Chapter – I

Historiography
Recent years have witnessed the emergence of a new and powerful interest in the study of cultural history, an interest that has produced important works in the social sciences. This has produced a play of a far-fetched array of theoretical, ideological, and methodological viewpoints. However in the case of history writing on the Mizos and by extension the entire North east, history writing has lacked theoretical and empirical soundness. This has thus reduced the enterprise of history writing to an exercise of mere documentation rather than a serious interdisciplinary pursuit. One of the prime recent for such a situation is mainly because the earlier writers about the Mizos were British administrators, anthropologists and the Christian missionaries; who had superficially looked at the Mizo society and tended to view their practices as ‘primitive’ taking a scale of advancement of contemporary west.

Moreover, their writings were mainly based on the Rankean tradition of ‘just to show how it actually was.’ This was the product of British administrators whose main aim was just to maintain records for the efficiency of administration. Thus most of the records on Mizos followed this method, which will be elaborated more in this chapter. The representations which they had implied on writing Mizo history has to be deconstructed as a first step towards preparing the ground for a proper understanding. In order to meet this demand we have to locate the sources of Mizo history in the context of historiography beginning from the colonial period and secondly to proceed to examine the limitations that have followed from the use of these sources, suggesting the alterations in history writing by combining different theories which have been shaped/stretched in accordance with the particular region. In this investigation we felt that it is essential to understand from the “Worldview” of the Mizos. Engaging with the process we should also try to highlight the possibility of periodizing Mizo history by using local knowledge of bamboo flowering (Mautam) as a marker of dividing the period.
1.1 Understanding Cultural history as “Worldview”:

The idea of culture sits at the heart of cultural history. Despite its widespread use in everyday communication, and perhaps because of its centrality to a range of academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, cultural history and cultural studies, the concept of culture remains complex and contested. If it is impossible to define culture, can we establish any parameters around the field of cultural history? Common theoretical touchstones for recent cultural history have included: Jurgen Habermas's formulation of the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*; Clifford Geertz's notion of 'thick description' (expounded in, for example, *The Interpretation of Cultures*); and the idea of memory as a cultural-historical category, as discussed in Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember*.¹

We shall examine how cultural history can be understood from the rubric of worldview. Umberto Eco in his book *A theory of Semiotics* subsumes the entire edifice of human culture under the discipline of semiotics. His two propositions are that:

1) the whole culture must be studied as a semiotic phenomenon
2) all aspects of culture can be studied as the contents of semiotic activity.

Stating it a bit differently he suggests that “the whole of culture should be studied as communicative phenomenon based on signification of systems” and that “only by studying it in this way can certain of its fundamental mechanism be clarified.”² In other words semiotics is best conceived as a general theory of culture, and all cultural realities can be explained and understood under the rubric of semiotics. This would include the cultural reality and the fundamental mechanism of Weltanschauung (Worldview). As a foundational component to

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¹ Extensive explanation on Cultural history can be found at *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere, An inquiry to into a category of Bourgeois society*
human culture then it is entirely appropriate to examine the nature and function of worldviews sub specie semiotica.

Consequently, we must connect semiotics as the science of signs with human subjects who use them so profusely. What is the nature of this apparently natural activity of making and managing signs- some in the form of dominant worldview? An answer may be found in essential semiotic nature of human persons. A defining trait of persons who possess logos is the ability to use one thing to stand another thing to section off one part of reality and employ it to refer to, mean, or stand for another part of reality. Most characteristically human being deploys sound in the form of speech to signify thoughts, feelings and ideas as well as people, places and things in the world. In turn they have developed a symbol of letters, words and written discourse to represent the same. By these primary semiotic activities people have been able to parse the cosmos and to create maps of reality.3

Recent thinkers have also emphasized the semiotic quality of human existence. For example, Charles Sanders Peirce recognized by many as the founder of modern semiology established his theory of signs on the notion that all thought and cognition and indeed human beings themselves are thoroughly semiotic in their basic nature. In his words, “the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign.”4 Furthermore, Pierce adopted what we might call a “semiotic worldview,” that is a pan semiotic view of the universe in which signs are not merely regarded as one class of things among many non semiotic objects, but where “the entire universe is perfuse with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.”5 Hence for Pierce semiotics characterizes not only the universe but also human beings as essentially sign-begetting and sign-bound creatures.

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3 For more comprehensive reading see, Everett M. Stowe; Communicating Reality through Symbols (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).
5 Ibid p.448
Ernst Cassirer in a similar manner posits in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that human beings are primarily symbol-creating animals and that the comprehension of reality is possible only by semiotic means. Cassirer thus promoted a pan semiotic epistemology, arguing that everything that has meaning is composed of “Symbolic forms.” This included such things as language, myth, art, religion, science and history each of which is based on its own set of symbolic laws and is independent of nature. According to Cassirer then sign systems are the only possible road to knowledge even though for him they do not in any way copy or imitate reality but instead create it.

Therefore it is clear that reading from their views we can argue that the power of signs and symbols vested across the whole spectrum of reality and human existence. They permeate the physical universe they are germane to all aspects of culture, they are essential to human thought, cognition, communication, they are efficacious instruments of either truth or falsehood. They create symbolic worlds in which people live, move and have their being. Indeed a certain string of symbols possess unique cultural power and determines the meaning of life. Those symbols which we can designate them as worldview. They provide a foundation and interpretation of life. They also inform the categories of consciousness and define human existence. Now the challenge which arises is that how this theory can be applied in our understanding of Mizo cultural history? Although Mizos belong to pre-literate society, symbols in different forms were practiced by them which spell out the meaning of their existence this will be elaborated more on chapter 4 of this thesis.

It is also worthy to note the contribution of Post-structuralist intervention on interpretation of worldview. In the pre-modern period there was substantial confidence on the part of the average westerner the Christian in particular to obtain a comprehensive review of the universe its facts as well as its values based

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on God and his self revelation in the Bible. In the modern period the center of gravity shifted from God to man, from scriptures to science, from revelation to reason in the confidence that human beings, beginning with themselves and their own methods of knowing could gain an understanding of the world, at least its facts if not its values. In the post-modern period confidence in humanity as an objective, omnipotent knower has been smashed, destroying any hopes of ascertaining the truth about the universe, its facts or its values. The result has been what Jean-Francois Lyotard has famously called an “incredulity towards meta-narratives,” or to paraphrase, a disbelief that any worldview or large scale interpretation of reality is true and ought to be believed of socially and linguistically constructed meaning systems, each unprivileged, non homogenous and thoroughly tolerated. To play with Heidegger’s lecture title, postmodernism is an age of world pictures and is characterised by “an incommensurable plurality ways of speech.” Post-structuralism attacked the traditional western confidence in language as bearing the freight of reality, and in the process have denied the accessibility to an extra-linguist domain of truth. All worldviews are reifications, the products of human construction and in human relations serves the interest of the stronger party in political ways.

We find approaches that can help us understand social scientific knowledge. Working at the interface of philosophy, history and literature, Jacques Derrida claimed that many key concepts are conjuring tricks for pretending that problems do not exist (using such a name as being, truth or objectivity to cover them up). Drawing upon Heideggerian phenomenology, Derrida placed such words ‘under erasure’, indicating their ambiguous status as inadequate but, in the absence of something better, it remains quite necessary. In particular, he argued that the concept of ‘the subject’ should be placed under

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erasure in the same way. Using the critical technique, Derridean discourse analysis destabilises the key ideas upon which western knowledge is grounded; i.e. in logocentrism. Rather than searching for some underlying foundation or essence, this approach suggests that we should map the conceptual landscape for the metaphoric and metonymic relations which provide a sense of order.

In order to meet this, we have to engage in the interrogation of texts to establish their organization around certain oppositional categories; such as true/false, rationality/irrationality, objective/subjective, masculinity/feminity and same/other. One side of the opposition is positively valued and placed in privileged position that is the dominant one. This approach has served well in the study of cultural differences where the distinction between same/other features heavily. By carefully mapping the relations of equivalence (of sameness) and difference (of otherness) we can identify the ways in which cultural differences are constructed around the ideas of insiders and outsiders and how they can be articulated with other oppositions, like rationality/irrationality, civilized/primitive, instrumental/expressive and so on. Cultures, identities and the boundaries used to mark the differences between them constantly shift through the dynamic practices of human beings which organize and recognize the built environment and their relationship to it.

Now the question is how we locate this theory in our understanding of cultural history of the Mizos. As we had already said the earlier writers about the history are the product of colonial legacy which had been followed even by the contemporary Mizo writers. The Logocentricism is a circle around God and they believed that they are civilized over the other cultures. Therefore, for the colonial writers and the internalized Mizo local writers the practices of the Mizos during the Pre-modern period are seen as an act of barbarism, animism etc. However, if we have to shift the centeredness of this Eurocentric view we have to locate how

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these symbols have meaning in their existence from the angle of Mizo worldview. The multi layers of meanings that are attached to its structure. Therefore the arrangement and construction of the buildings have a certain symbols and meanings. These artifacts can be read as a text carrying certain meanings to the reader which can be best understood from the worldview of the Mizos. The binary of looking at the meaning, for example Patriarchy is seen as the nature of the society. But the other side femininity has been neglected. This investigation will also try to highlight the role of women and how patriarchy is also constructed as a result of negotiating with nature.

Michel Foucault the greatest of Nietzsche's modern disciples was a historian, philosopher, literary critic and even more, the objectivity of his exhaustive investigations stated in his own words, was to “Create history of different modes by which in our culture, human beings are made subjects.” The plethora of cultural forces at play in shaping human life seems to be his primary object of investigation. As Edward Said explains, “he researched and revealed technologies of knowledge and self which beset society, made it governable, controllable, normal, even as these technologies developed their own uncontrollable drives, without limit or rationale. Additionally, on the critical level as the “philosopher of the death of man,” Foucault “dissolved the (modern) anthropological models of identity and subject-hood underlying research in the humanistic and social sciences.” Foucault made it clear that the way people functioned in society was not because they were free and independent Cartesian egos, solitary artists, gifted individual, or trained professionals, but because of the power of ideologies, disciplines, discourses, and epistemes that specified the a priori rules that ordered the thought, speech, and behaviour of all people. Foucault devised rules about such rules and exposed them for the power mechanisms they were. About these knowledge regimes, especially as they were embodied in such institutions as the clinic, the asylum, and the history of

sexuality, Foucault brooked no illusions. Then the question is what role did the concept of worldview play in his analysis.

The notion of episteme is crucial to Foucault’s thought, and it seems at least initially to bear a family resemblance to worldview. Pamela Major-Poetzl suggests as much when she writes that “The term discourse and episteme are frequently regarded as idiosyncratic expressions for the more common terms discipline and worldview.”12 There seems to be textual support for this contention especially in *The Order of Things*, where the exposition of the classical episteme has been interpreted by many readers as a basic and fundamental category underlying the intellectual productions of the seventeenth centuries. For example, Foucault writes: “In any given culture and at any moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether explain in a theory or silently in practice.”13 For Foucault the edifice of knowledge is a complex structure, and an episteme, which is analogous to a worldview, is a part of that deep complexity. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault affirms that an episteme may be suspected of being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes one each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape- a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand. This sentence is interesting for it contains Foucault’s own description of both an episteme and a worldview, given their close association. Both entail an inescapable set of rules and regulations, a way of reasoning, a pattern of thinking, a body of laws that generate and govern all aspects of formal knowing.

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12 Pamela Major Poetzl, Michel Foucault’s Archaeology of Western Culture (Chapel Hill: University of north Carolina Press, 1983), p.23. David Carr, Interpreting Husserl: Critical and Comparative Studies (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), pp, 220-21, believes epistemes are equivalent to conceptual schemes or worldviews, though he recognizes that Foucault himself denies their isomorphism to worldviews or cultural zeitgeist.

At the same time Foucault confuses matters to some extend when he says that an episteme as a significant cognitive layer should not be identified with worldview. In his introduction to *Archaeology of Knowledge*, he admits that the absence of methodological sophistication in *The Order of Things* may have given the impression that his “analyses were conducted in terms of cultural totality.”¹⁴ This would be a mistake! However, in the subsequent English edition of *The Order of Things*, Foucault states that the original purpose of the book was not to be: an analysis of Classicism in general, not a search for Weltanschauung but strictly ‘regional’ Study.”¹⁵ Corroboratively, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*—which he deems in part to be corrective in previous works, including The Order of Things – Foucault is clear in stating that his “aim is most decidedly not to use the categories of cultural totalities (whether world-views, ideal types, the particular spirit of an age) in order to impose on history, despite itself, the forms of structural analysis.”¹⁶ Thus Foucault distance episteme from Weltanschauung as an aspect of his historical methodology. His quest to identify the former localized subterranean layers of belief must be not be confused with comprehensive explanation of reality.

Despite this lexical ambiguity, it is primordial and determinative field of the episteme that Foucault is most anxious to bring to light and to do so not by means of typical historical study but rather by means of his famed method of “Archaeology” and “genealogy.” Rather than focussing on what known (history) or why knowledge is possible (epistemology), he investigates how fields of knowledge are structures (archaeology). He not only wanted to know the structures of knowledge but also their ancestry (genealogy). Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, Foucault tentatively defined the notion as “the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically

¹⁴ Foucault, Michel; *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tr. A.M. Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London and New York, reprint 2010, p.16
¹⁵ Foucault, Michel; *The Order of Things*,p.10
¹⁶ Foucault, Michel (1993), op. cit, p.x
today.\textsuperscript{17} By means of this genealogical investigation subjected knowledge would be identified, released and brought into play. Though in due course Foucault’s deployment of archaeological description was eventually surpassed by genealogy, nonetheless he sought to keep them functioning in tandem.

The archaeological and genealogical investigation of epistemes is intimately bound up with Foucault’s reflections on the subject of power. He sets before his reader’s a view of the world in which human beings are trapped within language structures and knowledge regimes with no possibility of escape. Every human discourse is a power play, every social arrangement oppressive and every cultural setting tyrannical. In this Foucauldian universe, there are no privileged or transcendent discourses unencumbered by the relativities of history or the dynamic of denomination. The world is suffused with the will to power and no social relationships are uncorrupted by it. All discursive practices imply a scientific power of politics and espistemic despotism, for as Foucault explains, “Truth is not outside of power or itself lacking in power.” Knowledge is also linked to power because of its connection with discourse that creates the world. The world which is created by discourse is the world of institutions, knowledge and practices that the present system of power finds advantageous. Knowledge is somehow independent of some stratagem and serves the common good. Rather, he makes this alternative confession:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge ...; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that doesn’t pre-suppose and constitute the same power relations. These “power-knowledge relations” are to be analysed, therefore, non on the basis

of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system but on the contrary the subject who knows the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. 18

Worldviews as epistemic constructs must also be implicated in the power knowledge relation. As visions of life and reality and determinative of ideas, values and actions, they are not to be merely understood as neutral conceptual frameworks, but exist in service to some socio-political agenda and bastion of power (Let's say theism for the church, naturalism for marxism and darwinism etc). In sceptical Foucauldian terms worldviews are merely the linguistic constructions of power elite. They are the facades of an absentee reality and function as effective means of social oppression.

As intimidating hypotheses about reality that serve as effective instruments of coercion, all worldviews, however they may fit into Foucault’s over all reckoning of the epistemological order must be associated with “the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to...formalized systems. 19 As such they too must be submitted to archaeological and genealogical investigation, thereby exposing their intellectual structure and epistemic source. Such as investigation would manifest “whose justice and which rationality” worldviews do indeed serve. In a reincarnation of the spirit of Gorgias and Protagoras, Foucault is essentially saying something like this: nothing exists; if anything exists, it cannot be thought about or apprehended by humanity; even if it can be apprehended, it cannot be communicated; even if it can be

19 Foucault; The Archeology of Knowledge. p.191.
communicated (and it can), it is communicated in discursive practices that are always in the interest of the stronger part! In the final analysis the conclusion of a Foucauldian must be this: worldviews are nothing but pseudo-interpretations of an ultimate reality all dressed up in a linguistic power suit.

Thus in the context of post-structuralism worldviews have been subject to considerable reconfiguration. According to Jacques Derrida as logocentric systems of thought and belief, they must be deconstructed in order to expose them as self-referential symbol systems that fail to connect with external reality. Despite the time-honoured Western tradition of an objective reference point for philosophical assertions, there is really nothing outside worldviews “texts” which conceptualize the cosmos except a gaping metaphysical absence. Worldviews therefore are actually sophisticated reifications—which in Berger and Luckmann’s terms may be understood as ordained conceptual systems allegedly grounded in some recognized objectivity but whose human origins have been perilously forgotten. In describing worldviews as an associated product of cognitive layer of the first order epistemes, Michel Foucault has provided a basis to understand how worldviews are a part of knowledge/power relationship that serves the interest of the stronger party or the party seeking strength. A thorough archaeological analysis and genealogical investigation of the origin and the content of such systems will reveal their true nature and how they have functioned and are functioning socially in the shaping of the self and in the fundamental categories of human experience. Thus the transition from modern to postmodern epochs has resulted in a remarkable change in the understanding the nature and character of the concept Worldview.

1.2 Cultural History - Twentieth–century Developments

The writing of cultural history expanded further in the twentieth century as textbooks and popular works presented the results of generations of research and interpretation. Notable examples were the one hundred volumes of Henri Berr's series *Evolution of Humanity* (begun in 1920); Egon Friedell's *A Cultural
History of the Modern Age (1931), which, dedicated to Bernard Shaw and glorying in its journalistic style, carried the story from the Renaissance to psychoanalysis and the "collapse of reality"; Preserved Smith's History of Modern Culture (1934), which, in the spirit of Robinson's new history, surveyed early modern sciences, humanities, social control, and "spirit of the times"; and European Civilization: Its Origin and Development, edited by Edward Eyre (7 vols., 1934–1939), which included also global frontiers beyond the West. In such works the whole world, private and public, real and imagined, natural and social, becomes a field of anthropological inquiry, interpretation, and speculation.

From the beginning the defining feature of cultural history, shared with anthropology, has been an inclination to holism—the effort to grasp "the history of everything," in Berr's famous phrase, or as Harry Elmer Barnes wrote of the new history, "the recording of everything which has happened in the past"—but of course "in the light of twentieth–century knowledge and methods." Yet cultural history was turned to analysis as well as synthesis, and so in 1940 in the United States, for example, there appeared a volume, The Cultural Approach to History ("edited for the American Historical Association"), which explored a wide range of techniques of cultural analysis, means of analyzing social groups, nationality, institutions, and ideas as sources of cultural history.

In this generation little has changed save the rhetorical claims in the "new cultural history," so–called since the publication of the volume by the same name by Lynn Hunt in 1989, supplemented also by the "new historicism," which has made its own contributions to cultural history, and by the study of mentalities and cultural practices carried on from the Annales school by Roger Chartier. In general, recent cultural history has come to embrace a wide and miscellaneous range of topics, such as crime, madness, childhood, old age, gesture, humour, smells, space, and other items (appearing on the world wide web) from addiction to unbelief. In terms of theory this self–proclaimed "new cultural history" has arisen out of the wreckage of scientific and Marxist history, which sought the concealed mechanisms of social change beneath the surface of collective
behaviour. This is true in the sense not only that many new cultural historians such as Natalie Davis and Lynn Hunt have emerged from the materialist assumptions of socioeconomic historical practice and/or Marxist theory, but also that cultural history has always contained a powerful critique of such methods.

In general, cultural history rejects economic and political reductionism, gives up the noble dream of objectivity, recognizes the role of imagination in historical reconstruction, and, no longer aspiring to rigorous explanation, turns instead to what has been called "interpretive social science." As represented by Clifford Geertz and Charles Taylor, interpretive social science places understanding (Verstehen) above explanation and so hermeneutics above causal analysis as the principal access to a knowledge of the human condition, past and present. Explanation requires some sort of reduction of experience, or evidence, to crucial factors at the expense of excluding other experience, or evidence, which not only lends color or, as Geertz says, thickness to description but also qualifies simplistic and naturalistic notions of causation.

The new cultural history may entail a sort of relativism distasteful to historians of the older schools, but the positive aspect is a more critical awareness of the meaning of the historian's craft. Not only the objects of history but the works of historians are themselves subject to the conditions of their cultural environment, and so (in contemporary parlance) "culturally constructed." Yet the premise of the new cultural history that, as Hunt writes, "the representations of the social world themselves are the constituents of social reality," is an insight not unfamiliar to earlier cultural historians; for as Huizinga reminded us, "The historical discipline is a cultural process." And like culture it is still changing and renewing itself, though not always with much appreciation for its own history.

1.3 Writing Cultural history of North East India:

The history of North east India has not been given adequate attention in mainstream Indian history writings. Marginalization of the North Eastern region could be seen in the trend of historical writings in India. Well known intellectuals
of the academic world such as Peter Burke’s ‘popular culture’, Eric Wolf’s ‘people without history’, E.P Thompson’s ‘unsung voices of history’, Genovese’s ‘objects and subjects of history’, Hobsbawm’s ‘social banditry’, Ranajit Guha’s ‘subaltern studies’, Lacan’s ‘others’, Said’s ‘Orientalism’ Barthes’ ‘structural analysis of narratives’, Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’, Michel Foucault’s ‘history of the historian’ Skaria’s ‘hybrid histories’ and many others question the existing orthodoxy of historical discourse. This is also true in the context of the North East as the regional specificity has been ignored by the academic community until the recent time. The greatest challenge to the Indian historians is to incorporate regional histories in the broader framework of Indian history. There has been consistent exclusion of North East from the history of India. A well known historian from the North East Sajal Nag pointed that:

“Such neglect prompted the historians of North East India to take up research on the area but they failed to communicate them to the rest of India.” As a result North East continues to suffer from historiographical exclusion. But unless the stories of North East are integrated with the history of the rest of the country, a true national history can never be achieved.”

This indifferent attitude towards the North East is evident in national curricula. Sirkka Ahonen rightly remarked in this context “the national curricula conveys narratives that are never inclusive of whole communities, and history curricula in particular need examination of their role as forms of ‘identity

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20 Kate, Curiie; The Challenge to Orientalist, Elitist and Western historiography, Notes on the Subaltern project 1982-1989, in George Pfeffer &Deepak Kumar Behara; Contemporary Society Tribal Studies, Volume Two, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997 and also in Shreedhan, E; A textbook of Historiography 500 BC to 2000 AD, Orient Longman, New Delhi.
22 Nag, Sajal; India and North-East India, Mind, Politics and the process of Integration 1946-1950, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 1998, p.6
politics’. Minorities tend to be excluded from the master historical narratives”.23 The cultural history of various communities of the North East has hardly found space in national curricula. Their heroes are forgotten and instead fed with the stories of kings and kingdoms of the rest of India that largely do not appeal to the people of the North East. The struggles of Khasis, Mizo chiefs, Jaintias and Nagas against the British have no place at all in the history of India. This is not only sad but also extremely unfair. The question remains the same with when Gayatri Spivak asks ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’?24 The answer is still ‘No’ in Indian history unless a comprehensive change in the historical discourse of India takes place.

The colonial ethnographers and Christian missionaries were the earliest scholars who represented tribal culture with their European terms and pronunciations. Numerous literatures on tribal cultural history were produced by colonial ethnographers and Christian Missionaries like A.Z Makenzie, JH Hutton, J.Shakepear, N.E Parry, J.H Mills, J.M Lloyd, J.H Lorrain. Habitually, colonial and missionary’ terms/terminology were ethnocentric in nature. In recent period, some scholars (trained indigenous) feel the burden of these ethnocentric terms and various efforts have been made on the decolonization of these local names/ terminology. In case of Mizoram, colonial names have been changed - Lusei, instead of Lushai, Maras instead of Lakher and Aizawl instead of Aijal. However, in many of the recent discourses (including official discourse) made by non locals both at the national and international levels are extremely ignorant on local language/terminologies. The capital of Mizoram, Aizawl is misspelt as Aizwal in news papers, academic discourses and even at airports. There has been repeated failure to run a correction, even after being asked. This is also evident in the academic field. For instance, one of the most popular

23 Ahonen, Sirkka; “Politics of Identity through history Curriculum: Narratives of the Past for Social Exclusion-or Inclusion?” in Journal of Curriculum Studies ISSN 0022-0272 printISSN 1366-5839 online, Taylor & Francis Ltd, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>
24 Spivak, Gayatri; ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’ in Cary Nelson & Lawrence; Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Ranajit Guha & Gayatri Spivak (Ed); Selected Subaltern Studies, 1988
referee’s journals of Modern Asian Studies in 1987 writes “The Negroids, who came from south and south-west China, are the present Nagas of Nagaland.”  

Surprisingly, the editorial boards including this Indian professor have failed to notice that the Naga tribes belong to the mongoloid stock of Tibeto-Burman. No correction was made even in the continuous issues. Such ignorance has for a long time dominated the North East discourse scenario which damages image of the people and their culture. Naga Students’ Federation (not the insurgency groups) who had forbidden a non-Naga to write on Naga history without their prior approval clearly indicates how people contested against such academic imperialism.

On the other hand the attempt to include North East history in the main stream discourse had been first taken up by S.K. Bhuyan between 1930s and 40s. Using the available resources Bhuyan first started his journey with much acclaimed History of Assam. He had a mission in his writings he acted as a crusader for placing Assam in the history of the Indian nation. His contributions during these periods are noteworthy and can be categorized into historical, biographical and miscellaneous. A historical sense has been preserved among the north east literate people through their respective chronicles and among the pre literate people in the form of folklore and folk songs.

1.4 Sources of writing Mizo cultural history:

The central focus of this theme is twofold, one to locate the sources of Mizo history in the context of historiography beginning from the colonial period and secondly, proceeding to examine the limitations that have followed from the

26 Prabhakar, M.S.; ‘Object of history, on the politics of the Naga Students’ Federation’s warning against any academic research into the Naga people’s history without permission’ in Frontline Magazine, 26, September
use of these sources. We will then focus on how these limitations are reflected in historical scholarship with special reference to the construction of the pre-colonial period.

Writing of Mizo history is still limited in the arena of theoretical approach as the majority of writings look drab and dry. This is mainly because the majority of writings on Mizo history lack theoretical approach and conceptualisation, but is reduced to mere documentation than history. There is very little awareness of the current debates in social sciences that have led to methodological advances forcing many historians to adopt analytical tools from diverse disciplines.

On tracing the ethnic background of the Mizos there is confusion over the question of the common nomenclature and origin. This is mainly because that the oral sources are not studied in comparing the relevant information with prevailing archaeology findings, that are available in the form of big memorial stones, that reveals about the past. eg:- Lung Au, Lungphunlian etc., which, reflect the condition of the past. However, the literary sources of the Mizos today belong to the British period, brought by the British officials during their short-term rule in Mizoram. Another limitation is that Mizo did not form a homogenous group with a single culture, as there are different clans within the Mizos; therefore in each practices of the clans there are also several variations. Thus the process of history writing should reflect the differences as the use of homogenous terms would lead to a different picture and would conceal the local diversities.

The sources of history of Mizo can be classified as:

1) Oral Sources,
2) Archaeological sources: Stone fragment, Megaliths,
3) Foreign accounts,
4) Existing literature (Anthropological approach, Colonial writers, Church history and Local writers)
5) Archival.
This may be elaborated and analysed as below:

1) Oral Sources:

The most important sources of history are from oral tradition. The transmission of oral tradition may follow definite rules. Where special techniques and methods exist, their purpose is to preserve the tradition as faithfully as possible and from one generation to the other. Oral history gains impetus importance on interpretation of history. To quote Paul Thompson the discovery of oral history by historians... is not only a discovery but recovery. It gives a future no longer tied to the cultural significance of paper documents... Oral history tradition therefore played an important role in understanding the historical evolutions of those societies which do not have recorded history and where beginnings might have to be made with the interpretation of legends, myths and folklore.

There is a lack of recorded history in the case of Mizo history writing. The literary sources among the Mizo become available only in the later part of the nineteenth century after the advent of the British, when the two missionaries, JH Lorraine and FW Savidge introduced the Roman alphabet for the Mizos and started education in Mac Donald Hill Aizawl. Oral sources cannot be denied in writing Mizo history as there is a scarcity of literary sources. For today, oral sources are accepted as complementary to the recorded sources in the reconstruction of the past.27 The traditional sources include all non-conventional sources like folklore, folk songs, beliefs, ceremonies, hymns, rituals etc.

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Oral sources of the Mizo may be elaborated as under:-

(a) Chhinlung tradition:

Most of Mizo historians are of the opinion that Mizos originally came out of a big cave. Lusei, Hmar and other clans in Mizoram called it “Chhinlung”, whereas Thadous, Paites, Gangtes, Vaipheis and others called it “Khul” or “Khulpi” but the way they locate the place is different from one another. The word “Chhin” stands for covered and “Lung” stands for stone. Some believe that the ancestors of the Mizo might have been a cave dweller or they might have come out from a big cave.

This reveals that the people who sang this song had a nostalgic attachment for the place of their origin, which is “Chhinlung”, and they wished that they would go back one day. *Rochunga Pudaite* located that the word ‘Chhinlung’ to be ‘Chin Lung’, the name of the Chinese prince rather than a mere covering stone, who revolted against his father Shih Huangti of the Chi’ın dynasty and who built a great wall of China in 228 B.C. that the prince has first established himself somewhere in the Himalayan mountains and then migrated again to the present Shan State of Burma. The Mizo are believed to be a subject of Chin Lung whose name continued to be retained as Chhinlung connecting with their origin.

There is a story told by the Thadous that in the past there were in subterranean region seven important villages ruled by Noimangpa, chief of Noimang beneath the earth, the cutting up of a big snake who blocked the hole into seven pieces by Chawngthu the progenitor of the Thadous, who led the migration out to the upper world, and the seven members of the company including Chawngthu who emerged out of the Khul. The names of thereof the seven are mentioned. Those of the other four are not known but they are believed to include the progenitors of the Meitei, the Naga, the Burmese and the unknown.

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28 Ibid, p.22.
Foreigner.  

There is also another legend which gives an interesting piece of information, different clans came out of a big cave (Chhinlung) and that the last to emerge were the Ralte couple whose loud chattering made Pathian (God) shut down the covering stone for fear of over-populating the upper world.\(^{30}\)

Pu Thangvunga who had gone in search of origin and migration of the Zos in 1941 explains that, the ancestors of the Mizo came from Shanghai, sent out by a Chinese king to be followers of his son who was to establish himself. But without following the prince, they cast lots according to which they proceeded in two groups, one group towards the southwest and the other to the south. The duration of the time they spent between Shanghai and Burma is not known, but the one in 1941 was counted as the 47\(^{th}\) generation. When the group came to Burma the Burmese said, “The “Chinlu” are coming.” (Chin is abbreviated form for Chinese, and ‘lu’ means ‘people’ in Burmese. it is believed that “Chinlu” came to be known as “Chhinlung” in the course of time.\(^{31}\)

Nevertheless contemporary historical writings and other recent works on the Mizo produced some clues on these claims. Certain writers believed that they abandoned Chhinlung because of their inability to check and defeat their enemies.\(^{32}\) Nunthara contents that “All the writers on the subject and the traditional history of the Mizo verbally handed down through several decades agree that the term Chhinlung, whether a place or a person’s name, originated from China and that the Mizo and all the related tribes claim to have originated from this. From this account, even though a conjectural one, we can surmise that the original home of the Mizo is somewhere in the east.\(^{33}\)

\(^{29}\) Kipgen Mangkhosat; Christianity and Mizo Culture, Mizo: Theological Conference, Aizawl, p.33.  
\(^{30}\) Shakespear, J; The Lushai Kuki Clans, London: Macmillan & Co., 1912 p.93  
\(^{31}\) Zawla K; Pi pute leh an thlah te chanchin : Zomi book Agency, Aizawl,1993 (6\(^{th}\) edition), pp 6-7  
\(^{32}\) Lalrimawia; Mizoram history and cultural Identity (1890-1947) Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p.12.  
The archaeology of migrations is not attempted and thus reliance on language without co-relation to material culture would make these conjectures unsteady. This aspect was never given much weightage in the writing of Mizo history.

(b) Earth Hole tradition: -

The folktale also indicates that the first man on this earth came out of the hole in the earth. When all men came out of this hole all were equal, but in a short time the cleverer men became chiefs and nobles and ruled over the less intelligent and energetic, who became the lower orders, and are known as machhi.34

The above folk tale shares common parallels with many folk tales of the contiguous regions and also in other parts of the world which explains the rise of different strata in society as the devices employed in narrating this tale clearly reveals.

(c) Totemistic tradition: -

There are only four clans among the Mara which appear to have any sort of totemistic origin: the Bonghia, the Theutha, the Hnaileu and the Mihlong.

The origin of the Bonghia and Theutha clans of Savang is the same, both claiming descendent from a python. The story is that many years ago there was a girl called Pithlong, who was employed as a priestess for performing sacrifices to the Khisong, the abode of evil spirits. As she held a priestly office, this girl had to remain a virgin. One night, however the python came to the place where Pithlong was sleeping, and assuming human form, had a connection with her. In due course Pithlong gave birth to a son, Bonghia who founded the Savang chief’s family. After Bonghia’s birth, Pithlong again had connection with the snake, and a second son named Thleutha, was born. Thleutha also founded a clan. The

34 Perry, N.E; The Lakhers, Firma KLM Pvt Ltd, on behalf of Tribal research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, p.232.
The Thleutha clan, though of noble birth, has never been a ruling house. Both the Bonghia and the Thleutha clans are snake clans. It is forbidden for them to kill or even touch a python, the belief is that if they so, they would die instantly. They regard the python, or Paripi, as they call it, as a good spirit, and as the special protector of all members of the Bonghia and the Theuthla clans.

The Hnaihleu clan of Saiko is a tiger clan; all members of it show special reverence to tigers, and it is forbidden for them to kill a tiger. The story of the origin of the clan is as follows.

The founder of the tiger clan was a man called Hnaihleu, whose name the clan still bears. Hnaihleu was a great friend of a tiger called Nangtha. Nangtha used to warn his friend whenever tigers were going to kill the village cattle, and consequently Hnaihleu always managed to save his animals. In gratitude for the benefits conferred on him by the tiger Nangtha, Hnaihleu laid down that none of his descendants must ever kill a tiger, never look at a tiger that had been killed, or ever take part in the ‘Ai’ feast, which is performed when a man killed a tiger. These prohibitions are observed to this day by all members of the Hnaihleu clan, and it is forbidden for them to break it. In addition to this, the Hnaihleu clan periodically performs a sacrifice to the tiger, which is called Nangtha Hawkhei.

Mihlong clan claim to be descendents from the hornbill. No member of this clan may kill a hornbill, and they say that if they ate hornbill’s meat it would be equivalent to eating their father and mother. The Mihlong do not however offer any sacrifice to the hornbill. The Wazukumer clan of the Ao Nagas is another hornbill clan, similar to the Mihlong it is forbidden for this clan to eat the hornbill.

(d) Chieftainship tradition:

Paihte and Sailo claim that they both are the descendent of Niguite whose birth is narrated in the form of a folktale; Dongula had infringe sex with his sister Lalmene who later gave birth to a beautiful boy named Niguite.
the differences of the person from others which is a common character of many origin myths. These differences have its origin in the original conception. The child was named Niguite because he was born on account of the rays coming from the sun. The word ‘ni’ means sun and ‘guite’ means ‘to burn’ or ‘to scorch’. Later Niguite had two sons named Ngeknguka and Bawklua, the progenitors of the Paihte and Sailo respectively. Bawklua married Lawileri who had given birth to Sihsinga who was a father of one Ralna. Ralna begot one Chhuahlawma, father of Zahmuaka who along with his wife named Lawilerhi had seven sons but one died in infancy. The name of the offsprings were Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangnura, Rivunga and Rokhuma who are believed to be the beginning of a clan as different tribes bear the name of their ancestor in the future. It was also believed that during this time a proper channel of chieftainship had been established as different clans started to have their own leaders and even when they migrated to present Mizoram that they kept this tradition.

There is a slightly different interpretation by J Shakespear in his book “Lushei Kuki clan”; he stated that all Lusei chiefs claim descent from a certain Thangura, who is sometimes said to have sprung from the union of a Burman with a Paihte woman, but according to the Paihte, the Lusei are descended from Boklua, an illegitimate son of the Paihte chief Ngehugka. The Thado say that some hunters tracing a sera noticed the foot-marks of a child following those of an animal, and on surrounding the doe sera they found it suckling a child who became the great chief Thangura, or, as they call him “Thangul”. From Thangura the pedigree of all the living chiefs is fairly accurately established. The Lusei, in common with the Thado and the other Kuki tribes, attach importance to their genealogies; and pedigrees, given at an interval of many years; and by persons living far apart, have been found to agree in a wonderful manner. From him sprang six lines of Thangur chiefs, Rokhum, Zadeng, Thangluah, Paliana, Rivung, Sailo. Each clan in search of finding a suitable place for Jhuming cultivation started to penetrate towards the west until they found their settlement in the

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present day Mizoram, however some of them migrated till the neighboring regions such as Haflong, Tripura in the west, Manipur in the north and Chittagong hill tract.\(^\text{36}\)

(c) The Lost tribe tradition (Mizo Israelism):

For around forty years this belief had revolved among the Mizo. According to Rev Lalbiaktluanga, the first man who claimed that the Mizo belong to the Israel tribe was Chala, a village man from Buallawn in 1951.\(^\text{37}\) Whereas Levy Benjamin stated that it was in 1936 that two men named Kapa and Saichhuma claimed they belong to Israel tribe. Tracing back the origin of Mizo we cannot totally ignore this belief, that Mizo are the descendent of a tribe of Israel. There was a long lasting debate regarding this topic. According to the Holy Scriptures, in the Old Testament the Israel were the chosen people, but due to their unfaithfulness to God they were dispersed to different parts of the world. Therefore this had led to Diaspora in different parts of the world. But the scriptures prophesised that they will all be gathering again to the Promised Land. Therefore when Israel got independence in 1948 most of the Jews returned back to Israel. So, some of the Mizo believed they have the right to migrate back to Israel the place where they believe they belong. They had drawn every possibility of similarities between Israel and Mizo in terms of customs and beliefs.

There aroused different opinions regarding the Mizo – of which Israel tribe do they can encircle with? One group claims that they were Ephraim tribes who migrated to the east. For which they reversed the word “Luse” or “Lushai” as giving the meaning “Lu” as “people” and “se” as “tenth”, which they totally admitted that they belong to the tenth tribe among the twelve tribes of Israel.

Ms. Zaithanchhungi who had visited Israel several times, lately realised the Mizo to be Manasseh tribe. Having counsel by Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail she had

\(^{36}\) Shakespear, J; *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, Part-II : Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl reprint, 1975. p.3.

\(^{37}\) Rev Lalbiaktluanga; “*Theological trends in Mizoram*” towards tribal perspective, 1989, p.66.
done a research over 8 years and she came to the conclusion that she had enough
evidence to prove her research was reliable. 38 She had connected with the
sacrifices made by the Mizo during olden days where if any man came home sick
from Jhum, the sickness was caused by an evil spirit. In order to please the evil
spirit the Bawlpu (the priest) then performed an offering by chanting the name
“Manasseh”. However Rev. Chuauthuama on his book “Mizo leh Israel” (Israel
and Mizo) crossfire the argument saying that as far as Mizo history was
concerned, such things never appeared on the verse of sacrificial rituals chanted
by the priest. He objected that chanting the name of “Manasseh” was self made
history that does not have a sound basis.

The reason why this people claim themselves to be one of the lost tribes is
the by product of Christian missionary. This opinion was shared by Dr. Myer
Samra who said that although this was the product of teaching led by Christian
missionaries however this was not even the intention of Christian missionary
either.39 Rev Chuauthuama was of the opinion that there was a strong economic
motive which made them think that their life would be better.40

(d) Khampat Tradition:
The entire leading Mizo historians like Vanchhunga,41 V.L Siama,42
R.Vanlawma,43 K.Zawla 44 (after the third edition only) and B. Lalthangliana
mentioned about the existence of Khampat. Khampat was believed to be the
oldest town ever built by the Mizo (believed to be the Lusei clan) in Burma
(Myanmar) which was divided into more than ten sectors. The central block was
called Nun Yar or Palace site wherein the ruler resided.45

39 Dr.Myer Samra; “Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram...” Seminar papers, pp. 63-6.
40 Rev Chuauthuama; Mizo leh Israel (Mizo and Israel) p.11.
41 Vanchhunga; Lusei leh an vela hnamdangte chanchin, 1977, p.22
42 Siama V.L; Mizo History : Lengchhawn Press, p.8-9.
44 Zawla, K; Mizo Pipute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, Tribal Research Institute 1985, p.22-3.
45 Lalthangliana; Mizo Chanchin, p.87.
The Mizo had migrated from the town due to the pressures of the enemies and the ongoing process of migration to the west. Before they dispersed they planted a banyan tree with a firm faith that they would return one day when the branches of the tree touches the ground.

By the time when a section of the Mizo returned to Myanmar and settled down in the areas around the Khampat site in the beginning of the 20th century A.D the branches of the tree had already touched the ground. Thus, many of them considered it as a fulfilment of prophesy.46

2) **Archaeological sources:**

a) Megaliths:-

Although the aspects of the spread and the development of megalith monuments are not known, megalith has two forms: dolmen and menhirs.47 The dolmen consisted of several upright supports and a flat roofing slab. Another form of menhir (men-‘stone’ and hir-‘long’) which erected in the northern and western Europe and also in southern India. Menhirs were simple upright stones of great size visible from afar. Though the concept of megalith monuments is still in debate, all the monuments have certain similarities in architectural and technical features worldwide.

Surprisingly, this type of stones was found in different parts of Mizoram mainly in the form of memorial stone. However, these stones were not studied scientifically to be used as a reliable source of material. This is in spite of the fact that the megalithic culture of South and South-east Asia has been well researched and has brought out important findings that relate to chronology and settlement patterns.

46 Zawla K; *Mizo Pipute leh an thlahte chanchin*, 1989, p.22-23
1) Sibuta Lung:-

The biggest Menhir in Mizoram was found in Tachhip village about 20 kilometers away from Aizawl- Lunglei road via Thenzawl. The stone is about 12 ft high. It indicates the selective memories of cruelty of the famous chief Sibuta.

The story goes that Sibuta, son of a concubine during his childhood was ill treated by Darlalpuii the daughter of Tachhip chief. Sibuta in his anger even told that one day he would take a revenge on her. Darlalpuii in her vain glory always ignored all these warnings; instead she replied that, “If you become a king, you can kill me to fulfil khuangchawi”.

As time goes by Sibuta attained the chieftainship. He had never forgotten the vow he had made during his childhood. One day it so happened that Sibuta performed Khuangchawi ceremony. In a normal situation, a gayal was sacrificed. But this time Sibuta decided to kill Darlalpuii in order to fulfil what he had told her before. The villagers were so shocked on hearing this brutal order of Sibuta, but could not resist because they were also in fear of being killed. So, he ordered them to bring Darlalpuii and tied her up at Seluphan (the sacrificial post). He took vengeance upon her by piercing her to death and hanging her head up at the top of the post. Sibuta Lung was erected by the villagers to commemorate his cruelty. There is one saying that one stranger from Chin Hills of Burma was put inside the hole where the stone is erected.48

2) Darthiangi Lung:-

This stone is located about 3 kilometers north of Farkawn village. Interestingly, the stone commemorates the imperishable love between Darthiangi and her husband Chertuala of Farkawn village. Darthiangi belonged to the Dulzawl village and was young and beautiful. She was married to Chertuala, the chief of Farkawn. But they could not bear any issue. At last they decided to

48 *Mizo Lal ropuite*, Published by Art and Culture Mizoram, p.37-45
separate and while packing up to leave her husband, Darthiangi wept bitterly and sang a song of her own composition.

A ia chan nuam che maw Zawllunghnemi,
Kan khaw kar ah Hranglungphun thiang chang dun I,
Chang dun ilang liankhua ah mi za selin.49

Which means:-
Darling, would you like to erect our memorial stone,
To commemorate our deep and mutual love,
Making everybody remember our names on this account.

The stone was erected jointly by Darthiangi and Chertuala.

3) Ridawpi Lung:-
The stone is round in shape and it is 5ft high, 2 ft thick and about 2 ton in weight which is situated in South Sabual about 45 kilometers South of Aizawl. It is the memorial stone of Ridawpi, the daughter of Lallula, the great Sailo chief. Ridawpi was the only daughter among the five children of Lallula. In the year about 1760, Lallula raided Thlanrawn and killed about 300 men. This is because Thlanrawn people used to collect tax in the neighboring villages for no reason at all which was disliked by the people. So, Lallula planned secretly to stop Thlanrawn for draining their wealth. So to train the people he first paid attention to the ‘Jhum’ and when they had enough crops, he diplomatically negotiated with the neighboring villages wherein, they promised to help Lallula in bringing down the Thlanrawn. He then let two ambassadors to the Thlanrawn chief asking them to collect wealth from their village as a compliment to their chief. So, a large number of Thlanrawn went to the village. At first they received a warm welcome. But the time came when they planned to kill their entire Thlanrawn guest. The Thlanrawn were gratified with a large banquet, after they had drunk enough they all got back to their respective guest houses. In the middle of the night a gong was

49 Chatterji.N; Monoliths & Landmarks of Mizoram. p.17
beaten and the people of the village started to kill their guests. Out of three hundred men only two or three men escape. This had an impact on peace among the neighboring villages also as they stopped paying tribute to the Thlanrawn. This was a time that Ridawpi the daughter of Lallula was born. When Lallula moved to Sabual his loving daughter died and in remembrance of her the chief erected this famous Ridawpi Lung. The stone bears the figure of a man and a woman with a smoking pipe.

4) Mangkhaia Lung:-

Mangkhaia is a son of famous Mangthawnga, chief of Champhai who belongs to Ralte clan. He was captured by Chuaungo people and imprisoned by his enemy. He was ransomed by his relatives. But Vanpui of Pachuau chief who did not receive his share in anger killed him on his way back home. His grief stricken father erected the memorial stone which is called Mangkhaia Lung. The stone is very huge which shows human figures and heads on it.50

Mangkhaia Lung can be seen at the southern part of the Champhai valley near Zote village. The uniqueness of this stone appears to be in response not only as a massive and huge structure which can be identified from far off places but also in the engraving of a series of human figures standing side by side with hands interlocked giving a really impressive idea of the large security their spirits offer collectively to the great chief in his celestial abode. According to A.G McCall, the stone is a monolith of the pre-Sailo occupation in early nineteenth century.51

5) Lungphunlian:-

Lungphunlian is a collection of Menhir which is in six numbers. There is a village named after these stones. The tallest one rises to 14 ft high, 6 ft wide and with 2 ft thick. According to R.Buragohain this is believed to have been erected by

50 Shakespear, J; *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, Part-II : Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl reprint, 1975. p.137.
51 A.G McCall; *Lushai Chrysalis* : Tribal research Institute, Aizawl, ( Reprint),1977, Plate No.XXVII (opp.to page 160)
the Meitei because another rock is found nearby with Bengali script on it.\textsuperscript{52} Darchhawna is of the opinion that the stone is planted by the Reangs (Tripuris) who migrated from Manipur from Tripura in the latter half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{53} While some other supposed that these stones were erected by Vangchhia (one of the Mizo clan) who moved from Zote village to Lungphunlian. If only the script were properly deciphered a new array might have crept in Mizo history.

6) Laituma Lung:–

The memorial stone of a handsome young man named Laituma. The stone is engraved with figures of fish, animals and human heads. The stone is one meter and sixteen centimeters long and one meter four centimeters broad with a thickness of twenty five centimeters. The stone bears a figure of a man and fish. This indicates that Laituma due to his good looks and ability to win over girls was envied by all the man villagers as a result a plot was set up to trap him. One day it so happened that Laituma was asked to dive inside the water, and as soon as he entered the water all the men threw stones in the river. This had resulted in the death of Laituma.\textsuperscript{54}

7) Lalthangpuii Lung:–

Lalthangpuii Sailo was the eldest daughter of the chief, Lalsavunga Sailo. She had two sisters named, Laltheri and Chawngpuituali and her three brothers namely, Lalphunga, Vanhnuailiana and Thawmvunga were all famous chiefs. They migrated to Lamtual from Darlawng and then to Zatezo (Mualpheng). While they were in Zatezo, Lalthangpuii a virgin girl died of tuberculosis. As all her family took the untimely death very seriously they mourned for many days and as a result they had erected a stone in remembrance of her name. A hole was seen at

\textsuperscript{52} Romesh Buragohain; \textit{"Lungphun as a source of Mizo history"} paper presented in the International seminar on Studies on the Minority Nationalities of North East India- The Mizo Mizoram on 7-9 April, 1992.

\textsuperscript{53} Darchhawna, \textit{Monoliths of Mizoram}, in Historical Journal of Mizoram Vol.I Issue I p.14

\textsuperscript{54} Lianhmingthanga, ed; \textit{Monoliths and Landmarks of Mizoram} : Firma Publication on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl Mizoram.
the stone which is meant for hanging a gong. During that time Lalsavunga’s territory extended up to Lamtual and Ruallung. This huge stone was removed and taken to the present position by the chief of three villages Zatezo, Lamtual and Ruallung. The stone was taken from ‘Dilkawr’ stream following by the eastern side about three kilometers away from its present position and half of the stone could now still be seen at ‘Dilkawr’.

8) Zawlmangi Lung:-

Zawlmangi Lung is located between the village Ruallung and Rulchawm. The stone is two meters thirteen centimeters high, two meters fifteen centimeters broad and seventy four centimeters thick. Zawlmangi Lung and Lungau lie side by side and the stone is engraved with naked female human figures. Though it is still a question when it came into existence, the assumption goes that Zawlmangi Lung might have been erected by the same people who erected Lungau.

9) Lungau:-

Lungau is located on the eastern side of Ruallung village. It has the length of one meter fifty two centimeters with a breadth of one meter two centimeters and one meter five centimeters thick.

In the literary meaning ‘Lungau’ means a screaming stone or alarming stone. The stone has an interesting legend which is however, unnatural and hardly believable. It is said that in the olden days this stone used to scream when dusk falls terrifying the people that enemies were at hand. But when the people found that they were only deceived, the villagers in anger rolled the stone down the stream. However, the stone would again return to its same place. In the course of time a stranger (believed to be a man from Lai clan) cut a stone near the middle part so that the people in the village never heard the scream anymore.

10) Lung Milem: -

This is indeed a unique stone in Mizoram as the engravings thereon plainly points towards a culture which doesn’t seem to have touched the Mizo
either before or after their wholesale conversion into Christianity. The figures appear to indicate Buddhist or Hindu background. On the southern edge of the Tawikhawthlir hill under the jurisdiction of the Mualcheng village about 65 kilometers south of Lunglei, three pictures can be seen in bold relief against the stony background of the hills. These are about twenty inches in length, two of these in standing position and the other in a sitting posture. The third one in a sitting posture clearly indicates a typical meditation pose of Hindus or Buddhists. Figures of this type have not been located anywhere else in Mizoram and are indeed demanding of close research. 55

11) Other Stones: -

Besides all these stones mentioned above there are also some other important stones which had occupied a significant place in reconstructing the past history of Mizoram such as Lalruanga Lung, Chhura Lung, Lungvando, Lallunga Lung.

b) Stone fragments: -

No dependable inscription is found in Mizoram. Recently, a stone fragment (supposedly called an inscription) engraved on a stone tablet was discovered at Suangpuilawn about 150 Kilometers north east of Aizawl. An attempt is being made to make out the meaning of the script. When it is properly deciphered and a more linguistic approach will make our history a new look. According to some, the script is believed to be the old Bengali script; however they did not have enough evidence. The stone is still lying at State Museum at Aizawl.

At the same time there is a report about one copper plate inscription which bears the name ‘Kukisthanan’ (the land of Kukis). According to Suhas Chatterjee, Dharmadhar (Swadharmapa or Chengpha) was the Raja of Kailagadh. He invited

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55 Chatterji.N; Monoliths & Landmarks of Mizoram : Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl Mizoram.p.36
a Kanuj Brahmin Nidhipati to his principality and granted to him is mentioned in the copper plate inscription. The second verse of The Sanskrit couplet states as;

Sri Nidhipati Vipraya Vastya Gotraya Dharmine
Prehayang Longai Kukisthanan Pratichyan Gopala
Nade.56

The English rendering of the verse according to Suhas Chaterjee is:

To Sri Nidhipati, The Vatsya Gotra Brahman,
the land bound in the east the Longlai and Kuki
land and in the west the Gopola River. The date
of the Land grant to Nidhipati is given as 1195.

3) Foreign accounts: -

Information that we get from foreign account is as scanty as epigraphy. S.K. Bhuyan writes: “The old Assam Government did hardly come in contact with the tribes now living in the Lushai Hills though there is evidence to show that the Assamese did know the Kuki on their way through the Cachar Hills.57 The neighboring plains people of the Cachar plains called Mizos as “Kuki” which means “wild hill people” as they found the early Mizo to be culturally backward.58

King Rudra Singha (A.D. 1696-1714) deputed two envoys to Tripura and the envoys reported that they had met some Kuki on the way who look like the Nagas. The two envoys proceeded up to the Barak River for four days and reached Lakhipur, the southern frontier province of the Kachari kingdom. From

56 Suhas Chaterjee; Early History of the Mizos : Proceeding of North East India History Association, Ninth Session, Guwahati, 1988, p.102
57 Bhuyan.S.K; Anglo Assamese Relations 1771-1828, Lawyer Book Stall, Gauhati, (Reprint),1974, p.46
there, they took another five days through the Barak to reach the frontier of the Tripura Kingdom. The two ambassadors wrote:

“...having halted there for two days, we proceeded for five days and reached the mouth of the Rupini River which is the boundary between Cachar and Tripura. There is no human habitation in that place. There are hills on the both sides. After three days we arrived at Rangrung within the jurisdiction of Tripura. The hills on both sides of the Barak River are inhabited by a tribe called the Kuki who are like Daflas and Nagas here. There will be about three hundred men at that place; their weapons are arrows, bows, shields and Naga spear. The Tripura Raja appoints governor over this place, and he is called Halamcha, who like the Naga Kunbaos in our country...”

Sangkima said that the two envoys had passed through the village now called Sairang about 20 kilometers from Aizawl on the way to Lengpui Airport. Rudra sent the envoys to Tripura for three times.

4. Existing Literature: -

With the advent of the British on the hills where the Mizo dwelt, the Christian missionaries started their mission towards the Mizo people. The two missionary J.H Lorraine and F.W Savidge started education for the Mizo in 1894 mainly for propagating Christianity among them. The script with Roman characters was introduced and this had bore a threshold for existence of literature among the Mizo. Tradition has it that once the Mizo were given a book

60 Sangkima; Some sources of Early Mizo history- A chronological study, Proceeding of North East India History Association, Jorhat, 1993, p.84.
(script) but due to carelessness, the dog carried it away. That was how the script was lost.\textsuperscript{61} Therefore, the first sources available are credited to the English.

The earliest works about the Mizo are done by military and administrative officers who had some connection related to the annexation and administration of the area by the British government, some of the earliest historical and anthropological works on the Mizo were in three books written by Tom Herbert Lewin: The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and The Dweller Therein (1869), Wild Races of the South-Eastern India (1870), and A fly on the wheel or How I Helped to Govern India (1912). Another of this period was C.A. Soppitt’s A short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-Eastern Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhol-Lushai Language and A Comparison of Lushai with other Dialects (1893). The military officers of the British army had given information about their military operations that were then referred to as the Chin-Lushai Hills. R.G. Woodthorpe’s book The Lushai Expedition, 1871-72 (1872), A.S. Reid’s Chin-Lushai Land: Including a Description of the various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the country, with maps and Illustrations (1893), and L.W. Shakespeare’s History of the Assam Riffles (1929).

The opening up of the Tribal Research Institute sponsored by the Government of Mizoram has brought out many useful sources some of which are confidential reports of the government. One of these, Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai Hills, September, 1892, describes the intense efforts made by the British government to bring the Chin Hills of Burma and the North and South Lushai Hills districts of India into single administrative units. Following up efforts resulted in two important books been published. The first of these was Bertram S.Carey and H.N. Tuck’s The Chin Hills: A History of the people, Our Dealings with them, their customs and manners, and Gazetteer of their Country, Vol. 1 (1896, reprinted 1976) and the other was John Shakespear’s The Lushei Kuki Clans, Parts I and II (1912). Though the original purpose of these books related to the proposed combination of three districts into one, a proposal that was not

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
accepted in the end, they nevertheless made important contributions to our understanding of the essential unity of the people concerned. To these should be added William Shaw’s Notes on the Thadou Kukis (1929) and G.A. Grierson’s monumental work, Linguistic survey of India, III, 3 (1904), both of which make the same point from different perspectives. These books based on a certain degree of anthropological analysis show us that the nature of Mizo society and culture just at the time the area was beginning to come under alien administration. N.E Parry’s book A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies (1928) is another valuable insight on cultures of the Mizo which is meant for the outsider to read. These books significantly altered the image of the Mizo in the minds of literate outsiders.

The fourth group deals with the changes that occur in cultural behavior of the people, this is mainly to highlight the changes brought by Christianity in the life of the people. Robert Reid’s book The Lushai Hills (1942) deals mainly about the political changes that had taken place which had been supplemented by anthropological works of N.E Parry’s book The Lakhers (1932), Parry having contact with the southern part of Mizoram and Mara clan which the Lushai called the Lakher. He had touch deep inside the cultural activities of the Mara. A.G McCall’s Lushai Chrysallis (1949) concerned about the traumatic cultural changes that had come upon as a result of the western contact through the Christian missionaries and government official. McCall puts that the main task of the government was to maintain law and order, however that had work to uphold and preserved the customs of the people. Parry also sought to preserve the pristine nature of the Mizo culture. Sharing the same opinion, McCall believed that some change was not only evitable but desirable. While admitting that change was inevitable, he pleaded that it should be indigenously ignited and properly guided, and not forced on the people by “over-zealous” outsiders. His book attempts to focus about the government policies in this respect, and also to provide guidelines for the moral and economic development of the people. In addition to this McCall wrote a book, The Lushai Hills District Cover (1972), prepared during 1938-39 as an official hand book for the administration of the district, which had
the same objective. Its rule on traditional, if slightly modified forms of
government through the chiefs. Parry defended the institution of Zawlbuk
(bachelor’s dormitory) and successfully sought to revive it. Similarly McCall
defended the Bawi system, and similarly failed. The accounts found in the above
books are incomplete and certainly are not free from bias. However, they made
good contributions to the understanding of certain aspects of the matter studied
in this book, but not dealt with its subject directly.

J.D. Baveja’s The Land Where Bamboo Flowers (1970) and L.B. Thanga’s
The Mizos: A study in Racial Personality (1978) provide fresh information about
the Mizo socio-cultural life. Though one may not agree with his main thesis
regarding the origins of the ills in Zo society, particularly the recent insurgency,
Baveja’s conclusions concerning the Mizo personality are noteworthy. Mizo, he
noted, is a person with contrasting “moods” which are difficult to anticipate.
Thanga agrees with Baveja that “A Mizo is not easy to understand. To understand
the “mood” or, more accurately, the “mental aptitude” of the Mizo is, in fact, the
key to understand the phenomenal growth of Christianity among them about
which this book is concerned.

One way in which the interaction between Christianity and culture of those
who embraced it has been studied is to look at the impact of the former on the
latter. Example can be seen in John Vanlalhluna’s Church and Political upheaval
in Mizoram: A Study of Impact of Christianity on the Political Development in
Mizoram (1985). Though it was not the main purpose of his research, Hluna
devoted three brief chapters to the growth of Christianity. Without attempting an
in depth analysis of the reasons for it, Hluna attributed the rapid growth of
Christianity to the “Mission ‘Policy’ and its implication” and, additionally, to “the
responses made by the Mizo people.”

The study of the impact of Christianity upon Mizo society has been
undertaken by a number of writers, both westerners and the Mizos. The
perspective from which such writing is usually done is that of missionary
expansion. The earliest works of this type were Grace R.Lewis’ The Lushai Hills: The Story of the Lushai Pioneer Mission (1970), M.E.Bowser’s Light on the Lushai Hills: The Story of our Foreign Mission (1930), David Kyles’ Lorrain of the Lushais: Romance and Realism on the North-East Frontier of India (1944). In common with most book of this type these were written mainly to inform western readers and to solicit their support for the agents, the missionaries – especially those activities that were successful.

The Mizo are mentioned as only the objects of missionary works. The descriptions of the people found in them are only a slight improvement over the newspaper reports. Their descriptions of the moral and religious life of the people were not reliable. This was because their purpose in writing was not to help their readers understand traditional Mizo culture sympathetically, but to solicit their support in bringing about changes “for the better” in that culture. It is clear that this approach is inadequate either for the purpose in developing self-understanding among Mizos who happen to be Christian or for providing adequate historical explanation.

An interesting recent work has been written by Prof. Lal Dena. While his book Christian Missions and Colonialism (1988), is mainly concerned with the relationship between the British and foreign missionaries in Manipur and Mizoram, he also has one chapter entitled “Modus Operandi of the Missions and the Impact” in which he describes the way in which the missionaries working in the two states used similar methods “the increase in converts was much more phenomenal in Lushai Hills than in Manipur.” He attributes this partly to the different structure of the churches in Mizoram and partly to the united efforts of the missionaries belonging to different missions working in the area. While these are certainly factors to be taken in consideration, they are certainly subsidiary to the main factor – the nature and consequences of the encounter between Christianity and the traditional Mizo culture which resulted in a distinctive kind of Mizo revivalism.
Nevertheless, an in depth analysis of these studies on the Mizo reveals that almost all of them are biased towards ethnography of the Mizo. They hardly go beyond the ethnographical details. Most of the studies are devoted to describe the paradigm rather than explicit analysis and interpretation of the Mizo society.

5) Archival Records:

In the nineteenth century the official records and archival materials became relevant when the European archives gradually became available to the historians; these sources have had one of the most popular usages for historians. In the case of the historian of modern India, the opening of the archives of the colonial government for the researchers made available a flood of information which has contributed immensely to the understanding and assessment of developments in India during British rule. The availability of the official records of the British rulers made the writing of the history of India’s colonial period both exciting and difficult in the past forty years or so. Till about a few decades back the sources available to the historian were limited to some studies of Viceroyos, works on constitutional developments, some biographies and some general histories written mainly by British officers or British professional historians. But with the opening up of the official records and private papers the entire colonial history of India has come to wear a new look.62

With the annexation of Mizoram by the British in 1890 which was followed by a process of consolidation and investigation into the indigenous form of government. The Britishers in their quest to the unknown land began to explore and started to write about the ways of the people. These materials are available in the National Archives of India, New Delhi; State Archives, West Bengal, Kolkata; Record office, Assam, Dispur and Record office, Aizawl, now called State Archive, Record room, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Silchar. Documents relating to the vents of Mizoram under the British are also abundantly available in the

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62 Sumit Sarkar; Modern India (Madras, 1986 reprint) pp.4-6.
Commonwealth Relations Office Library, London. Also the National Library, Kolkata, the Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi, may also store valuable materials to supply evidences to the writing of history of Mizoram.

1.4.1 Their Limitations:

The most important task of the historian is to first relate the question of what kind of sources he/she had used and the second question is how the historian make the sources speak. Thus one can say that in a sense bias is the problem of the empiricist because every source comes with its own prejudices and it is up to the historian to recognize that bias and apply correctives. The major task of the historian therefore lies in making the information animate, and so in any work of historical research there are two major procedures involved. The first is the formulation of questions in a given field and the second is the seeking of appropriate answers to those questions. However neither of the process is inevitable without the availability of the sources. In the antiquity of history the sources of formation was mainly of enquiry, interview and eyewitness because at that time the question of reconstruction had not been in the layers of writing history. In the Middle Ages there had been a turn towards a discipline in history writing as the church dominated, making it a main shell of a canon to their entire writing. Needless to say the renaissance brought the spirit of humanism later followed by the scientific invention and the growth of modern technology which started to affect the writing of history.

Oral history tradition therefore holds out hopes for understanding the historical evolutions of those societies without recorded history and where beginnings might have to be made with interpretation of the legends, myths and folklore. But unfortunately there is no question of enquiry ‘as to why?’ Or ‘how it happened?’ along the line of theoretical clarity and methodological soundness.

63 Manorama Sharma; *History and History writing in North East India*, p.28.
We should also acknowledge the part played by English anthropologists in the classification of the ethnographic artifacts in terms of a “march progress”. Anthropologists tended to view the practices of different cultures with an eye to their place on the scale of advancement with instrument social order of the west at the civilized end. This was represented through display of tools placed in sequential order from the simple general purpose devices to more specialised artifacts so that the audience could followed the movement from the primitive to the complex. In doing so, the audience situated themselves at the top of the scale of advancement and the ‘other’ the people to a position lower down. Henrietta Lidchi argues that ethnographic artifacts were taken as the ‘material embodiment of the social-cultural complexities of the other cultures. The interventions of ethnocentric anthropologists ensured that these representations came to be seen as a ‘true’ account of how western societies had emerged and how they came to be seen as advanced.64

The first sources in terms of writing were limited to the British official who had represented the Mizo as the abode of savages, barbaric and head hunters, blood thirsty etc. Their task was to maintain a record for the convenience of administration. Therefore they were bound by their officialdom. These were the first assumptions made by the outsider to their unknown land. The writing was the product of anthropologists who had taken the model of western society as the measuring scale of advancement. After their prolonged study on the African continent, the same strategy had been applied to their studies. A famous Kipling’s poem “A white men’s burden” takes its toll again, a feeling that it was the task of the white men to civilize those whom they regarded as a weaker in society.65

The missionary superficially overlooked the cultures and society of the Mizos. They started to write about the Mizos as they had done it mainly to enable

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64 Mark J. Smith; Culture (Re-inventing social science): Viva book Private Limited. p.8
65 Rudyard Kipling published "The White Man's Burden" in 1899, an appeal to the United States to assume the task of developing the Philippines, recently won in the Spanish-American War. As the poet of British imperialism, though being regarded as a beloved children's book author. Today he might yet gain appreciation as a transmitter of Indian culture to the West.
the easy spread of Christianity among them. The writing of Christian missionaries or Church men no doubt rendered valuable information in writing history. While writing about the Church expansion and activities of different churches and Mission, they failed to ask the question why Christianity found such a wide support base in particular areas of the region. What casual factors in the tribal society led to the expansion of Christianity? There is also a need to assess the impact of Christianity on the social, political, economical and cultural fabric of the communities.

By using the sources one has to be aware that these sources were the documents and to make the document animate is not an easy task either. The earlier writers about the Mizo failed to handle the sources by passing the document as it is. Instead of transcribing them to interpret history or locate them in the historiographical context, they followed the same footstep rendered by the Britishers.

1.5 Problem of Periodisation and the way out:

An attempt will be made here to discern new trends in the historiography of the Mizos. I will take up the challenge of rethinking the colonial legacy of history writing, which could constitute a major paradigm shift. This shift is mainly with reference to the social memory concerning Mautam famine (which had occurred periodically) against the Eurocentric construction of periodising Mizo history, which has internalised Mizo history writing for so long. I will also highlight the advantage of this shift, but also the possible limits. Does Christianity/colonial periodising of Mizo history suffice the need for demarcating the events that has occurred over the years?

1.5.1 Applying Derridean discourse and a critique on “Logocentrism”:

With regard to the historiography of the Mizos, we find an approach that can help us to understand it with social scientific knowledge. Working at the
interface of philosophy, history and literature, Jacques Derrida claimed that many key concepts are conjuring tricks for pretending that problems do not exist (using such terms as ‘being’, ‘truth’ or ‘objectivity’ to cover them up). Drawing upon Heideggerian phenomenology, Derrida placed such words ‘under erasure’, indicating their ambiguous status as inadequate but, in the absence of something better, remaining quite necessary. In particular, he argued that the concept of ‘the subject’ should be placed under erasure in the same way. Using this critical technique, Derridean discourse analysis destabilises the key ideas upon which western knowledge is grounded; i.e. in logocentrism. Rather than searching for some underlying foundation or essence, this approach suggests that we should map the conceptual landscape for the metaphoric and metonymic relations which provide a sense of order.

In the process we have to engage in the interrogation of texts to establish their organization around certain oppositional categories; such as true/false, rationality/irrationality, objective/subjective, masculinity/feminity and same/other.66 One side of the opposition is positively valued and placed in a privileged position which is the dominant one. This approach has served well in the study of cultural differences where the distinction between same/other features heavily. By carefully mapping the relations of equivalence (of sameness) and difference (of otherness) we can identify the ways in which cultural differences are constructed around the ideas of insiders and outsiders and how they can be articulated with other oppositions, like rationality/irrationality, civilized/primitive, instrumental/expressive and so on. Cultures, identities and the boundaries used to mark the differences between them constantly shift through the dynamic practices of human beings which organize and recognize the built environment and their relationship to it.

Now the task is how we can locate this theory in our understanding of the periodisation of Mizo history. In opposition to colonial legacy, to justify our argument, we may state that the earlier Mizo history writers were colonial products. Here, Logocentrism is circled around the evangelical and philanthropic activities of the west which are imposed upon the ‘inferior’ Mizo culture, as well as the activities of colonial officials who superficially looked at the Mizo society carrying the load of the “Whiteman’s burden”, a belief that the white races are more civilized over other cultures. Therefore, for the colonial writer and the internalized Mizo local writers, the practices of the Mizos were narrated as acts of barbarism, animism etc. However, if we are to shift the centeredness of this Eurocentric view we have to locate how these symbols have meaning in their existence from the perspective of the Mizo worldview and the multiple layers of meanings that are attached to its structure. The local knowledge cannot be abandoned at all, as it carries certain meanings that are clear to the views of the tribals themselves.

1.5.2 The colonial construct of periodisation:

In this world of “archive fever”67 one of the problems in writing Mizo history is that, there can be no periodisation of history which is generally categorized as ancient, medieval and modern; we cannot apply the general rules of periodisation mainly due to the absence of written records. From the ethnocentric point of view the written ‘text’ is regarded as superior to the ‘oral’ one. Therefore, the process of writing history for the internalised Mizo writer at the beginning was linear and progressive. The question which can be posed here

67Derrida Jacques, Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, University of Chicago Press, 15-Oct-1998 - In the Note, Derrida begins not “even at the archive,” but with the word. He traces its meaning from the Greek Arkhe which means “at once the commencement and the commandment.” Through this Note, he explores the authority of archives from the Greek superior magistrates, the archons, and the domiciliation of the archives as physical locations and most importantly outlines the way that archives appear to have authority, physical location and consignation but ultimately seeks to “shelter itself and, sheltered, to conceal itself.” This is what he wants us to realize before we even begin to contemplate the archive: the nature of an archive is to be both authoritarianly transparent and authoritatively concealed.
is whether a society without a scripture can have no history at all. Does the oral tradition have a place in writing history in the modern context?

Mizo historians broadly classified the periods into those of the pre-British period and the post-British period, by taking the coming of the British as the dividing line between the two. Dividing the period in colonial terms is entrapment in colonial legacy itself. Our paper seeks to explore the possibility of reconstructing this periodisation with the social memory pertaining to bamboo famine, which appear to be both traditional and scientific.

1.5.3 The way out: reconstructing with local knowledge:

We argue that upon careful analyses and study, we can re-construct Mizo history through local knowledge of Bamboo famine. Now, let us examine the development of Bamboo famine. Despite significant contributions to the local economy, bamboo flowering causes two types of famine, locally known as “mautam tam” and “thingtam” – their occurrence usually being based on chronological sequences. In local language, Mautam or thingtam literally means larger bamboos withering or dying out. Tam meaning ‘famine’, Mau/ Thing meaning ‘bamboo’, the famine caused by bamboo is therefore called mautam tam and thingtam. According to folk tradition, the two species of bamboo (thing or bambusa longispiculata and mautak or melocanna bambbasoides) which grow in abundance in the hills, flower in a cycle of 30 years and 50 years respectively. The bamboo flowers soon produce fruits which are usually brown and green in colour. The seeds contain rich protein and are the favourite food of the local rats or Sazu. This is followed by a sudden explosion of rat population in the hills. Local people believe that bamboo seeds increase rat fertility and that even a single female rat is able produce more than ten babies at a time if it consumes

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68 Sangkima in his paper “Sources of Writing Mizo history” divided the period between ancient and modern (naming pre-colonial and post colonial) using the advent of the British dividing line between the two, Whereas Lalchungnunga in his book Politics of Regionalism and National Integration (Reliance Publishing House) divided the period into: A- Pre British period, B- British period, C- The post- Independence period.
bamboo seeds. The bamboos soon die, leaving the rats without abundant food from the bamboo. C. Rokhuma says, “After eating up the bamboo fruits, rats started attacking paddy fields in the beginning of autumn season and in a matter of one night or two, such eye catching paddy fields were suddenly reduced into nothing but dead paddy straws.”

Although, bamboo flowerings and famines are also known in Myanmar, Japan, Sri Lanka, South America and Southern Africa, they seem to cause more devastation in Mizoram. Despite the numerous researches conducted by environmentalists and scientists, the cause of bamboo flowering still remains unexplained and mysterious. Various hypotheses such as the pathological, genetic, periodical, mutational, nutritional, resource matching and bamboo wildlife cycle have been drawn. However, little is known about the mechanism responsible for determining when a species of bamboo bears flowers. Mizo folk traditions provide some references on numerous signs of unnatural ecological imbalance which took place before the bamboo flowering which goes as follows:

A host of insects locally called *thangnang* swarm the hills before and during the bamboo flowering. The Mizo elders are still able to recall the sound of the swarm of *thangnang* in the hilly skies which they said resembled that of a thunderstorm. Even the tree branches broke off because of the numerous *thangnang* that perched on the branches. It may sound like a mere myth to scientific communities, but there is proof that it is indeed true. In 2006, the State Agriculture Department reported that villages in the southern part of Mizoram witnessed large scale devastation of vegetables by giant snails. Folk

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tradition called such incidents as *tam hmahuai* or the harbinger of famine.

The sub-tribe *Hmar* clans were believed to have migrated from Burma to the present Mizoram due to a famine that took place in 1500. One of the earliest known *Hmar* oral songs goes as follows:

\[ Shan \ khuaah \ lenpur \ a \ tlakin, \\
Miza \ raza \ tlan \ their \ e. \]

“Because of the great famine that befell us in Shan State

*We had to leave it behind*”

The dominant sub-tribe *Lusei* was believed to have entered Mizoram sometime in the middle of the 17th century. They must have probably experienced these periodic famines even then.

The local knowledge and the oral tradition testify Mautam famine as a marker of change which had occurred periodically, which is also attested to by scientific methods. These incidents in history can be used as methods of periodising Mizo history.

**1.5.4 The possible limitations:**

Using Mautam/Thingtam as a means of periodising Mizo history is the paradigm shift that we intend to suggest; similar to the way the Muslims have their Hijri calendar, how Hindus have their present Kali Yuga, and how Kerala has its Malayalam calendar. Mautam periodisation is presumably inclusive (since it is an environmental phenomena), although only of course up to where it physically stops.
Is it a touch macabre to periodize history around bamboo death and famine? Not only that, there is a possibility that this could only ever end up being a parochial category—a sort of 'resistance periodization' against the usual, British-normative periodization. How would we actually deploy it in practice? That is, do we refer to Mautam II for instance, when earlier ones existed though were not recorded, and when we do not know when the 'first' Mautam was? The whole business can get murky: the 2008 Mautam might have been the hundredth Mautam. It might have been the fortieth, the thousandth... “Projecting” Mautams back into time is perhaps possible, but there would surely be a margin of error compounded with each projection? This is an area which needs thorough investigation/research in order to avoid such complications.

The quest for something more than the usual colonial-normative periodisation is, of course, an enterprise that involves meticulous efforts and dedicated research in the survey of history. The course of western civilization too often moves mechanically from one time slot to another without raising issues of what key factors have changed, what has caused change, and whether an alternative periodisation might be construed. Our attempt here is to bring an insight into a deeper understanding of Mizo history. This paper is thus, an attempt toward suggesting Mautam famine as a means of establishing a periodised Mizo history through careful examination of the changes that have occurred over the years.