do any hard work. Although they lived happily, they still faced life's ordinary hardships. They worked diligently and joyfully together and looked forward to the day when they would each have families of their own.

During the hot season, water became scarce in the jhum where they plant rice and the family had to fetch water from distant places. One particularly hot day, Hlawndawhthanga went into the forest to search for water while his brothers continued working. After wandering for a long time, he found a small pool of red-coloured water hidden inside a tree trunk. Delighted, he drank deeply and filled his bamboo water container, his brothers, exhausted and thirsty, also drank from the water he had brought. But shortly afterward Hlawndawhthanga's body began to change and before long he transformed into a tiger. His two brothers also underwent the same transformation.

A traveler saw the three tigers near their jhum and intended to warn the brothers but was unable to find them. The brothers wandered in the forest as tigers killing cow and other animals. The traveler related what he had witnessed in the forest and their family believed them to be devoured by the tigers.

Three days later, to everyone's amazement, the brothers returned home carrying their tools as if nothing had happened. When people asked where they had been, the brothers themselves could not explain. From then on they discovered that they could change into tigers whenever they wished. At first they kept this secret hidden. However, livestock in the village began disappearing regularly, and no one knew why.

Ngunchiangi noticed something unusual. Although many villagers lost pigs to tiger attacks, her family's pigs were never harmed. She also observed that her brothers were never home whenever livestock disappeared. She secretly told her father, and together they watched the brothers carefully. Eventually they discovered the truth—the three brothers were the mysterious tigers responsible for the attacks.

When the whole village learned the truth, the brothers realized they could no longer remain among people. They left the village and lived in the wilderness, avoiding human contact.



Hlawndawhthanga often warned his younger brothers not to attack livestock unnecessarily, but they ignored his advice. Before long, Laicherhnauma and Zahrama were killed by hunters. He alone survived, becoming increasingly fierce and solitary.

In another village lived a young woman who suffered under a cruel stepmother. Because everyone feared Hlawndawhthanga, no one dared venture into the forest, but the stepmother forced the girl to gather firewood. While collecting wood near a rocky place, she met a remarkably handsome young man sitting on a large rock. He greeted her kindly and asked why no one from her village came into the forest.

The girl explained that everyone feared Hlawndawhthanga. The young man asked why she herself had come. She answered that her stepmother had forced her. The young man comforted her and helped her gather firewood. When they finished, he instructed her: "Go straight home. Do not look back until you reach the hill. When you get home, leave your firewood in the yard. Whatever your stepmother tells you, do not obey her." The girl followed his instructions. When she finally looked back from the hill, she saw that the handsome young man had transformed into a gigantic tiger—it was Hlawndawhthanga himself. Terrified, she hurried home.

That evening the firewood still lay untouched in the yard. The stepmother angrily ordered the girl to hoard it in a proper place, but she firmly refused, remembering Hlawndawhthanga's warning. The stepmother then decided to do it herself. As soon as she bent down to gather the wood, Hlawndawhthanga suddenly appeared, seized her, and killed her.

Not long afterward, the young woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. According to the legend, this child became the ancestor of Hlawndawhthanga's descendants called the Pawi clan.

Another Mizo was Keimingi: In a village a brave and exceptionally skilled hunter named Khualtungamtawna (also called Hualtungamtawna) lived. He was a handsome young man whose fame spread far and wide because of his remarkable hunting ability. The walls of his house were decorated with the heads of many animals he had killed, including tigers and wild boars, and his wealth reflected his success as a hunter. As a result, he was respected and admired by everyone.

In a neighboring village called Keimi (village of were men) lived a chief who had a beautiful daughter named Keimingi. She had two maternal uncles. They knew that Khualtungamtawna often hunted and killed tigers that were regarded as relatives or sacred by their people.

Because of this, they hated him and wished to kill him, although they had never found the right opportunity. One day, while they were still waiting for such a chance, Khualtungamtawna happened to visit their village.

When Khualtungamtawna arrived, he saw Keimingi splitting firewood in the courtyard. Struck by her beauty, he asked his companions, "Who is that young woman splitting wood? She is incredibly beautiful!" He tidied himself before approaching her. They introduced themselves to one another, and he helped her finish splitting the wood. Afterwards, they went into the house together, shared refreshments, and then he returned home with his companions.

From that day on, Khualtungamtawna fell deeply in love with Keimingi and wished to marry her. Her parents secretly hoped this marriage would eventually give them an opportunity to kill him so they agreed to the proposal. A grand wedding was held. However, despite the splendid ceremony, peace did not exist in their household. Their married life was filled with constant quarrels and tension from the very beginning.

One day, Keimingi and her husband's illegitimate young daughter, Chemtei, went into the forest to collect firewood. After gathering enough, Keimingi suggested they stop and observe the forest. Suddenly, she transformed into a tiger and began prowling around. She caught a nearby deer and devoured it greedily. Chemtei was horrified. Terrified, she ran home and told her father everything she had seen. The frightening sight made her so distressed that she even became ill.

Later, Khualtungamtawna invited Keimingi's two uncles to visit his home for a pig slaughtering feast. When they arrived, they saw the tiger heads displayed on his walls and became furious. They secretly began planning how to take revenge against him.

That night, after everyone had gone to sleep, Keimingi's two uncles quietly began chanting a mourning song beneath the tiger heads hanging on the wall:

"Oh! Our dear brothers,  
Wild beasts were hunted by you;  
But your heads adorn the wall now  
"Oh! Our dear brothers,"

Chemtei heard them and frightened that they intended to kill his father, she woke him up begging him to accompany her outside, pretending that she needed to relieve himself. Once outside, she revealed everything she had overheard. Realizing the danger, her father stayed awake for the rest of the night. He kept the fire burning and deliberately made noise until dawn, preventing the visitors from carrying out their plan.

The following morning, Khualtungamtawna instructed the young men to drive a pig into the pen. Meanwhile, Keimingi's two uncles climbed up a tree, hoping to ambush and kill him. However, he spotted them first. With great speed and accuracy, he shot arrows at them and killed both men. When she learned that her two beloved uncles had been killed, she became overwhelmed with grief and anger. From that day on, she thought only of taking revenge on her husband.

Khualtungamtawna knew that his wife would seek revenge and therefore remained constantly on his guard. One day he lovingly told her, "Ask for anything you desire, and I will get it for you." Keimingi requested the meat of a rare giant deer with magnificent antlers. Without hesitation, he took his hunting dog and set off into the forest to fulfill her wish. He cleverly surrounded the forest, driving many deer into the open and killing nearly all of them. Only one enormous stag remained—a legendary animal with huge antlers capable of deflecting arrows. A fierce battle followed between the hunter and the mighty deer.

Khualtungamtawna wounded it many times, but the creature was extraordinarily powerful and refused to die. During the struggle he climbed up several trees that were previously arranged by him. Finally he leapt onto a tree called Phuanberh. Unfortunately, its branches broke beneath him. He fell to the ground, was badly injured, and lay dying.

Before breathing his last, he called his faithful dog and instructed it carefully to lead the villagers to his body. They will first try carrying him through the main doorway, but they will fail. So he must bring them instead to the dog's entrance, where his body will fit. When Keimingi tries to sweep the house after the funeral, the dog will sit firmly on the broom. If she insults or strikes him, he will bite her ankle. The loyal dog obeyed every instruction.

The dog returned to the village without its master, leading everyone to suspect that something terrible had happened. The villagers followed it and eventually discovered his body. They were unable to carry the body on a stretcher made of wood, but on a stretcher of foliage. Just as he had foretold, they could not fit the body through the main doorway, but it passed easily through the dog's entrance.

Keimingi wept loudly during the funeral, appearing heartbroken before the villagers. In reality, she secretly rejoiced, believing that she had finally avenged her uncles. After most of the mourners had left, she began sweeping the house. The faithful dog sat firmly on the broom as instructed. Irritated, Keimingi shouted, "You filthy dog!" and struck it. Instantly, the dog leapt forward and bit her on the ankle. Although she survived the attack, she never fully recovered. She lived the rest of her life in misery and illness before eventually dying.

Khualtungamtawna was buried beneath a great banyan tree, just as he had wished. The story concludes by explaining the origin of a traditional belief: the descendants of his faithful dog, known as the Chinghnia (wolf), were said always to leave the heart and liver of any animal they killed beneath a banyan tree in memory of their master.

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