Introduction

1.1. The Research Problem

‘Political Identities’ are the consequence of how power is organised; and how it defines the parameters of the political community, telling us who is included and who is excluded; it also differentiates the bounded political community internally. Through this process of identification we exclude the other from our shared space of imagination or existence either consciously or unconsciously. In other words, the boundary question, or the frontier, channels and directs the program of inclusion and exclusion. The questions of identity and boundary are intrinsically interwoven within the sub-text of ‘Identity Politics’ in Mizoram.

The Identity formation around the generic identity ‘Mizo’ successfully replaced the hegemonic imposed identity ‘Lushai’ constitutionally from the mid 50s. However, even the generic name has invited micro-national responses with strong cultural resistance and political exclusiveness on the lines of ‘Lusei-Hmar chuak’ (northerners) and ‘Chhim chuak’ (southerners); reminiscent of the Colonial division of the territory into North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills. The generic identity generated ripples of micro-national response from the three prominent southern tribes namely Mara, Lai and Chakma. Their consolidated effort at resisting the generic identity ‘Mizo’ ultimately led to the creation of cascaded ethnic autonomous territories for these three tribes in southern Mizoram. The ‘Southern identities’

1 Identity consciousness among Zo tribes first went through the stage of imposed identities: Kuki, new Kuki, Old Kuki, Lushai right from the pre-colonial through the Colonial times. With the rise of the Middle-class, the hegemonic imposed identity such as the Lushai was challenged and through the Commoners movement was successfully replaced by the more acceptable generic identity ‘Mizo’ in 1950s. However, the language ‘Duhlian’ as a subject in school curriculum continued to be referred to as Lushai till statehood; post-1986 the subject (language) has been referred to as ‘Mizo’. Western Education had made the tribes in Mizoram a distinct class or a category. Education brought into them a feeling of being different and far ahead of the tribes of Assam and other parts of the North East. This feeling of superiority was further accelerated by the mass conversion to Christianity. The feeling of being ahead of rest of the group in the North-East, coupled with the contesting claims of superiority by the people from the state which claims to be ‘the elder sister’ (Assam) of the region opened the gates for culture clash. The adaptation of the Roman script further heightened the culture clash with almost every literate Christian Mizo having the acumen of reading ‘English’ and the Bible far more proficiently than an average educated person from Assam schooled in vernacular language.
or 'Chhim lam mi' like the Lai, Mara, Chakma or the 'khawthlang mi' and a nebulous category of 'Others' continue to contest both the generic (Mizo) and phonetic (Zomi) identities. Post 1986, the intensity of identity consciousness has heightened with the appendage of an Indian Identity. This intensity of identity consciousness reflects the embattledness of identity politics. These vistas of resistance, within the erstwhile embedded identities provide newer visuals on the visible emergence of vocal contesting identities. This being the case, the texture of the tapestry of identity politics continues to be ever changing, reflective of the socio-political-cultural panorama.

The research has attempted to trace the essence of the evolution of the complex process of 'Zomi identity building', and its contestations in Mizoram. The contestation is actually a layered process and this research has looked into the three major manifestations of the same (1) ‘Mizo’ versus ‘Zomi’, (2) ‘Zomi’ versus the ‘Vai’ and (3) The state of

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2 These terms reflect the undercurrent of boundary consciousness among the Zo/Mizo tribes. 'Chhim lam mi' and 'khawthlang mi' refers to the others. While the former refers to any of the southern tribes, the latter refers specifically to the groups from Myanmar and Bangladesh interchangeably.

3 The great debate on whether to be called 'Mizo' or 'Zomi' has shadowed the politics of identity building in Mizoram for a long time. The general accepted term to refer to their identity is 'Zofate' or 'Zo hnahthlak' (children of the Zo people).

4 The term ‘Mizo’ is a generic one and incorporates the different tribes or clans who inhabit the entire perimeter of the present Mizoram and whose culture, traditions, dialects etc. are similar. They consist of the Lusei, the Ralte, the Hmar, the Chawngthu, the Pawi, the Khawlhring, the Khiangte, the Chawhte, the Ngente, the Lenthlei, the Tiau, the Pautu, the Rawite, the Zongte, the Vangchhia, the Punte, the Palte, the Fanai Pawi, the Thadeo, the Pangkhua and the Mawk with their many sub-clans. They inhabit the northern and middle parts of the territory forming the bulk of the population. The term Mizo ignores important divides between ethnic groups such as the Chakma, Reang, Magh, Pnar, Gorkha, and the ‘Vai’.

5 Recently the majority tribes have been advocating for an inclusive Zo identity exclusively meant for the 17 Zo tribes and their sub-clans. There is a general tendency among those who call themselves Mizo to impose the ‘Zo/Mizo identity’ on other minor tribes like the Mara, the Lai, the Chakma and the Reang (Bru). One of the binding factors for this Zo identity or ‘Zomi’ identity is the nostalgia of having originated from the mythical cave of ‘Sinlung’ (‘Chhinlung’, or ‘covered stone cave’) somewhere in the north. The term ‘Zomi’ ('Zo People') is derived from the root word ‘Zo’. Zo is difficult to explain and has been variously interpreted. ‘Zomi’ reflects the primordial connectedness of the Zo people as single ethnic entity in their presumed historic homeland from where they dispersed and settled in areas now occupied by them in Myanmar, India and Bangladesh, with each
Mizoram versus the Centre. The work has revealed how identity politics at the wider state level on the one hand, has sought to construct and subsume the other, and how identity politics at the local level, on the other hand, has contested and redefined the same. The implications of this process have entered into my dissertation. Ethnic identity formation in Mizoram reaffirms that identity formation is a process created through the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities. My research relates to the evolution of 'Zomi' identity within the discursive political terrain of indigenous, and indigenous vis-à-vis central discourses of power, and is presented as a humble, miniscule contribution both to the emerging knowledge on Mizoram specifically, and to the interface between such specific areas of the North-East and the Indian State more generally.

In the presence of a plethora of contesting 'Identities', I take the case of the 'Zomi Identity' and its several strands of contestations which forms an interesting phenomenon of the Zo/Mizo 'socio-political-cultural landscape'. Keeping in mind the paucity of detailed research work done on this aspect of identity politics, I intend to accentuate 'The Evolution Of 'Zomi' Identity and Politics in Mizoram' and; shed light on the aberrations surrounding the process of identity formation among the Zo hnahthlak, thereby substantiating the line of thinking that 'Identity', is an ever continuing process of becoming constantly evolving; oscillating in different directions; fluid and yet open to interpretations. This process being

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6 The term 'Vai' is a Mizo word and refers to the people of India who have Aryan features. The term is derogatory and signals anger, scorn, and racist overtones. B.B Goswami looks at the construction of the Vai from the perspective of 'out-group'-'in-group' psychology. For the Mizos the term Vai as an out-group has three broad meanings. In one sense all non-Mizos including the British people are Vai. In another sense, all the people living in the plains of India are Vai. In the third sense the plains people of Burma are also considered to be Vai but in contrast to the Indian, the notion is more positive and traditional. For detailed reading on the Vai and 'in-group- out-group' problem in Mizoram, Cf. B.B Goswami, “out-group from the point of view of In-group: A Study of Mizos”, in Dubey, S.M. (1978). North East India: A Sociological Study. pp. 99-110. The category of the 'Vai' is again categorised as 'Vai chhia' (bad/inferior 'Vai') and 'Vai thra' (good/superior 'Vai'). The 'Vai' from Silchar/Cachar speaking Sylheti Bengali fall under the first category. The 'Vai' from North India and elsewhere with lighter skin tones fall conveniently under the second category. The 'Vai' thus also has racial overtones attached to it.
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geared towards 'survival' emits strong tendencies of hybridization and veritably opens the possibilities of discovering itself anew.

1.2. Research Questions/Hypotheses

The following are the research questions pertaining to and, around which, I direct my investigation:

1. What has been the nature of the ‘Zo-reunification’ process overtime?
2. What was the nature of the political developments in the post-British period up till the formation of statehood and how did it affect/influence the identity-building processes?
3. How has the ‘Zomi’ identity survived and responded to the Indian state?
4. How have the ‘Zomi’ interacted with the ‘Vai’ or the ‘outsiders’ and how has this interface contributed to the success-orientedness of the Mizos?
5. Does the existence of an apparent religious homogeneity contribute to development in Mizoram?

Through these questions, I endeavour to re-examine the complex process of evolution of identities in Mizoram thereby, illuminate, the otherwise hidden aspects of the ‘Zo’ consciousness from one of the most explicitly violent phases in the 60s to the peaceful calm ushered in by the Peace Accord of 1986. I also intend to highlight the fissures and cracks, cementing and bonding, between and among the contesting tribes and groups; and trace the ever changing nature of the terrain of identity politics in Mizoram.

1.3. Literature Review

Most writings on the North-East of India evoke two basic strands of thought and reactions. One glorifying or romanticising or lamenting ‘the loss of the pristine past’, ‘innocence and beauty’ of the region and; the other inevitably speaking about the contested nature of the conflicts and armed struggles/insurgencies in the region and the apathy of the mainland India towards its ‘North-East’. Many writers from the region namely Sanjib Baruah, Patricia Mukhim and others often tend to make sweeping generalisations on the North-East. Often these writers tend to undermine the fact that the region and the
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Terminology North-East is very much contested in nature and needs to be re-evaluated. The monolith that the term intends to carry or convey lacks the united face especially when juxtaposed against the bitter-sweet ground realities of the region. Patricia Mukhim in Geeti Sen (Ed.). (2006). 'Where the Sun Rises...' makes a sweeping generalisation that the north easterners feel like aliens in the big Indian cities. Admittedly true, the statement fails to explore the other side of the argument that insularity of the people of the region or politics of Otherisation works both ways. And that the Otherisation has layers to it and often people from within the region, themselves, are exposed to such Otherisation. For instance, a non-tribal from Cachar would be made to feel as much an alien as anyone else from mainland India in any of the hill states of the region.


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In keeping with the theme and the questions raised in the research, the few areas that have been explored include: first, the issue of the ‘Zomi’ consciousness; second, the question of the ‘Vai’; and third, the issue of leadership and politics of identity; finally Centre-state interface over the years.

The ‘Zomi’ or Zo *hnahthlak* consciousness has been the underlying theme of the socio-politics of Mizoram. The history of migrations, inter-tribal feuds, intra-tribal/clannish clashes and the impact of colonialism have been well documented in the several writings mentioned above. What has been lacking in all the above mentioned works is the non-charting of ‘Zomi’ consciousness in the changed times in Mizoram (post-Peace Accord). The Zo consciousness has overtime undergone a tremendous change in its moods and several mutations have occurred in the double-helix of the ‘Zomi’ identity.

G.A. Grierson’s *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III, Part III, (1904) supports the homogeneity of the Zomi. Grierson after careful and elaborate comparisons of the various languages spoken in India and Burma demonstrated that the dialects spoken by the Zo people are a distinct language group under the Assam-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.
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of languages. These studies unanimously concluded that the Zos in India and Burma are ‘of one and the same stock’. Apart from the above scholars, Stephen Fuchs, F. K. Lehman, B. C. Chakraborty, S. K. Chaube, B. B. Goswami, H. K. Barpujari among outsiders writing in English, and among the Zo/Mizo writers Lalthangliana, T. Gougion and Mangkhosat Kipgen all speak of the cultural, historical and traditional homogeneity of ‘Zomi’ or the Zo hnahthlak. The homogeneity of ‘Zomi’ as a distinct racial stock has been elaborated on the grounds of common race, common religion, common language, common history, common political aspiration, geographical contiguity, and common culture.

T. Gougion’s (1980) book titled ‘The Discovery of Zo land’ (Churachandpur: Zomi Press) commendably documents the ‘Zomi’ in Manipur where the Kuki-Chin group forms a formidable minority. The documentation of the Zo consciousness in Mizoram remains an untraversed terrain and this makes the research attempt even more necessary. The significance of the work is further substantiated by the fact that it is a novel attempt at tracing the evolution and the dynamics of the Zomi identity vis-à-vis the ‘Others’ in Mizoram. Identity politics, most conveniently encasts it’s authentic by defining its opposition to an ‘Other’. Reclaiming such an identity as one’s own merely reinforces its dependence on the dominant ‘Other’, and further internalizes and reinforces an oppressive hierarchy. This being the case, charting the consciousness of the Zo hnahthlak vis-à-vis the ‘Other’, helps to accentuate the unseen, neglected, erased, suppressed, silenced or veiled aspect of identity politics in Mizoram.

The question of the ‘Vai’ in the Zo/Mizo society has been highly contested and continues to channel the identity consciousness of the people in the region. The ‘Vai’ remains a category against which the Zo consciousness is bulwarked. The ‘Vai’ issue though very important remains yet to be charted and traces of the attitudes of the Zo towards the ‘Vai’ can be found only in bits and pieces in the existing works done by the Zo/Mizo writers/scholars. In this context, Rami Sena Samuelson’s (1990) work titled The Mizo People: Cultural Analysis of life in a Mizo village in the 1980s (Ann Abhor, U.S.A.: University of San Francisco, UMI) which gives a vivid description of life in a Mizo village and people during a specific time frame can be brought to the scanner. The work has several errors (typological or
otherwise) for example her work claims that there are 31 states in India (p.2). The work makes sweeping claims and her personal bias/prejudices against the minorities in special the ‘Vai’ seem to be overwhelming. For instance, in the work she mentions that ‘Indian Airlines began commercial (passenger) flights up into Mizoram in 1986....The commercial pilots for the Government run Indian Airlines are mostly Indians, of course, and non-Mizos, or ‘Vai’. Flights scheduled ...to Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, often simply do not materialize...Aizawl is often bypassed, because the pilot dislikes, fears, or is contemptuous of spending the night in Aizawl’. Samuelson seems to have forgotten to take into account that the pilots who flew into Aizawl during that particular time (1989-2000) were mostly very senior pilots, known as daredevil pilots (that is the best and the bravest pilots that we have in India). If one takes a casual look even as a lay person at the mini air strip that was used for landing and take-off at Tuirial one would realise the efforts and extra-ordinary expertise that it would take to manoeuvre even a small aircraft like the Vayudoot. Another factor that she seems to have overlooked as a researcher before making a sweeping comment is that the weather in Mizoram is highly unpredictable especially during monsoon: fog and zero-visibility makes it dangerous for take-off and landing. There are categories of people like Samuelson in Mizoram who would suggest that the Airlines destined to Mizoram should have air-hostesses and pilots of Mizo origin and flaunt ethnic wear. However, what they seem to miss is that every airline has a specific norm in terms of clothing; and another pertinent issue is do we have sufficient airhostesses and Pilots of Zo/Mizo origin?

The issue of leadership and politics and its role in construction of identities and consciousness among the Zo hnahthlak or the ‘Zomi’ has been muted. The existing writings for instance, P.K. Bandyopadhyay’s (1985) Leadership Among The Mizos: An Emerging Dimension. (New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation); Suhas Chatterjee’s (1994) ‘Making of Mizoram: Role of Laldenga.’ (Delhi: M.D. Publications) and my frequent interactions with ordinary people and the youths (both in Mizoram and those Zo/Mizo youths studying and living elsewhere in India) has impressed upon me that there is paucity of documentation of the ‘life and times of Laldenga’ and the ‘politics of leadership in the region’. The only reliable resource that can be cited in this context being Suhas Chatterjee’s (1994) ‘Making of Mizoram: Role of Laldenga.’ The work though a well researched piece has its own short
comings. For instance, it deals at length with the historical dimensions of Mizo politics and to an extent neglects the biographic detailing required especially if the title of the book is taken for granted; and also the book ends with the death of Laldenga in the 90s and the developments beyond remain yet to be catalogued. Thus the aspect of inquiry beyond the death of the enigma of Laldenga and the impact of his death on Mizo politics remains largely yet to be voiced. As mentioned above, through my field work I realised that a large number of people are unaware of the biographical details of Laldenga and very few could recall which tribe and sub-clan Laldenga belonged or where he was born. My intention in this work is to start-off from where Chatterjee ends i.e. 'the death of Laldenga'; and look beyond into contemporary politics of Mizoram and re-trace the spectre of Laldenga.


My work differs from the above, since it combines the socio-historical with the empirical method to investigate the nature and processes of ‘Zo-reunification’. None of the writers cited above look at the highly contested process of identity-building in Mizoram, which continues even today in various forms. The work acquires special significance in the sense that it charts the ‘Vai question’, an important factor that has moulded and shaped the identity consciousness among the Zo/Mizo tribes. How the process of *inclusion* in the wider Zomi identity is actually an *exclusivist* one and highly politically motivated has not been looked at so far, and that becomes the concern of this research. Knowledge about tribal politics in India still remains uncharted. In this respect, work on the North-East is urgently
needed, and this investigation, however small in nature, is significant since it is an attempt in that direction.

1.4. Significance and Limitations of the Study

The research has shed light on the evolution and the essence of the complex process of 'Zomi identity building' and its contestation in Mizoram. It has investigated how identity politics at the wider state level on the one hand, seeks to construct and subsume the other and how identity politics at the local level, on the other hand, contests and redefines the same. What makes the study a significant one is that it is the first of its kind which highlights the contested nature of the interactions between the 'Zo' and the 'Vai' or the 'outsiders'. Since colonial times, there has been a slow, yet sure encroachment of the Vai over the Mizo economy. Resurgence of the 'Zo' identity has successfully curbed further entry of the Vai and has resulted in their absorption in varying degrees. What have been the implications of this process has entered into the core concerns of this investigation.

Ethnic identity formation in Mizoram reaffirms that identity formation is a process created through the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities. The North-East of India still is very much undiscovered to mainstream Indian social and political thinking, primarily because of its cultural specificity and difficulty of access. For this reason, this study becomes immensely significant both for contributing to macro social theory and micro resource base. Since my ethnic roots lie with the region, my insider’s knowledge proved to be added advantage both for communication purposes and in getting access to remote tribal sub-groups.

Zeroing in on the strengths and weaknesses of this particular study seemed the toughest part because what apparently seemed the strength at times became the most challenging part of the research. Being born and raised in Mizoram and knowing ‘Mizo’ (Duhlian) apparently seemed to be ‘strength’ initially. However, my field experience told me otherwise. Most of my respondents often refused to answer my queries by telling me 'hei hi chu i hre reng a lom' ('you already know this'). My respondents presumed that I knew what I did not know.
Familiarity with the terrain had both advantages and disadvantages. I realised that most of my elderly respondents having seen me ‘grow up as a kid’ continued to treat me with such attitude. The Zo/Mizo respondents during the prolonged interviews tried to give muted or restrained answers to my queries especially when it dealt with the issues of the ‘Vai’ and the ‘Gorkha’, because I belonged to both these communities. During my fieldwork and interview I also faced the stereotyped attitudes towards the ‘Vai’. For example, a respondent with whom I had a prolonged discussion told me in Mizo ‘Gorkha thisen chu kai lo la, Mizo twang hi thiam viau mahla, tana thil ka soi hi ka soi kher lo ang’ (Even though you are fluent in Mizo, ‘if you did not have a Gorkha blood, I would not have told you the things I have shared with you’). Many of the Government and Church officials requested me to paint a positive picture of Mizoram so as to keep the image of the Ideal Zo Christian State shining.

Many of my respondents wanted me to hand over a copy of my research questions to them so that they could pass it to the CYMA and the other agencies of the Ideal Zo Christian State for evaluation. Also a few respondents who had agreed to have recorded interviews refused to answer sensitive questions dealing with the relations between the ‘Vai’ and the ‘Zo’ because they felt that it would harm the interest of Mizoram; though they did agree to give me their response ‘off the record.

The total universe of the study also proved to be too large to handle not just in terms of population but also in terms of geographic distance. The southern tribes were more inaccessible both in terms of language and remoteness of the villages and townships. The secrecy and bureaucratic red-tapism was challenging. I could get easy information from the Zo/Mizo in the north and the Vai and the Gorkha and the ‘Burma mi’, this was mainly due to my lineage and knowledge of the languages of the said groups. The work could have gained more interesting dimensions had it been possible for me to meet the Zo hnahthlak from Manipur and adjoining areas in India.

1.5. Research Method and Procedure

The present study is complex in the sense that it purports both a synchronic and diachronic evaluation and analysis of the politics of Zomi identity in the social historical
context of Mizo politics. ‘Event history analysis techniques’\(^7\) have been employed to chart the changes in the political structure and other territorial units in the Zo Hills. Considering the nature of the research problem purely objective categorisation of data was impossible. As a result, I have proposed to adopt a ‘mixed’ method.\(^8\) Its use is driven by pragmatism rather than principle, synthesising the merits of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies; an eclectic research method, embracing socio-historical and analytical-exploratory techniques. Hence, the method used is a combination of descriptive analysis and the use of select aggregate data on a purposive basis. However, the eclectic method of the present study has attempted to overcome the said limitations through a collection of data by way of intensive interviews with relevant members of both the state and civil society. The method and procedure adopted involved a two-way trajectory - Perusal of resources both at the state and districts level to investigate (a) How far policies at the state level have tended to be “inclusive” aiming at larger Zomi identity and (b) How far the concept of the same identity has been acceptable to the different tribes at the districts.

I have focused on semi-structured interview both to control the nature and extent of vagueness as well as to focus on the area of concern. According to Chambers (1994) semi-structured interviews entail having a mental or written checklist, but it also compels being open-minded and following upon the unexpected. For the collection of primary data for the present study, the following tools and techniques have been used: in-depth interviews (semi-structured and structured), and informal discussions. Combining the Socio-historical Method along with in-depth interviews of selected samples proved to be a handy tool. Prolonged In-depth Interviews of politicians, grass-root workers cutting across party affiliations (horizontal

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and vertical); interviews of academicians and Church leaders along with ethnic leaders; and 
also a survey to glean the opinion of young Zo/Mizo Graduates and post-Graduates of a 
sizable number, in order to come forward with the observations. Selective sampling was 
done for mail questionnaires. People with an active interest in politics were chosen. Further, 
occasional and unplanned informal discussions were conducted with the respondents 
representing both the government as well as the civil society.

Clubbed with the above methods both primary and secondary data were tediously 
collected from fifty major newspapers and periodicals over the years. Newspapers published 
from different districts in Mizoram (both in English and Mizo) and the North-East have been 
consulted. Mizo Dailies from Aizawl District are: Dingdi, Evening Post, Hnehtu, Mizo Arsi, 
Mizo Aw, Mizo Express, National Observer, Romei, Tawrh Bawm, The Aizawl Post, The 
Zozam Times, Vanglaini, Zoram Times, Zoram Tlangau; Champhai District: Dumde, 
Lenrual; Kolasib District: Kolasib Times; Lunglei District: Chhinlung, Lunglei Times, 
Lunglei Tribune, Virthli; Mamit District: Lentupui, Mamit Times; Saiha District: 
Moonlight, Saiha Post; Serchhip District: Laisuih, Serchhip Times. Weeklies and 
Magazines include: Aizawl Observer, Lelte Weekly, Sunday Post, Lengzem, ZOlife, Zoram 
Today, Zozam.

Newspapers from the rest of the North-East include: North East Times, The Assam 
Express, The Assam Tribune, The Shillong Times, Eastern Panorama, and the north eastern 
publishation of the Anand Bazaar Patrika. National newspapers and magazines including 
Times of India, The Telegraph, Hindustan Times, Statesman, The Indian Express, India 
Abroad, India Today and other national dailies have been consulted.

Publications of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church: Presbyterian Review, Kristian 
Tlangau, Synod Newsletter, Ramthar, Agape; and also publications of the Aizawl 
Theological College have been liberally consulted to catalogue the role of religion in 
Zo/Mizo society.
Primary and Secondary sources were collected from Libraries, organisations and persons from across India and abroad: National Library (Kolkata); The University Libraries both at College Street and Alipore; Anthropological Society of India (Kolkata); Centre for Social Science Studies (CSSS) (Kolkata); Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAIS) (Kolkata); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (New Delhi); Voluntary Health Association of Delhi (VHAD) (Saket, New Delhi); All Burmese Refugee Committee (ABRC) (New Delhi); Father John Whelan Library (St. Joseph’s College, Darjeeling); Career Information Counselling & Coaching Centre (CICAC) (Darjeeling); North Bengal University Library (Siliguri, West Bengal); Salesian College Library (Dimapur, Nagaland); Don Bosco College (Maram, Manipur): Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) (Mumbai); Mizoram Police Headquarters Library (Aizawl, Mizoram); Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG) (Kolkata); North East Hill University (NEHU) (Shillong); Tribal Research Institute (TRI) (Aizawl, Mizoram); Mizo Presbyterian Church Records (Aizawl, Mizoram); Mizoram State Library (Aizawl, Mizoram) Mizoram University Central Library (Tanhril, Aizawl, Mizoram); CODESRIA Library (Dakar, Senegal).

The library at CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal proved to be a heaven of collections for tribal politics and proselytisation from across Africa and the Caribbean. I was introduced to the works of Mahmood Mamdani and Jean and John Comaroff which helped me develop my understandings of tribal politics better.

The Personal collections of Mr. Hari Thapa, Pi Vanramchhuangi and Pu Lalchamliana (Sr. Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl) proved to be of immense value.

After the field study, I meticulously translated records in Mizo and Gorkhali language to English. Data obtained from the interviews were classified into content categories; and subsequently analysed using simple statistical techniques and descriptive analysis.
The employment of exclusive methods employed for each chapter purports from the fact that the issues raised and dealt with in each of these chapters differ and calls for the hybridization of methodologies and proper use of available resources to thread together the available jigsaw puzzle to make sense and support our understanding of the research topic. For instance, there was hesitation or reluctance on the part of the respondent to open up on certain issues such as rape or attitude towards the 'Vai' during personal interviews with women. As a result I had to develop my own convenient methods to dig-out the required information from the men who had witnessed the violent phase of counter-insurgency. Taking on the role of a personable interviewer was more comfortable than that of a business-like interviewer. I had to constantly engage with my respondents, so as to keep them focused and at times tailor-make the interviews. For each respondent I had to go in for 'probing' through follow up questions. The dilemmas of prolonged interviews were overcome through the techniques of 'Creative Interviewing' which helped the conversation to be active and 'talked into being'. The use of hybridization of methodology in this work flows from the understanding that a 'Magic Formulae' does not exist but can be created to serve our purpose of study.

1.6. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters and includes seven Appendices that outline "The Evolution Of "Zomi" Identity and Politics In Mizoram".


Chapter I provides an *Introduction* to the basic themes and methods adopted in the dissertation.

Chapter II: *Contextualising Identity Politics in Mizoram* explores the complex web of the inter-layered process of identity building or identity formation among the tribes in Mizoram. In keeping with the title of the thesis, this chapter unfolds the layers in the evolution of identities in Mizoram.

Chapter III: *Exploring the Politics of Leadership in the Construction of Identity(ies)* explores how leadership became democratised and how the new leadership adopted different ‘Markers’ for Identity Construction.

Chapter IV: *Experiments in Governance and Democracy: Exploring the relations between the State of Mizoram and the Centre over the years* explores the braided relations between ‘the Centre and the State’ and also looks at the process of party formations and attitudes towards the southerners vis-à-vis northerners in the process of identity formation.

Chapter V: *Politics of Ethnic Identity and Politics of ‘Otherisation’: ‘Zomi/Mizo’ and the Vai* flipping through the oral history and the history of migrations in the region and also adopting a gastronomical perspective on identity, I make an attempt to locate the ‘Other’ in Zo/Mizo society.

Chapter VI: *Development and Identity Formation* discusses the complex relationship of identity in the context of peace, development, globalisation and culture; and explore the ever changing nature of the same over time and space in Mizoram.

Chapter VII summarises the preceding chapters and interweaves the arguments and addresses the conclusions that can be drawn from the thesis as a whole as ‘*Some Concluding Observations*’.
MAP 2.1
Map of Mizoram

# Shows the eight districts in the state of Mizoram.