The term puan in Mizo means cloth in general and denotes, in particular, the traditional costume of Mizo women and men. The traditional way of wearing a puan is to wrap it around oneself from the waist to the ankle. The length of the puan is normally sixty to sixty-five inches. Loin-loom is used to weave the puan and it takes a week or more to finish a plain puan, and a month or more for one with patterns.

Some of the most important traditional Mizo puan are:

1. Puanchei or Puan Laisen
   In literal terms, puan means cloth, chei means to decorate, lai means middle and sen means red. Both terms above mean ‘decorated cloth’ or ‘cloth with a red middle’. In Puan Laisen, the red colour runs through the middle horizontally. It was and is still used for wedding costumes and for very special festivals and dances.

2. Ngotekherh or Puan Hruih
   This is also an important Mizo traditional puan. The older term used for this puan is Puan Hruih. Hruih is a technique of weaving. The background of Ngotekherh or Puan Hruih is white with horizontal shadowy black stripes which is produced by using white and black weft alternately in the white vertical warp. Both men and women wear this puan.

3. Puandum
   When literally translated, this is ‘black cloth’, and assumes different names according to its different functions. The background is black and both the horizontal edges are red. The multicoloured bands are arranged horizontally between these edges. Traditionally though, it consists of black and red colours only. Puandum is very significant in Mizo culture.

4. Tawlhlopuan
   The attribute of courage or bravery is associated with this puan. The design of this puan consists of a black background with vertical stripes of red, yellow and white.

   Some of the Mizo traditional patterns integrated in the puan are good examples to illustrate man’s skill in translating artistic expressions. They are as follows:-

5. Lenbuang thuam
   Lenbuang is the name of a tree and thuam means ‘the junction of two or more boughs or branches’. This a very common pattern in a Mizo puan and is woven into different shapes.

6. Disul
   Di means ‘sungrass’ and sul mean, “the long grass or weeds on or by the side of a path which brush against passers-by and thus point in the direction in which they have gone.” This pattern is considered to emulate a design in the compounded word. It is also combined with other patterns.
7. Sakei zang zia or Keipui zia
The word sakei or keipui means ‘tiger’, zang means ‘the back of the animal’ and zia is ‘pattern’. This pattern emulates the striped pattern of a tiger’s skin.

8. Senior zeh or senior par
By the very term ‘senior’, it can be assumed that the pattern is a later improvisation. The word zeh means pattern and par means ‘to bloom’ and, here, it also means ‘flower’.

9. Sawththing par
Sawththing par means ‘ginger flower’. This pattern is combined with other patterns but generally the shape of ‘ginger flower’ is woven or placed on top of other designs.

10. Arsi par
Arsi means ‘star’ and par means ‘flower’. This pattern is an imitation of the stars in the sky.

11. Kikiu
Kikiu simply means ‘zig zag’. Within this pattern, smaller patterns of four or five are arranged in a diamond shape and are woven in zig zag pattern.

12. Kawkpui zik zial
Kawkpui is the name of a fern. Zik means ‘tender part of the leaf’ and zial means ‘twist or twirling’. It is a pattern that evolves from the twirling of the tender part of a fern at the tip.

13. Herhsawp par
Herhsawp means a bamboo stool. The pattern resembles the shape of the stool.

14. Pangpar
Different flowers like roses, tulips etc. are also used as patterns for the puan. In a puan with floral patterns and the colour combination is where the skill of the weaver is often reflected.

In modern Mizo puan, the traditional patterns have been modified and a number of new patterns that do not necessarily emulate nature or traditional tools have evolved. Some of them have a combination of different traditional patterns whereas some are just patterns without names.

References