Chapter II

Theorising Mizo Myth of Origin and Migration
The main aim of this chapter is to highlight the origin of the Mizos and different migration theories that were evolved by the local writers and also to highlight the cultural progress in the pre-colonial Mizo society.

2.1 Myth and the theories of origin:

The majority of the Mizo historians, while tracing the origin of the Mizos, did not fail to mention the Myth of Chhinlung and Khampat legend. A reference to the myth did not fail to infer the relatedness of the myriad tribes collectively known to the British administrators of the late 19th centuries as Kuki-Chin-Lushai, now known under various names and divided by international as well as state borders. It is indeed surprising to see how this myth holds an integral part of Mizo imagination, despite the recognition of its mythical nature. The syncretism of myth and history is quite a universal experience, in the sense that all societies take recourse to it. Myth and mythologies together with symbols value from the bowels of the earth. The beginning of the Mizo origin was translated into English by Lt. Col. J. Shakespear in 1912:

Once upon a time when the great darkness called Thimzing fell upon the world, many awful thing happened. Everything except the skulls of animals killed in the chase became alive, dry woods revived, even stones become alive and produced leaves, so men had nothing to burn. The successful hunters who had accumulated large stocks of trophies of their skill were able to live using them as fuel. After this terrible catastrophe, Thimzing, the world was again re-peopled by men and women issuing from the hole of the earth called ‘Chhinlung’.¹

¹ Shakespear, J; *The Kuki Lushai Clan*, London: Macmillan & Co., 1912, pp.93-94
2.2 Myth of Chhinlung and Khampat Legend:

The Mizo origin myth is said to be based on Chhinlung tradition. According to the story, a long time ago the Mizos emergence from Chhinlung which can be translated as a capstone. The popular imagination for the Mizos implies Chhinlung to be a hole in the ground, covered with a capstone. It was believed that the tribes of the Mizos emerged from this hole, and finally when the Ralte clan emerged, they created a ruckus that the owner/keeper of the capstone, thinking there were already too many (tribes/people), shut the hole with the capstone.² Lusei, Hmar and other clans in Mizoram called it “Chhinlung”, whereas Thadous, Paites, Gangtes, Vaph eis 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 cave dwellers or they might have come out from a big cave. This tradition is seen in folk songs, which mention that:

Ka siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
Ka nu ram, ka pa ram ngai.
Chawngzil ang kokir theih chang sien,
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ka ngai³.

Translated as:

My homeland Sinlung the famous one,
I miss the land of my mum and dad,
Only if it could it be called back like Chawngzil,
I miss the land of my mother and father.

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² Liangkhaia, Rev; Mizo Chanchin (Bu I & II hmun khatah), LTL Publications, Mission Veng, Aizawl, 2002
³ Pudaite, Rochunga; The Education of the Hmar People, Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, Silemat, 1963, p.21
The above song 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.

There is also a folktale which runs parallel with this tradition among the Mara which is called “earth hole” tradition. It indicates that the first man on this earth came out of a 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.4

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 stratus in society as the devices employed in narrating this tale clearly reveals.

Another interesting legend emerges with the Mizos that the forebears parted ways with Burmese. They planted a banyan tree (Khampat, identified as in Burma, Liangkhaia said it was a Burmese myth) and promised to meet when the roots that grow off the branches of the tree struck root once again. B. Lalthangliana mentioned about the existence of Khampat. For him Khampat was believed to be the oldest town ever built by the Mizos (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.5

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

4 Perry, N.E; The Lakhers, Firma KLM Pvt Ltd, on behalf of Tribal research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, p.232
5 Lalthangliana, B; Mizo Chanchi (History and Culture of Mizo in India, Burma & Bangladesh), published by Remkungi, RTM Press, Chhinga Veng, Aizawl Mizoram, 2001. p.87
branches of the tree touches the ground. When the people are about to leave the place they even composed a song:

Ka phun Bungpui dawi-ai ka sanna,
Mi khawih loh, sa khawihloh te in,
Thang lian la Khuanu leng hualin;
I tangzar piallei a zam tikah,
Seifaten vangkhua kan rawn dih leh nang e

Translated as:

I planted a Banyan tree,
Not touched by the animals or a man,
Let it grow up so high with god’s care
When the branch touch the ground
We Lusei clan will return and rebuilt the town again.

By the time a section of the Mizo returned to the Myanmar and settled down in the areas around the Khampat site in the beginning of the 20th century, the branches of the tree had already touched the ground. Thus, many people considered it as a fulfilment of prophesy.6

Looking at these myths and legends we now have two reference points about the origins of the Mizos. It is essentially the historicizing of these myths and legends and also the journey between these two stages that are important for the Mizos imagination for identity makers and markers.

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2.3 The methods of textualizing orality pertaining to Myth interpretation:

Rcollecting the past was not something new for the Mizos. The question is how this oral tradition is formalized in a textual form. This happened not long after writing was introduced to the Mizos by the Christian missionaries. The textualization of memories into history is something that the so-called educated Mizos have to take it as a challenge. What was new therefore was the narration of oral into written form. The first work can be attributed to Liangkhaia’s book on “Mizo Chanchin” meaning “Mizo narratives” which was published in 1928. Other useful contributions were VL Siama’s Mizo history in 1953, the first textbook for the Mizos commissioned by the Board of School Education. This was followed by Vanchhunga in 1955, Zatluanga in 1966 and K. Zawla in 1974. It was important to note that Liangkhaia was an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church, VL Siama a school teacher and Vanchhunga an employee of Church as Tirhkoh. Having been trained in the colonial legacy the question is how much did colonial writing influence their writings?

According to these local writers who pioneer the history writing the need for textualising oral tradition are in two ways. Firstly, borrowing the words of Liangkhaia “One read the histories of other nations, but never of the Mizos.” If we carefully observed his argument the need for writing Mizo history at first for him is placing the importance of Mizo history along the line of world history. The colonial context to which he was internalized made him recognize that the written text was to be given privilege over an oral one.

Secondly, Mizos origins and past life would soon disappear if the elders who knew such affairs died and then there would be no one to consult. Remembrance of the past is essential for the youth to know about their origin and past.
Therefore, his main aim at textualising oral history at the beginning was homogenizing the story of the Myth. In justifying his methodology, Liangkhaia claimed that he was careful in collecting multiple voices. He picked up a version which appeared to be the most appropriate one. In the process a number of voices have been abandoned. The question which can be raised at this stage is what would be the most important one? For them the method is simple enough that the knowledgeable elders were summoned which for them would gain legitimacy of writing Mizo history. Written narratives also served a purpose of legitimizing their claim as a valid ethos.

In the process of textualising myth as a history there can be a problem of sources from the informants. Thought still theoretical but more of practical nature which can be seen in a dialogue between the researcher and the informants. For instance the informants belonging to a particular clan might know the best legends and myth belonging to their own lineage, but nevertheless they might not be interested in collecting data from other families, or other clans. This can lead to bias in collection of memories, and the researcher can draw information to legitimize his/her pre-assumed ideas.⁷

2.4 Historicization of a Myth:

The opening of the Mizo world to the wider geographical region often encouraged the Mizo historian to place their people in this cultural and geographical context. This was followed by the process of historicization. This systemization was based on the knowledge that they were exposed to and thus there were two or three ways in which this location was understood. In most of the earlier colonial ethnographies there was a tendency to try and link up the tribes into groups and tribes, a result of the age’s needs for ‘scientific’ classification. This led the Mizo authors speculating their place with ‘racial’ (read

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linguistic) categories. Also, Mizos also had to be placed within the Bible narrative scheme and finally there was also Chhinlung to be explained.\(^8\)

The origin of the past could not rest on unencrypted myth alone. In the scientific age, with such a notion it is hard to believe that man came out of a hole/capstone. As K. Zawla wrote, since it became difficult to imagine that all tribes came from a subterranean abyss, the concept of Chhinlung required explanation.\(^9\) Therefore such tensions were resolved by the emerging historians. The process of historicization of a myth therefore requires associating it with a name of a person or some geographical place.

The earlier historian Thangvunga started to locate the origins of Mizos with the Chinese. Thangvunga, a Mizo historian who went to Burma to trace the history of origin and migration of the Mizos in 1941, was told by the Burmese priest of Mandalay regarding the explanation of this myth.

The ancestor of the Mizos 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, the cast lots according to which they proceeded into two groups, one group towards the south-west and the other to the south. How long they spend between Shanghai and Burma is not known, but the one in 1941 was counted as the 47th generation. When the group came to Burma the Burmese said, “The Chinlu are coming.” (Chin 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.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) Ibid, p.152
\(^9\) Zawla, K (1993), Mizo pipu an thlahte Chanchin
\(^10\) Ibid, pp.6-7
Coming as it did from a neutral informant, this explanation has the advantage of being readily accepted. Interesting though it may be, however, it has no explanation for the belief long held by the Mizos that their origin goes back to a cave, the covering rock of the Mizos of Mizoram called *Chhinlung*.

The more likely explanation of the cave propounded by Rochunga Pudaite is the Great Wall of China. As he suggested 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’n dynasty and who built the Great Wall of China in 228 B.C. 11 To avoid severe punishments from cruel ruler, the prince first established himself somewhere in the Himalayan mountains and then again migrated to present Shan State of Burma. According to this believe the Mizos are said to have been the subject of *Chin Lung* whose name is continued to be retained as *Chhinlung* connecting with their origin. This evidence is also attested by a Hmar folk song.

\[
\text{Khaw sinlungah kot siel ang ka zuang suaka,} \\
\text{Mi le nello tam e, hriemi hraiah.}^{12}
\]

Translated as:

\[
\text{Out of the city of Sinlung} \\
\text{I jumped out like a Siel}^{13} \\
\text{Innumerable were the encounters} \\
\text{With the children of men.}
\]

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12 Songate, L. Hranglien; *Hmar Chanchin (Hmar history)*, L& R Press, 1977, p.11
13 Siel (Sial) is a domesticated animal among the Mizos and the tribes of North east India and Burma. In olden days it played important role in their social life. Prices were determined and measured in terms of Sial. It was a sacred animal of the Mizos. The British called it mithun and sometimes goyal.
The song indicates that they hurriedly left Chhinlung like a mithun leaping out of a cage. There have been compelling factors for which they have to leave Chhinlung. 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.\(^\text{14}\)

Another theory on Chhinlung myth is attached to a Chinese city of Chhinlung (Xinlong) at longitude degree 101 03’ and latitude degree 31 in the Szechwan province of China. Its height is 1742 cm above sea level. The city is situated on the western side of the Yulung River and on the east of Yantze Kiang River. Old walls and defense fortifications which once surrounded the city are still visible. It had been the district headquarters under the various Chinese rulers and is still regarded as one of the most important cities in the province. During the imperial period, it had been an important port.

Another theory is Mizo Israelism, which is often regarded as a distortion of myth or history. According to this theory some of the sections of Mizos came to the conclusion that Mizos are among one of the lost tribes of Israel. For around forty years this belief had revolved among the Mizos. The methods were based on drawing certain folk songs or trying to locate similarities between Mizo cultural practices with that of the Israelites. According to Rev Lalbiaktluanga, the first man who claimed that the Mizos belonged to the Israel tribe was Chala, a village man from Buallawn in 1951.\(^\text{15}\) On the other hand Levy Benjamin stated that it was in 1936 that two men named Kapa and Saichhuma claimed they belonged to an Israel tribe. Tracing back the origin of Mizo we cannot totally ignore the belief that Mizos may be the descendents of a tribe of Israel. There was a long lasting debate regarding this topic. According to the Holy Scriptures, in the Old

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\(^{14}\) Lalrimawia; *Mizoram history and cultural Identity* (1890-1947) Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p.12

\(^{15}\) Lalbiaktluanga, (Rev); “*Theological trends in Mizoram*” towards tribal perspective, 1989, p.66
Testament the Israelites were the chosen people, but due to their unfaithfulness to God they were dispersed to different parts of the world. Therefore, this led to a diaspora in different parts of the world. The scriptures prophesized they will one day gather in the Promised Land. Therefore, when Israel gained independence in 1948 most of the Jews returned back to Israel. So, some of the Mizo believed they had the right to migrate back to Israel to which they thought they belonged. They had drawn every possibility of similarities between Israelites and Mizos in terms of customs and beliefs.

There aroused different opinions among the claimed-Mizo-Israelite to which tribe of Israel they belong. One group claims that they were Ephraim tribes who migrated to the east. They reversed the word “Luse” or “Lushai” as giving the meaning “Lu” as “people” and “se” as “tenth”, which they admitted that they belonged to the tenth tribe among the twelve tribes of Israel. Another group called themselves as Chhinlung-Israel drawing possibilities of affinities between Mizo tradition and Juda tradition. For them it’s not about shifting from Mizoram to Israel. They believed that they can get Independence in Mizoram itself under the protection of Israel government under the decolonization process. 16 So they have repeatedly send memorandum to United Nations for their cause. However their dreams about independence are not yet fulfilled till now.

In recent years there is a development with the Mizo-Israelite a progressive Mizo Scholar Ms. Zaithanchhungi who had visited Israel several times and who claims that Mizos belong to Manasseh tribe. Having been counselled by Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail she had done a research for over eight years, she came to the conclusion that she had enough evidence to prove that her research was reliable. 17 She made a connection with the sacrifices made by the Mizo during pre British period. When any man comes home sick from Jhum, it was believed that the sickness was caused by an evil spirit. In order to please the evil spirit The Bawlpui (the priest) then performed an offering by chanting the

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16 An interview with Lalchhanhima Sailo in july 2006.
name “Manasseh”. However Rev. Chuauthuama, in his book “Mizo leh Israel” (Israel and Mizo) debates 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 to the notion that chanting the name of “Manasseh” was a self-made history that does not have a sound basis.18

If we observed carefully about the year of development as mentioned before the reason why these section of Mizos claimed to be one of the lost tribes is a by-product of Christian missionaries, as a belief of being a lost tribe of Israel by the Mizos begins only after the coming of the British and the spread of Christianity. This opinion was shared by Dr. Myer Samra saying that although this was the product of teaching led by Christian missionaries, this was not the intention of the Christian missionaries either.19 A scholar from Aizawl Theological College, Aizawl Rev. Chuauthuama was of the opinion that there was a strong economic motive which made them think that their life would be better.20

2.5 Original homeland of the Mizos:

The original home of the Mizos is shrouded in obscurity. There is a theory that runs along the linguistic pattern. Scholars have sub-divided Tibeto-Chinese family into sub-groups. In these divisions Mizos are grouped as a Tibeto-Burma family which speaks the Tibeto Burman language.21 Recently, the emerging historian Sangkima, basing on Hall’s argument, emphasized that the earliest known home of the Tibeto-Burmese speaking people was somewhere between the

18 I personally interviewed one of the leaders of this group Mr. Lalchhanhima at his office Canteen Kual, Treasury Square, Aizawl. During the interview he admit that he was in touch with the UNO office in Delhi and worked for the Mizo Israelites that they will get independence from Indian union under the umbrella of Israel. The general Secretary F. Lala informed me that the practices of the Mizos like preparation of dishes among the Mizos are quite similar to the Israelites and he also tried to connect some of the Bible scriptures to back up his evidence.
19 Samra, Myer (Dr); “Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram...” Seminar papers, pp. 63-6
20 Chuauthuama, (Rev); Mizo leh Israel ( Mizo and Israel ), p.11
Gobi Desert and Northeastern part of Tibet, possibly Kansu.\textsuperscript{22} The interesting question is how Sangkima had come to the conclusion that Mizo traditional home is somewhere in the southern part of China?

Tai and other non-Chinese like the Lolo, Miao and other tribesmen had come to Yunan from Sze-chuwan, Kuichaw and other provinces due to pressures from the Chinese. As a result, Yunan is found to be a cradle of these tribals; there are 18 larger minority nationalities in China.\textsuperscript{23} Hence Lolo, Miao, Yao, Lashi, Li (Lai), Yi (li), Pai and others are the prominent tribes. Among these tribes Lalos have a linguistic affinity with the Mizos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Mizo</th>
<th>Lolo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>Ni</td>
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<td>Pig</td>
<td>Vawk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Kua(pakua)</td>
<td>kue</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table.1 A comparison of English, Mizo and Lolo language\textsuperscript{24}

Sangkima was of the opinion that the Mizos might have been with this tribe somewhere in the Southern China. Drawing his evidence from the above language comparison and asserting a close affinity of the Mizos with the hill tribes of southern China in languages, mode of living and cultural practices, he believes that the Mizos came in contact with other hill tribes and as a result there were mutual borrowings of language and culture. It is more likely that like other non-Chinese tribes of southern China, the Mizos too, moved down to the South possibly due to the pressure of the Chinese. From there they came to Yunan province and stayed for some time. Therefore, the southern part of China, particularly Szechwan, Yunan, Kwichow provinces and in wider context, the

\textsuperscript{22} Sangkima, (Dr); Mizos Society and Social Change (1890-1947), Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 1992, p.13, see also Hall, D.G.E; A History of South-East Asia, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1956, Reprint, p.34

\textsuperscript{23} Lyall, L.A.; China, Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1934, p.83

\textsuperscript{24} Forest, R.A.D.; The Chinese Language, Faber and Faber Ltd., London,(n.d.), p.101
entire fringe of eastern perimeter of the plateau between Kansu and Burma, may be considered as the original home of the Mizos.\textsuperscript{25}

Taking this view Prof. J.N. Phukan remarks that “The connections of the Mizos with the Burmese and the Shans in many of their cultural elements and civilization brings us to the theory that their late home of migration was southern China bordering Myanmar where even today many tribes lead their traditional life.”\textsuperscript{26} Nunthara also contends 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.”\textsuperscript{27}

These tribes were the descendants of early feudal rulers created by the Chinese emperors. They came to the South as a result of vast wave of population movements and also owing to certain Chinese pressures. In the period between 338 BC and 244 BC the tribal people moved to the south owing to the war between the Chin and Ch’u.\textsuperscript{28} The imperial army of Ch’in put down the latter with a heavy hand and consequently this led to a large scale dispersal of the populations of Szechuan and the other provinces in the south. But in subsequent years, the people, after regrouping themselves in various localities amid hills and plains in Yunan, set up a number of small principalities.\textsuperscript{29} One of the principalities was that of Ngai-Zeo founded by one prince called Chiu-lung. The major wave of population movement of the tribals to the south was also perhaps caused by the policy of Cheng better known to the history as Shih Huang (Wang) Ti (246-210 BC). Known as Napolean of China and founder of the Chinese

\textsuperscript{25} Sangkima (1992), op.cit., p.14
\textsuperscript{26} Phukan, J.N.; \textit{The Late Home of migration of the Mizos, paper presented at the international Seminar on the studies on the Minority Nationalities of northeast India- The Mizo at Aizawl on 7-9 April 1992.}
\textsuperscript{27} Nunthara, C; \textit{Mizoram: Society and Polity}, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996, p.39
\textsuperscript{28} Gogoi, Padmeswar; \textit{The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms}, Guwahati University, 1968, p.38
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. p.39
empire, Shih Huang-Ti initiated the real pressure on the tribes during the time when the construction of the Great Wall vigorously went on.\textsuperscript{30} So, he was responsible for the great revolution development in China.

2.6 Theories of Migration:

People move for different reasons. These differences affect the overall migration process. Although a comprehensive theory is unattainable, it remains a crucial task of demographers to explain why people migrate. Theories of migration are important because they can help us understand population movements within their wider political and economic contexts.\textsuperscript{31} Ernest Ravenstein is widely regarded as the earliest migration theorist. Ravenstein, an English geographer, used census data from England and Wales to develop his "Laws of Migration" (1889). He concluded that migration was governed by a "push-pull" process; that is, unfavorable conditions in one place (oppressive laws, heavy taxation, etc.) "push" people out, and favorable conditions in an external location "pull" them out. Ravenstein's laws stated that the primary cause for migration was better external economic opportunities; the volume of migration decreases as distance increases; migration occurs in stages instead of one long move; population movements are bilateral; and migration differentials (e.g., gender, social class, age) influence a person's mobility.

Many theorists have followed in Ravenstein's footsteps, and the dominant theories in contemporary scholarship are more or less variations of his conclusions. Everett Lee (1966) reformulated Ravenstein's theory to give more emphasis to internal (or push) factors. Lee also outlined the impact that intervening obstacles have on the migration process. He argued that variables such as distance, physical and political barriers, and having dependents can

\textsuperscript{30} Latourette, Kenneth Scott; \textit{The Chinese- Their History, and Culture}, New York, 1947, pp 92-96. Also see, Gogoi, Padmeswar; op. cit. pp 32-37

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Theories of Migration},< http://family.jrank.org/pages/1170/Migration-Theories-Migration.html> (accessed on 4.3.2010)
impede or even prevent migration. Lee pointed out that the migration process is selective because differentials such as age, gender, and social class affect how persons respond to push-pull factors, and these conditions also shape their ability to overcome intervening obstacles. Furthermore, personal factors such as a person's education, knowledge of a potential receiver population, family ties, and the like can facilitate or retard migration.

As discussed, Mizo migration from the east moved towards the south west also falls under this “push” theory. One of the factors for their migration is famine which is clearly mentioned in the folk tradition. In the pre-British period no written account was available regarding the nature and effect of famines. It was only through the folk tradition that we can refer to these incidents. 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 is as follows:

Shan khuaah lenpur a tlakin,
Miza raza tlant nei e.

Translated as:

“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. (Rokhuma, 1998:96).

Mizos being a subject of Chi’n prince who revolted against his father Shih Huangti of the Chi’n dynasty and who built the Great Wall of China in 228 B.C.\(^{32}\) to avoid severe punishments from cruel ruler, the prince first established himself somewhere in the Himalayan mountains and then again migrated again to

\(^{32}\) Pudaite, Rochunga; *The Education of the Hmar People*, Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, Silemat, 1963, p.22
present Shan State of Burma. As mentioned before this evidence is also attested by Hmar folk song as mentioned before.

On the other hand James Scott had given us excellent idea why the hill people like the Mizos keeps themselves at arm’s length in his book on “The Art of not being Governed: An Anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia” Scott teases out the obverse of state-making and disrupts long-held views of hill peoples as “pre-state”. The Art of Not Being Governed confronts us with a “radically different approach to history that views events from the perspective of state-less people and redefine state-making as a form of internal colonialism”. Virtually everything about the communities inhabiting the “zomia” - their social structure, agricultural practices, belief system, orality - are/were designed to escape state or thwart state springing up within them. For example, Scott argument, “agricultural practices are not ecologically given, but are political choice”, disjuncts conventional notion of shifting agriculture as pre-wet agriculture. This is a history of communities who chose to keep the state at arm’s length.

An interesting theory of migration begins with GH Luce’s theory of the origin of Tibeto-Burmans which is followed by other Mizo historians and anthropologists. According to this theory the Chi’ang were not just the ancestors of the Chin but of the entire Tibeto-Burman group and they “enjoyed a civilization as advanced as the Chinese, who disturbed them so much that they moved south. In order to legitimize this claim Professor Luce comments:

33 A number of other theories have been advanced in this connection, more noticeably by Sing khokai and Chawn Kio they both believed that the Mizos ancestors were either the Ch’ing or Ch’iang in Chinese history, which are “old generic designations for the non-Chinese tribes of Kansu-Tibetan frontier, and indicate the Ch’iang as a shepherd people, the Ch’ing as “barbarian tribes”. See Sing Kho Kae, The Theological Concept of Zo in the Chin tradition and Culture, (BRE thesis: Burma Institute of Theology, 1984) and Chawn Kio, “The Origin of the Chin” in Ceu Mang, ed., Khrifa Bukbau (Haka: CCLR Press, 113)
With the expansion of China, the Ch’iang had either the choice to absorb or to become nomads in the wilds. It was a hard choice, between liberty and civilization. Your ancestor chose liberty; and they must have gallantly maintained it. But the cost was heavy. It cost them 2000 years of progress. If the Ch’iang of 3000 BC were equals of the Chinese civilization, the Tibeto-Burmans (including the Mizo) of 700 AD were not really as advanced as the Chinese in 1300 BC.  

According to Enriquez, before they moved to the wilderness, along the edges of western China and eastern Tibet, the ancient homelands of Ch’iang and all other Tibeto-Burman groups lied somewhere in the Northwest possibly in Kansu, between Gobi and north western Tibet. Thus, it is now generally believed that the Tibeto-Burman group and other Mongoloid stock who now occupy Southeast Asia and Northeast India migrated in three waves in the following chronological order:

1. The Mon-Khmer (Talaing, Palaung En Raing, Pa-o, Khasi, Annimite).
2. The Tibeto-Burman (Pyu, Kanzan, thet, Burman, Chin, Kachin, Naga, Lolo).
3. The Tai Chinese (Shan, Siamese, and Karen).

The Tibeto-Burman group initially moved towards the West and thereafter subdivided themselves into several groups. They follow different routes, one group reaching northern Tibet, where some of them stayed behind, while others moved on until they reached Burma in three waves. These people were:

1. The Chin-Kachin-Naga group

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34 Tun, Than; *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*, Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1998, p.4
35 Enriquez, C.M; *The Races of Burma*, Rangoon: Government Printing, 1932, pp. 7-8
2. The Burman and Old-Burman (Pyu, Kanzan, Thet) group
3. The Lolo group.\textsuperscript{36}

This migration theory has been mainly adopted by historians like Than Tun and Gordon Luce. However, anthropologists like Edmund Leach believe that “the hypothesis that the Southeast Asian peoples are known today migrated from the region of China is a pure Myth.”\textsuperscript{37} The main difference between the historical approach and the anthropological approach is that while historians begin their historical reconstruction with the origins and migrations of the ancestors, anthropologists start with “the development within the general region of Burma of symbiotic socio-cultural systems: civilizations and hill societies.”\textsuperscript{38} However, both historians and anthropologists agree-as historical linguistics, archaeology, and racial relationship definitely indicate- that the ancestors of these various people did indeed come from the North. But the anthropologists maintain their argument by saying that, “they did not come as social and cultural units we know today and cannot be identified with any particular groups of today.”\textsuperscript{39} Their main thesis is that the hill and plain people are now defined by their mutual relationship in present sites, because for anthropologists, ethnicity was constructed within the realm of social interaction between neighboring reference groups.

Therefore, the idea and new line of approach shed by the anthropologists can be very helpful especially when we investigate the pre-historical context of the Mizos where written records are available. Thus, based on ethnic and linguistic differentiation, not on written document, Lehman was able to demonstrate that “the ancestors of the Chin (Mizo) and the Burman must have

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p. 22
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid
been distinct from each other even before they first appeared in Burma.”

He comments that:

Undoubtedly, these various ancestral groups were descended in part from groups immigrating into present Burma, starting about the beginning of Christian era. But it is probable that some of these groups were in Burma remote past, long before a date indicate by any present historical evidence. We are not justified, however, in attaching more than linguistic significance to the terms ‘Chin’ and ‘Burman’ at such dates. He concludes, by commenting that “Chin history begins after A.D. 750, with the development of Burman civilization and Chin interaction with it.

Anthropologists like T.S. Gangte seem eager to agree with Leach and Lehman. Like Leach and Lehman, Gangte rejects hypothetical theories propounded by K. Zawla, Liangkhaia and other historians who locate “Chhinlung” somewhere in China and Tibet, respectively as a myth. “In the absence of any written corroboration or the existence of the historical evidence to support them,” he said, “such hypothetical theories are considered highly subjective and conjectural. They are, therefore, taken with a pinch of salt. They remain only as legends.”

He nevertheless accepted the “Chhinlung” tradition as the origin of the Mizos and even claims that Chindwin is where Mizo history really begins. Similar to this opinion, Sing Kho Khai maintained that “Khuangsai source of Chin tradition mentions that the location of Chhinlung was somewhere in Chindwin area.”

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40 Ibid
42 Sing Kho Kai (1984), op.cit., p.3
2.6.1 Sojourn in the plains of Burma:

There has been no unanimity on the questions of the date when the ancestors of the Mizos migrated down to Burma. K. Zawla suggested 950 A.D.\textsuperscript{43} as the estimated date on which the Mizos departed from Mandalay. He left the period blank before 950 A.D. F.K. Lehman and G.H. Luce agree that there is sufficient evidence to show that the influx of the Sino-Tibetan speaking peoples and particularly of the Tibeto-Burman into the South East must have taken place during the first few centuries A.D., but differs on the date of the Mizos entry into Burma. Luce suggest the probable date as the middle of the eighth century, while allowing for the possibility of a date as far as the fourth century A.D. B. Lalthangliana, who based his ideas on tradition, also gives the eighth century A.D. as the possible date for the Mizos arrival in the Chindwin Valley. Lehman, however, advocates a much earlier date than both, going even beyond Luce. He assigns the date some time shortly after the beginning of the Christian era.

Gordon Luce and Lehman based their reckoning on linguistics, the ethnic population spread and other factors which have relevance to the problem. This writer regards the earlier date as more likely for the following reason. First, Burma is believed to have witnessed at least three main waves of southward migrations from the north, all of the people belonging to the Mongoloid stock. The first of these was the Tibeto-Burman speaking people consisting of the Burmese, the Mizos and the number of other groups. The second and third waves included the Mon-Khmer and the Tai (Shan) races, respectively. Even if the Mizos were the last of the first wave, it could have been as late as the eighth century A.D. Second, the wide distribution of the Mizo family and the extent of variant cultural traits must have taken centuries of separation and hence an early date of arrival.

\textsuperscript{43} Zawla (1989), op.cit., p.7
The Chin (Mizos), according to Luce, descended from western China and eastern Tibet into the South via the Hukong valley,\(^{44}\) which is a completely different route than the Burman had taken. Thus, Lehman’s theory is quite convincing that the ancestors of the Chin (Mizo) and the Burman were distinct from each other even when they first appeared in Burma. There is ample evidence that the Chin (Mizo) were the first who settled in the Chindwin valley. The Pagan inscriptions dating from the eleventh century onward refer to the Chin (Mizo) of the Chindwin valley. There is also persistent reference in the legends of almost all the Chin (Mizo) tribes to a former home in the Chindwin Valley. Chin original myths uniformly refer to the ruling lineage when speaking of the original homeland in the valley.\(^{45}\) Moreover archeological evidence supported this interpretation.\(^{46}\) Sing Kho Kai claims that the literary meaning of the name ‘Chindwin’ definitely suggests that Chindwin area was primarily inhabited by the Chin tribe.\(^{47}\) This argument is also backed up by Vumson who said that “When the Burman descended to the plains of central Burma, during the ninth century, the Chins were already in the Chindwin valley.”\(^{48}\) The settlements of the Chins in Chindwin valley also have historical evidence mentioned by Professor Luce while referring to Pagan inscription of the thirteenth century indicating the words “Chins and Chindwin” but not much of this settlement pattern have been found in the inscription. However, based on this inscription Luce had suggested the period of settlement will be possibly the middle of eighth century.

It is important to note that before the settlement of Chindwin valley there had been kingdoms of Mon and the Pye in the Burma River valley, Sak or Thet and Kandu in upper Burma and the Shan who settled on the eastern side. There

\(^{44}\) Luce, Gordon; “Old Kyaukse and the Coming of Burma” in Journal of Burma Research Society, Vol. XLII, June 1959, pp. 75-109
\(^{45}\) Lalthangliana; History of Mizo in Burma (MA thesis: Madalay University, 1976), p.9
\(^{46}\) Vumson in his book Zo History (1986) mentioned that the “remains of Chin settlements are still found today in the Chindwin Valley. Two miles from Sibani village, not very far from Monywa, is a Chin ritual ground. The memorial stone was in earlier days, about thirteen feet (4.3 m) high, but now decayed from exposure. The Burmese called it Chin paya or Chin god.” p.34
\(^{47}\) Sing kho Kai (1984) op.cit., p.36
\(^{48}\) Vumson (1986) op.cit., p.35
had been a series of wars between the Pagan Burman with Thet, and the Kandu but never with the Chins. Instead the Chins were called “Khyan” meaning “friends” by the Burmese. Over the course of time, the Chins migrated from eastern bank of the river to the upper Chindwin called Kale-Kabaw valley. However it is difficult to draw definite years for their settlements in this valley. Lian Sakhong suggests beginning with the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth century. He came to this conclusion drawing from the Pagan dynasty which fell in 1295. Their inscriptions continuously mentioned the Chins. The reason for their migration is linked to a flood which destroyed their earlier settlement as oral tradition can be drawn on these accounts. As far as linguistic evidence is concerned, the Zophei group, who are under the branch of the Lai clan have carried on the memories of this flood. According to them the flood from the low valley had driven their ancestors to the mountains on the other side of the river where the name of the place ‘Khatlei’, ‘Khalei’, ‘Khale’ have root of the word ‘Kale’ which means “other side of the river.”

It was believed by most of the Mizo Burma historians that it was because of the flood the Chins moved to the upper valley from their original settlements. Drawing collective memories of the Chins this period marks a very crucial place in the history of the Mizo. Firstly, this period is marked the splitting up of Mizo Sinto different groups or clans and formations of different dialects. Secondly, there is the absence of written documents. Many different myths and legends exist which explains the breakup of the group. B.S. Carey and NN Tuck recorded one of such stories:

The Chin (Mizo) became very powerful and finding no more enemies on earth, they proposed to pass their time capturing the Sun. they therefore set about a sort of Jacob’s ladder with poles, and gradually mounted

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49 The term ‘Khale’ is Burmanized version of ‘Khalei’. Literal term for ‘Kale’ or ‘Khale’ means Children. Thus linguistic study confirmed that the Chin traditional account of flood story, but also the root of the word name ‘Kale valley’
them higher and higher from the earth and nearer to their goal, the Sun. However, the work became tedious; they quarreled among themselves and one day, when half of the people were climbing high up on the pole, all eager to seize the Sun, the other half cut it down. It fell down northwards, dashing the people beyond the Run River on the kale border and the present site of Torrzam. These people were not damaged by the fall, but suddenly struck with confusion of tongues; they were unable to communicate with each other and did not know the way home again. Thus, they broke into distinct tribes and spoke different languages.50

Another story which runs parallel along with this story also emerged within Zophei (A sub clan of Lai) called “leather book”. How the written language came into being.

In the beginning, when the stones were soft, all mankind spoke the same language, and there was no war on earth. But just before the darkness called Chun-mui came to the earth, God gave different languages to different peoples and instructs them to write on something else. While the Chin ancestors carefully inscribed their language on leather, the Burman ancestors, who were lazy, wrote their language on stone, which was soft. However, soon after they had made the inscription of their languages, the ‘darkness’ called Chun-mui came and Sun disappeared from the earth. During the ‘darkness’ the stone became hard but the leather got wet. Before the Sun came back to the earth, and while the wet leather

50 Carey, B.S and Tuck, H.N; *The Chin Hills*, 1896, p.146
was still very smelly, a hungry dog ate up the leather, and this way, the Chin ancestors lost their written language.

When the Sun came back to the earth, the Chin ancestors realized that while they had lost their written language, the Burman language which was written on the stone had returned into ‘the magic of letters’. Moreover, while the sons Burman spoke the same language, the sons of Chin spoke different language because their common language was eaten up together with the leather by the hungry dog. Thus, the ancestor of the Chin prepared to make war against the Burman in order to capture ‘the magic letters.’ Although the Burmans were weak and lazier, the Chin did not win the war because ‘the magic letters’ united all the sons of the Burman. Since the sons of the Chin spoke different dialects, their fathers could not even give them the war order to fight the Burman. It was for this reason that the Chin broke into distinct tribes and speak different dialects.  

The Lusei clan have different versions of “magic letters” which was recorded by Lt John Shakespear in 1912. According to this tradition God gave different talents as well: “to the ancestor of the Pawih or Laimi clan he gave a fighting sword, while the ancestor of the Lusei clan only received a cloth, which is the reason that the Pawih clan are braver than the Lusei. In contrast with the Zophei version of “magic of letters” the Lusei story tells that the magic of letters was given to the white man, not the Burman. Shakespear therefore concludes that

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“I was told he (white man) had received the knowledge of reading and writing- a curious instance of the pen being considered mightier than the sword.”

According to Lian Sakhong the Chin lived peacefully in the upper Chindwin of the Kale-Kabaw valley for at least a hundred years, from the fall of Pagan in 1295 to the founding of the Shan’s Fortress City of Kale-myo in 1395. Both Mizo historian Kipgen and Lalthangliana are of the opinion that during this period of settlement the Chin group founded a capital called Khampat which is regarded to be the most glorious period of their history. Most of the major clans, who now inhabit the Chin state of Burma, Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar and Tripura are believed to have lived together there under a great chief having the same culture and speaking the same language. But the questions which should be asked are what kind of culture would run in that town and what would be their common language?

There are different varieties of opinion among the historians on the question of why they migrated from Khampat town. K. Zawla was of the opinion that the cruelty of the Chief coupled with a great famine was the cause for migration. B. Lalthangliana was of the opinion that the departure from Khampat seems to have been caused by invasion of enemy stronger than the people of Khampat. He cites a Mizo legend which describes the hasty manner in which they left Khampat through the western gate, and how they trampled over the two clusters of bamboos in the process, leaving them reduced to dust. He thinks that the stronger enemy wouldn’t be the Burmans as other historian believed it to be the Shan. In the year 1395 when the Shan built the great city of Kalemyo with double walls at the foot of what is called the Chin Hills, 20 miles west of the Chindwin River, a century of Kale-Kabaw valley had broken up.

52 Shakespear, J (1912), op, cit, p.95
53 Kipgen, Mangkhosat (1996), op.cit., p.39
54 Zawla (1989), op.cit., p.11
55 Lalthangliana (1978) op.cit., p.88
56 Luce, G.H; The Chin Linguistic Tour, 1959, p.26-27
Shan have supremacy over these regions after the fall of the Pagan. They continued to war with the Burman kingdom of Ava and finally conquered them in 1529. Kale-Kabaw valley remained under the rule of the Shan until the British period. During the next century after conquering the Chin of Kale-Kabaw valley they continued to annex Assam and established the Ahong dynasty which lasted for more than two centuries.

Drawing on the writings of Sing Kho Kai and Lalthangliana, the Chin did not leave the Kale-Kabaw valley as soon as the Shan conquered the region; they lived side by side with the Shan. The Shan who are now building the Fortress started to ask a force labour from the Chin.\textsuperscript{57} Prof. D.G.E Hall was of the opinion that the Shan were the one who drove the Chin out of Chindwin valley into the western hills of present Mizoram.\textsuperscript{58} According to the legend before they left Khampat town they planted a banyan sampling at Khampat they took to pledge that they would again return to their permanent home when the sampling had grown into a tree and when the spreading branches touches the ground.\textsuperscript{59} It is difficult to know when the Chin left Khampat town for present Mizoram. However, the problem of chronology as suggested by Lian Sa Khong can be traced at least approximately, the periods from the Shan and the Burma Chronicles from the East and the Manipur chronicles from the West. The Manipur Chronicle mentioned the Chins as Kuki in the year 1554.\textsuperscript{60} Thus it is certain that the Chin settlement in the present Mizoram began only after the founding of Kale-myo in 1395 and reached the far most region of their settlement in the present Manipur State of India in about 1554. Before they left Khampat town the oral tradition also shows that there was a dreadful natural calamities wherein people died in the hundreds. Therefore one can come to a conclusion that it might be a Shan advancement and the famine that occurred during that period as the reason for their migration from Khampat town.

\textsuperscript{57} Sing kho kai (1984), op.cit., p.43
\textsuperscript{58} Hall, D.G.E; A history of South East Asia, London: St. Martin’s Press, 1968, p.158
\textsuperscript{59} Kipgen, Mangkhosat (1996) op, cit., pp 40-41, b-a 1976 pp. 87-89
\textsuperscript{60} Shakespear, J; The Kuki Lushai Clan, in JRAI, Vol. 11. No.1. 1955, pp. 94-111 and also see Lehman, F.K (1963) op cit., p.25
2.6.2 Sojourn in Chin Hills, Manipur and Lushai Hills:

The migrations of the Lushai Kukis from Burma are of three phases and the people here are identified under three names- ‘Old Kuki’, ‘New-Kuki’ and ‘the Lushai’. ⁶¹

The ‘Old Kuki’ or Hrangkawl, Biate, Langrawng, Pangkhua and Mung (Kawk) were the first batch in the migration. They were followed by the “New Kuki” and the Lushai followed them in the third batch. It is not precisely known about the exact date of their migration to the Lushai Hills (Present Mizoram) but from the folk narrative it is evident the two batches had been pushed, causing them to move as far as what is now known as “Zampui” Tripura State of India and Chittagong Hill Tract the present day of Bangladesh.

Soppit brings the date of their migration to the middle of the sixteenth century A.D. ⁶² but this conclusion may conflict with the account of the fact mentioned in annals of Tripura under the Raja Chachag or Roy Chachag who said to be flourished around 1512. A.D. ⁶³ Chachag or Roy Chachag was a military commander of Dhanya Manikya who ascended the throne of Tripura in 1490. In 1513 A.D., the Raja issued a coin in his name and in the coin it is written as “conqueror of Chittagong”. ⁶⁴ During his reign a quarrel arose between him and the Kukis over the procession of a white elephant. The Kuki occupied the deep forest lying to the east of Tripura and the West of Lushai Hills. The Rajamala, the Chronicle of the Tripura Rajas have also an account on the Kukis to the Tripura

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⁶¹ Gangte, M, Priadarshini; Historical back ground of the Chins, 2009. p.61
⁶² Soppitt, G.A.; A Short Account of the Lushai-Kuki tribes, Aizawl (reprint), 1976, p.7
⁶⁴ Bhattacharaya, A.C; Progressive Tripura, New Delhi, 1930, p.19
Kings. The Chronicle narrates how the Raj Kumar fell in love with a Kuki woman.\(^{65}\)

A large section of the group migrated southward and made permanent settlements at Tiddim, Falam and Haka and still others moved further down to Zotung, Matupi and Mara areas up to the most portions of present Mizoram. Apart from this some other groups who are called Pautus, the Hualngos, the Khawlhrings, the Darlongs, the Hmars, the Thadous, the Gangtes and other allied clans moved westward and in due course crossed over the Tiau river entering into the hills that soon came to be known as the Lushai Hills by the British administrators. Not long after this group left the Chindwin valley for the Chin Hills the other group, the inhabitants of Khampat town also followed them up to the hills. After spending several years in Than Tlang (Tiddim Area) they moved across the Manipur River, which they called “Meitei Run” in contrast to the Chindwin River which they claimed to be their own run and settled themselves in Len Tlang (Len Range), K Zawla dated this as around 1466 AD.\(^{66}\) This group generally called “Lushai” consisted of the Luseis, the Raltes, the Chawngthus, the Khiangtes, the Huhnars, the Chuaungos, the Chuauhangs, the Ngentes, the Puntes and the Partes who lived in clan-wise in twelve villages.\(^{67}\)

The folk narrative gave us the evidence that the clans are at war with each other for certain reasons during this period. If we look at one of the folk songs which reveal about that period:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Pawih in stealth came}, \\
\text{And Kawlni fell an easy game} \\
\text{The open space where we celebrate in happiness} \\
\text{Was now silence forever with sadness,} \\
\text{Our braves lay dead underneath the trees,}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{65}\) Long, James (Rev); \textit{Analysis of the Rajamala or the Chronicle of Tripura} (Reprint), 1955, p.8  
\(^{66}\) Zawla, K (1993)op.cit., pp.10-1  
\(^{67}\) Liangkhaia, \textit{Mizo Chanchin}, 1938, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition ed.1976, p.21
And this was the last scene of our beloved Suaipui
Heads and guns were collected as trophies,
And triumphantly went away our enemy.\textsuperscript{68}

And a prayer beseeches:

Guard us from our enemies; guard us from the death...
Bless us in Killing man...
Guards us from spears, guard us from the dah.

\textbf{2.7 Evolution of Chieftainship and formation new Identities:}

At settlements in Thantlang and Lentlang there were no chiefs; each clan had their own settlements and the picture that is imagined is traditionally that of homogeneous unit. There were, however, clans that were considered antagonistic to each other; taking slaves from each other in wars is quite a common feature, suggesting thereby increasing heterogeneity of the group. The rival groups thus push each other and the movement of these groups led to new alliances and new identities were being formed.

Among these clans the Luseis and the cognate clans are without a leader. In the absence of an authority to organize them, resulted in trounce to their neighboring clans like Falams, Hakas and the Suktes who are collectively called as Pawih. Therefore, the conflicts among these clans resulted in search of a capable leader who would lead them in times of war. The reluctant Zahmuaka was persuaded, through his ambitious wife Lawileri. Zahmuaka’s sons were Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangnura, Rivunga and Rokhuma. The names of the offspring are the beginning of new identity formation as a clan, as their descendents in the future bear their names. In the process of tribal-feud the stronger clan pushes the weaker clans downwards. The directions in which they moved also formed a new name for identity of a clan like Hmar clan (Hmar

\textsuperscript{68} Lalthangliana (2001) op.cit., p.21
means North) and Paihte clan (Pai meaning go), Chhakchhuak Clan (Chhakchhuak meaning those who moved from the east) refer to an identity created in a movement. No doubt, all the names of the clans were not based on the direction that they moved but in the essentially cross-tribal scheme of such things, it does not appear as if the movement was that of a single tribe in one direction. While there could have been a predominance of one tribe, there were others who were also part of the movement. However the crystallization of that identity and its formalization came into a sedentary character.

The genealogy is back up by oral tradition according to this Paihte and Sailo claim that they both are the descendant of Niguite whose birth is narrated in the form of a folktale; Dongula had infringe sex with his sister Lalnemi who later gave birth to a beautiful boy named Niguite. This Myth reveals the differences of the person form others which are a common character of many origin myths. This difference has 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 his wife named Lawileri had seven sons but one died in infancy.

There is a slight different interpretation by J. Shakespear in his book “Lushei Kuki clan” where he stated that all Lusei chiefs claim descent from a certain Thangura, who is sometimes said it 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 Ngehguka. The

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69 This can be common with the Princess who claimed their birth connected with the cosmology, or royal animal like tiger. It is a political ideology for they think it is great to be on that lineage, this practice is common with the Medieval Tughlaq dynasty.

Thado say that some hunters tracing a serao noticed the foot-marks of a child following those of an animal, and on surrounding the doe Serao 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 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.\(^7\)

Looking at the whole process of migration it is interesting to question why the culture of the Mizos get set back from civilized to the simple life? Is it really true to model Mizo identity as primordial or as pre-existing before the migration as most of the Mizo historians think it so. Answering to this first question Mangkhosat Kipgen was of the opinion that the difficult terrain of the highland which they came to inhabit and the influence it has on the life of the people was the reason for the set back. He further goes on saying that in the plains of Burma (excepting those offshoots that had separated themselves from the main group earlier) the people seem to have maintained something of a national character. Even after the separation when leaving Mandalay the two groups continued to be sufficiently large to maintain their common identity. Once they entered the hills with their steep mountains and deep gorges, things began to split up into smaller groups, often the same family of clan settling in the same village. On account of difficulties of communication between the now scattered villages maintaining contact with each other became difficult and infrequent. Naturally, therefore, each locality developed its own way of speaking, dressing manners and customs.

\(^7\) Shakespear (1912), op, cit., p.3
Feeling of close kinship between the different settlements was no longer strong, being replaced by clan identity and loyalties. On the few occasions when they meet it was often in the form of conflict over jhum land which created and perpetuated clan feuds. Once hostile attitudes were introduced, fighting among them became frequent, often on flimsy grounds. The scattered people completely lost their sense of national identity.

In attending the question on whether Mizo identity is primordial or pre-existent before the migration, if we look at the whole process of historical development whether it is a migration or a formation of chieftainship it does appear that the congeries of clans that moved allied with each other to form the whole in course of time. Thus for instance in stories such as creation of ruler among the clan, it can be seen to be true though there are contesting stories to point to this. In the version of VL Siama, this coming of the tribe as follows:

While the Mizos were on the west of the river Run, the Paihte were to the east. The Chhakchhuak and the Paihte fought a war in which the former took captive a man from among the Paihte, who became their slave. They treated him well and even allow him to marry. He had a son named Zahmuaka who marries a lady of the Lawitiang Clan. They had seven sons. The Hnamte lived in the neighboring hill and as their leader did not have a son, the clan and the leader felt it is appropriate to ask Zahmuaka to come and lead them. When the Hnamte leader died, Zahmuaka was approached. Initially Zahmuaka hesitated, but in the end he agreed, not because he wanted to but because the clan insisted. The Sailo who came to rule large parts of Mizoram was one of the sons of Zahmuaka.
If you look carefully at this narration, the creation of the rulers of the Mizo was from those who are not even considered Lusei. And in contemporary conceptualization, the Sailo clan do not considered themselves as Paihte by any degree of imagination. Many agree that those whose identity crystallized to form the ‘Mizo’ were those who came to be ruled by the Sailo chiefs across the length and breadth of the country. The rule under the Sailo rulers gave a sense of territoriality to the identity, which had earlier been in a state of flux. The British contribution was that of legitimizing their status.

This whole theory of migration forms vivid part of Mizo imagination of their identity as their identity is closely related with the movement whether it was in the creation of Chieftaincies of tribal confederations. The Pre-colonial culture as opposed to occasional colonial allusions to timelessness and status quo involved movement and change, which in fact was brought to halt by colonialism.

2.8 Cultural and Political development under Sailo regime:

The Sailo chiefs set up Selesih, the first town of Mizoram in 1740 A.D. because of fear of Pawih attacks and it needs to be elaborated here because of its historical importance. Firstly, a large town set up at Selesih by combining seven villages in the eastern part of Mizoram can be looked at as a process of state formation, as this measure was effective in checking the Pawih from further acts of depredation. Secondly, Selesih was important not only because of its size and role in checking the Pawih. The settlement at this place marks Mizo’s cultural development. It was under the wise guidance of the senior Chief, Pu Kawlha and

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72 Kipgen, Mangkhosat, (1996) op.cit., p.44
73 Vanlalringa; Origin And Development of Chieftainship In Mizoram (unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation), Department of history, NEHU, Shillong, 1991. p.55
other six chiefs that most of the customary laws and practices were introduced and formalized.

However the town declined because of the absence of modern system of cultivation and means for providing sufficient fuel to such a large population could not be sustained for long.

Though the breakup of Selesih town and the dispersion of its inhabitants was a setback to the ascendancy of the Sailo chiefs, as shrewd administrators, they soon consolidated their position. While many subjects deserted villages ruled by “the cruel and arbitrary rulers” belonging to other families of the Lusei and other clans, thus weakening their economic and defensive positions, the Sailo chiefs improved their position by receiving such deserter into their villages. A plan was drawn up under which Sailo chiefs went about subjugating the chiefs of the Zadeng, Palian and Thangluah families into Lusei Clan. Though some of the villages of these clans were still at large, their discontented subjects would not show the bravery required of them, whereas the forces of Sailo chiefs fought with Great Spirit. By the early nineteenth century the Sailo Chiefs completed the campaign to subjugate the chiefs of other Lusei families, as also their associated clans like Chawngthu and Raltes. To achieve this objective the Sailo launched their campaign in east and the north. They had no problem in dispensing with the Hualngos, one of the clan who inhabited the hills before the Lusei and associated clans entered Mizoram. They were pushed back to the east across the Tiau river. However, the Sailo were advancement put on hold by the Suktes and therefore could not proceed beyond the Tiau river. The Pawih who settled on the west of Tiau river also dared not to encroach.

Prior to the coming of Sailo in Mizoram the Thadous and the Hmars were another group of earlier settlers in Mizoram. These clans mostly under the

74 Shakespear, J (1912) op.cit., p.4
Thadou chiefs, established themselves in the north dislodging the earlier inhabitants namely the Hallams, Hrangkhawls, etc. and enforcing them to migrate to Cachar, Tripura and Sylhet where they came to be known as Kukis.\textsuperscript{75} After reducing all others into submission and securing their position, the Sailos were now in a position to take on the Thadous in the north. In the contest the Thadous lost to the superior forces of the Sailo chiefs who drove them out of the hills to the north into the plains of Cachar or the southern hills of Manipur in about 1848 A.D.\textsuperscript{76} A few of the Thadou and about half of the Hmars accepted Sailo suzerainty and stayed in the then Lushai Hills (Mizoram). After the defeat and expulsion of the Thadous, the Sailo chiefs emerged as the undisputed rulers of the regions between the Tiau river in the east and the Zampui hills in the west except for the extreme south of Mizoram where the Pawih and the Mara chiefs enjoyed their supremacy. The victorious Sailo chiefs now proclaimed themselves as “those who glide between the Sun and the Moon”.

Many agreed that those whose identity crystallized to form the ‘Mizo’ were those who came to be ruled by the Sailo chiefs across the length and breadth of the country. The rule under the Sailo rulers gave a sense of territoriality to the identity, which had earlier been in a state of flux. The British contribution was that of legitimizing their status.

\textbf{2.9 Contestation of common generic term:}

The most important criteria in creating a clear identity are through having a common name which represents the particular community of a region of which whose culture and practices were more identical than variations. As we have already pointed out that Myth of origin Chhinlung and Khampat acts as instrumentality in building a common identity. Whether belonging to different clans or sub clans they all agreed that they belong to one ancestor and origin.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, p.57

\textsuperscript{76} Shakespear mentioned them as “New Kukis”, distinguish them from the earlier settlers who were called “Old Kukis”. Ibid, p.6
Mizoram is home to many clans belonging to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Mongoloid stock who trace their original homeland to somewhere in Southern China in the Szechuan province and the adjoining mountainous regions of Kansu and Shensi. With the coming of the British, the erstwhile tribal societies formed/based on clan and village identities began to undergo a process of developing an ethno-tribal identity.

Almost always and most invariably sooner or later, the search for an ethno-tribal identity leads to an attempt for political unification or reunification with their brethren cognate clans (real and imagined) under one administrative umbrella. Notwithstanding the palpable differences in terms of dialect and ritual practices, etc that had accrued due to long period of separation, however, these tribes retain certain elements of their original traditional costumes, language, legends and folk-lore; the similarity of which make them understand that they were of the same stock and of the same ancestry. As S. Carey was of the opinion that the people were of the same stock; their form of government, method of cultivation, manners and customs, beliefs and tradition point one origin. They also further summarize the common traits of all the Mizo as

...characteristics that can be universally traced and may be briefly enumerated as follows. The slow speech, the serious manners, the respect of birth and the knowledge of pedigrees, the duty of revenge, the taste for and the treacherous method of warfare, the curse of drink, the virtue of hospitality, the clannish feeling, the vice of avarice, the filthy state of the body, mutual distrust, impatience under control, the want of power, of combination and continued effort, arrogance in victory, speedy discouragement and panic in defeat are common traits throughout the hills.  

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78 Ibid, p.165.
An attempt had been made by the various scholars in building the common generic term for the Mizo. However the problem arises as the people did not agree with the name given by the outsider. They were given a name “Chins” or “Khyan” meaning “a friend” by the Burmese giving this name to the great Chindwin River and Chin Hills. When the section of this people moved towards the hills and began to have contact with the plain people of Assam they were given a name of “Kuki”, and in Manipuri, “Khongjai” by the Meiteis. The colonial writers who first contacted the people had given them a name “Lushai”. This was indeed taken from Lusei, one clan of the Mizo. Though the name had been used to cover the entire section of the population large sections, the people did not favour this, as depicted by the 1901 census where the majority used the name of their particular clans.

Table I. Population of the Lushai Hills in 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Clan</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>10411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lushai</td>
<td>36332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paihte</td>
<td>2870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawih</td>
<td>15038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralte</td>
<td>13829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>78,480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Rev Liangkhaia, Mizo Chanchin

The named “Chin” had been first been mentioned in the Burmese history of ‘Pagan Period’ in the inscriptions around 1481 A.D. In the year 1490 the Tripura Raja Dhanya Manikya mentioned that from the east of Tripura a thick

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79 Lalthangliana, B; India, Burma leh Bangladesh a, Mizo Chanchin, Published by Remkungi 2001. Here after cited as Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin.
dense forest is inhabited by the “Kukees”. Francis Law, the chief of Chittagong Hill Tract, in his letter to Capt. Edward Ellesker, Commander of the 22nd Battalion the word “Cokoos” had been mention. In the year 1776 Capt. T.H Lewin mentioned the word “Cucis”. In 1792 and 1799 Rawlins and Dalton shared the same term given by him in Asiatic Research Journal. As mentioned by B. Lalthangliana the word “Kuki” might come from Bengali Script “Kukil” (Bengali Dictionary” Bangla Vishwa Kosh” Vol. IV Edited by Negendranath Basu) which means “Parbat” and “Hill or Mountain” in English. Thus Bengalis and other Indians called them “Kuki” with a variety of spellings. The British, the common rulers of both nations combined the two and named it “Kuki-Chin.”

Therefore the word “Lushai,” “Chin,” “Kuki” etc had been a challenge in building up the common identity for different clans. The first attempt for the local writer is whether to locate “Zo” as the tools for hegemonising the Mizo identity.

The word “Zo” had appeared in the writings of Fan-ch’o, a diplomat of the Tang dynasty in China, in 862 AD, mentioning the inhabitants of the Chindwin valley whose princes and chiefs were called “Zo”. Wherein others connected with “Zhau” dynasty of China (921-960), mentioning the named in connection to “Zhao,” “Zao,” “Jao,” “Jo,” “Zo,” “Yao,” “Yo.” But they did not have enough evidence in regards to customs and cultural similarities. T.H Lewin, the first British administrator who had come to ‘Mizoram’ in The Lushai Expedition

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82 Fan-Ch’o; The Manshu : Book of Southern Barbarians(862) cited in Vumson, Zo history : With an introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their status as an ethnic Minority In India, Burma and Bangladesh (Aizawl) P.1. and also in Mangkhosat Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture, Mizo theological Conference, Aizawl Mizoram, 1997, p.18. Here after cited as Kipgen, Mizo Culture.
83 Singkho Khai , Zo People and their Culture, Churachanpur 1995, p.79 cited in Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin, p.760
(1871-72) wrote that, “The generic name of the whole nation is “Dzo.” However his writing was soon challenged by H.B Rowney and Alexender Mackenzie who had said that there is no common name for the particular region. And in 1945, H.W Carter, a BMS missionary working in South Lushai Hills wrote that like the Scottish people who called themselves as highlanders the same were being called highlanders by the people living in Mizoram who dwelt in the mountainous region. The same opinion had been shared by J.M Lloyd, a Welsh missionary who had worked in the North Lushai Hills and who called the people as “people of the hills”. Vanlawma was of the opinion that the term “Zo” does not merely signify highlanders, the place where the people dwell is a place of pleasant climate which in Lusei word is “Zo”. He goes on with basing the findings of F.K Lehman, a head of Department of History, University of Illinois in the United States, who had done a research on the people living in the Chin of Burma. Vanlawma said that it was not the people who derived their name “Zo” from the high altitude of their abode, but on the contrary it was the high lands and especially the farm lands there called “zo lo”, which derived their name from the Mizo people who cultivated the farms. In regards to the word “Zo” many of the Mizo clan and villages earlier bore the name “Zo”. Some of the clan name such as “Zophei,” “Zotung”( both Lai clan) “Zokhua” and “Zote” (Hmar Clan), and geographical names such as “Zotlang,” “Zohnuai,” “Zohmun,” “Zobawk,” and a famous “Zopui” village wherein ruled the powerful Lusei chief Lallula of the late eighteenth century, “Darzo” a Lai village on the eastern boarder of Mizoram.

As most of the writers do not object indicating the term “Zo” as the common generic term, the next step in building the common generic term is whether to suffix “Mi” meaning “people” before or after the word “Zo” which will become “Mizo” or “Zomi” which relates the same meaning. I have used the term

86 Llyod, JM; On Every High Hill (c.1956), p.9.
“Mizo” to cover the entire community because it has been accepted by majority of the clan living in Mizoram (see table 1 given above). However, the prevalent practice of using ‘Mizo’ as a common generic term is political rather than cultural. Therefore, indicating cultural identities is the best tool for making “Mizo” as the umbrella to cover the entire clans. K.Zawla had mentioned in his writing that once a hunter after killing a wild boar with “Puiraw” (bamboo spike) prided himself by singing a song in which he called himself “Mizo”. Therefore the great zeal for making Mizo as umbrella to cover the entire clans had been flown in full swing. Therefore the common features had been shared by all these clans and it was being used even by the Britishers. T.H Lewin in 1874 had published a book named “Progress Colloquial Exercise in Lushai dialect ‘DZO’ or “Kuki” language”. And he started the first news paper which bears the name “Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu”. In the process various associations such as “Lushai Student Association” had been changed into “Mizo Student Association”, “Young Lushai Association” as “Young Mizo Association” (the most powerful voluntary organization in Mizoram). Even the first political party is called “Mizo Union”. Therefore the family under Mizo came about clubbing them as under.

MIZO

Asho Chho Ha-lam Hmar Lai Lusei Mara Miu Paite Ralte Thado-Kuki

Sources: B.Lalthangliana: India, Burma leh Bangladesh a, Mizo Chanchin,
Published by Remkungi 2001. p.770

The suggestion of using the term “Mizo” as a common generic term on the other hand had to be undergone cautiously. The British administrators as well as

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89 Dr. R.Doliana in his book Mizo nun hlui leh hlate, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 1988, p.91,96 mentioned that Dr.R Zokhuma says that the song which the hunter sang was called “Ai a e” which was composed during the sojourn in Chindwin rivers.
90 Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin, p.762.
the previous local writers who had favored the word ‘Mizo’ did not draw the other clans on the main stream of Mizo history as their interpretation as the Mizo confined to the Lusei clan alone. As taking one good example that in Mizo history written by V.L Siama, had mentioned that the Pawi (Lai) of the east used to attack the Mizo.\textsuperscript{91} This would mean that the author presented the whole community under Lusei Clan alone, neglecting the presence of the other clans, not only that, he regarded even one of the clans like Lai to be out of the Mizo umbrella whom he mentioned as being having a war with the Mizo (Lusei).

Moreover, advocating the Lusei dialect as the official language for the Mizo. However, we have to also note that within the Mizo there are different clans which have different dialects. This has to be also taken into account in building the common identity as the Mizo. This tendency of patronizing a single dialect and culture by the British administration and the earlier Mizo writer undermined the composite nature of tribal societies, and at the same time instilled a false sense of “superiority” in the psyche of the client. In the case of Mizo identity issue, this tendency of patronization of only the Lusei resulted in the false conception that the Lusei dialect and cultural practices are yardsticks/signposts for Mizo identity. Moreover this will lead to more confusion and for the other clans which would feel that they are being marginalized or alienated. In building the common identity one has to explore that different clans within the Mizo shared cultural elements as well as different dialects. In the process the history writing has to be re-examined again.

Using the generic term ‘Mizo’ in this dissertation, the main aim is to write in terms of integrating a confluence within the mainstream of Indian history. Despite several variations that prevailed within the practices of different clans, the main central core of the cultural fabric bears identical features, which will be highlighted in each of the chapters. Therefore the term “Mizo” had been used to represent the said community during the Pre-Colonial period.

\textsuperscript{91} Siama, VL; \textit{Mizo Chanchin} : Published by Lengchhawn Press, 1953. p.30.