

male had to undergo rigours of mental and physical trials. He had to prove his worth by showing courage in the face of peril. Therefore, the most respected were those who took to the wilderness and bring back needed resources and information that could make the difference between life and death for the entire village community. Such men were called *Pasaltha*. Therefore, such sayings as are thought to be to belittle women were in all likelihood, actually meant to hit deeper. They were meant to deride the men who though male in gender, did not actually perform the social role as expected of them.

CHAPTER-8

CONCLUSION

Key issues and findings of the Study

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses concepts of migration and social formation and those ideas found particularly relevant in relation to the subject under study. The second section gives a brief profile of the Mizo and their general way of life during pre-colonial times. The third section concerns the statement of the problems, objectives of the study and review of literature,

CHAPTER-2: ORIGIN AND EARLY ANTECEDENTS

The second chapter investigates the identity, origin and early antecedents of the Mizo. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the identification of the Mizo people through exposition of the various nomenclatures they have been related to. The second section deals with Chhinlung in relation to origin of the Mizo people. The third section discusses the origin of the Mizo against the background of the general migration of the Tibeto-Burman groups of people. The fourth section deals with the Khampat settlement in the Shan state based on oral tradition and ancient Pong and Manipur chronicles.

A study of the Mizo necessitates, at the very outset, a reference to various generic names applied to different sections of the people since these appellations serve to impede a definite understanding of their identity. Appellations such as Chin, Kuki, Lushai and Zo have stood out to designate these people at various points of time and space. Chin was (is) applied to the Mizo in Myanmar, Kuki to the Mizo in contiguous hill ranges starting from Arakan to the south of Mizoram through the hill tracts of Chittagong, Tripura and Cachar winding up in the Manipur border of Myanmar; and, at a later date, Lushai to the Mizo in Mizoram. A proper understanding of these names and how they came to be used as different designations for the same people is necessary here.

With its adoption as the name of the first political party (namely the Mizo Union) in 1946 in the then Lushai Hills, a district of Assam, the term 'Mizo' became the popular word of the people to designate themselves as against Lusei (wrongly spelled and pronounced Lushai by the British) which represented only a small

segment of the people. Thus officially, beginning as a political party it evolved as an effective name for an identity which circumscribed not only the Lushai Hills but also its surrounding areas. While some of the aspirations of the 'founding fathers' of Mizoram were fulfilled (when 'Mizo' replaced 'Lushai' with the change to Mizo Hills District in 1952, and then more explicitly to Mizoram, or "Mizoland" as a Union Territory of the Indian Union in 1972.), the larger aspirations were not. Much of the ongoing current of affairs concerning these said people can be understood as symptoms related to the reactions to these aspirations following the end of British Imperial rule.

All societies have always had ways of explaining the origin of the earth and the emergence of humanity. The Mizo, in tracing their origin, have some interesting legends and theories. Mizo tradition maintains that their ancestors originated from 'Chhinlung.' Chhinlung story is a lively tradition of the people which has served, to some extent, to convey a sense of common origin of the Mizo and cognate tribes. This feeling is invoked by the phrase '*Chhinlung Chhuak*', meaning 'people from Chhinlung'.

Local historians have tried to locate Chhinlung. Of these, K. Zawla, a Mizo scholar who wrote a book entitled *Mizo Pi Pu te leh An Thlahte Chanchin*, in 1964, opined that Chhinlung could have been the name of a Chinese emperor, Ch'ienlung. Others suggest that Chhinlung was a hole in the Great Wall itself which provided a passage through which the oppressed sections of the society left the country in secret. On the other hand, J. Ginzatuang, assume that Chhinlung is a place in Tibet to which the remote ancestors of the Mizo moved from central China. Here, they were hiding in

caves from enemies, leading to the tradition that 'they are born of Chhinlung'. These writers suggest that from Chhinlung, the ancestors of the Mizo moved down to Irrawaddy and the Chindwin rivers and finally arrived on the Burma plain.

Scholars have classified and put the Mizo and their cognate clans in the Tibeto-Burman group in terms of linguistic affiliation. Therefore, the migration of the Mizo ancestors can be studied and identified in terms of the general movements of the Tibeto-Burman groups. According to F.K. Lehman, among the Tibeto-Burman, the ancestors of the Mizo, moved south-westward on the line of Irrawaddy and Chindwin by around 8th century A.D. and disbursed along the mountainous regions of Indo-Burma and of Burma on its western side. It is very likely that from the Chindwin plain the ancestors of the Mizo migrated westward towards the Kabaw Valley of Burma. It is apparent that, while living in Kabaw Valley, the Mizo had a close relation with the Burmese.

The dispersal from the Kabaw Valley does not seem to have been concerted or in unison, rather it was a dispersal of different groups and seemingly a random scattering in different directions, and at different times. In this regard, the Mizo insistently claim that they were settled at Khampat, some forty miles to the north of the present Kalembo. Hmar (a segment of the Mizo) tradition alludes to an event where, on the eve of their departure, they planted a banyan tree where a solemn pledge was made for a return when the sapling of the tree had touched the ground. According to K.Zawla, Lusei migration to the Chin Hills began in 1463. This estimation is very close to the year 1475, the year which marks the overthrow of the Shan Sawbwa of Khampat by Meiteis under Raja Kyamba combined with the Pong

(Shan) of Mogaung. The period starting from 1450 to 1700 A.D. also witnessed several wars and conflicts between the Manipuri Kingdom and the Shan state of Burma in the Kabaw valley, which must have impelled many tribal groups to take refuge in the Chin Hills.

CHAPTER-3: MIGRATION AND SOCIAL FORMATION IN THE CHIN HILLS

The region of the Chin Hills, in so far as it concerns the early period of Mizo tradition, is understood as an area dominated by two ranges of hills, running side by side, almost parallel and in a north south direction. They are about 80 Km long, at their broadest stretch, have a breadth of about 60 kilometers. The eastern one rises up from the Kabaw valley known to the Mizo as *Thantlang*, at its highest, ascends up to a height of 8871ft. West of it, its twin, *Lentlang* runs the course with *Thantlang*, at its highest, ascends up to a height of 8551ft. In between these two runs the *Run* river (better known as the Manipur River), starting its course from Manipur, runs for about 110 kilometers to the point where it merges with the Chindwin in Burma. Highly torrential and un-navigable, it maintains a general width of 40 meters. The origin of traditional Mizo society is set against the background of these mountains, *Thantlang* and *Lentlang*, and also significantly, the *Run* and Tiau Rivers. The forefathers of the Mizo who constitute present Mizoram, moving in a westerly direction, touched upon these regions and in the process evinced the traditional society from which stemmed the society and people of Mizoram.

Thantlang

The Thantlang settlement (circa 1400-1500 A.D.) is the earliest tangible record that the Mizo have of their past. According to their popular tradition, the Mizo maintain that their ancestors were in Thantlang and in the confluence of Run (Manipur river), between the 15th and 16th century A.D. Even so, the only settlements that figure in folk tradition are those of the Ralte – namely Dimpi and Dimlo, located very near the Run river. The Than range, with its high altitude made rice and cotton uncultivable. Because of this, their main food consisted of millet, maize, yam, sweet potato and a large type of bean called *fangra*. They grew these domesticated plants by scattering them with the hand. Then it was found that the seeds that fell on the small hollows of tracts of deer and other animals grew better. From then on holes were made for the seeds. There is no mention of iron tools for agricultural activities. The materials which were used for agriculture includes wooden objects and antlers of animal as the folk songs indicate.

With population small, the village was a unit in which production and distribution along kinship lines constituted a system of circulation and exchange. Lusei tradition alludes that when they were in the *Thantlang* they were half naked, that they made cloth of from the bark of trees covering only their private parts. Men and women wore *Hnawhkhal* and *Siapsuap* respectively. Their main weapons were clubs. With life being such, the method of settling of dispute between rival villages was very simple and did little damage. The chosen champions of the contesting villages settled the score by fighting single combat. They faced each other perched on a log over a ravine.

Lentlang

We begin to have a better configuration of the settlements at Lentlang. It was here that most of the various groups that make up for the population of present Mizoram and its surrounding areas make their appearance. From Thantlang, there was a gradual process of shifts that brought them to Lentlang. Lentlang lies between the Run and Tiau rivers. This movement is estimated to have occurred roughly from 1500 to 1700 A.D. With the shift to the western part of Len range, they began to cultivate rice. Folk tradition alludes to the fun and gaiety associated with winnowing at this time. With rice providing better support to life, increased production of food-grains was followed by a process of steady growth in population. Population growth, in turn, exerted strong influence upon the social and political development. On the one hand, it brought in conflict as there was a contesting for the acquisition of prime land. Wars and raids, though generally seasonal became prevalent. On the other hand, villages became larger and new villages branched out of an original one. This led to lineage segmentations within the clan. Thus, in course of time, settlements in the *Len* range show them configured as divided and delineated into clans with each forming a separate village or villages. A clearer and more detailed account of these circumstances may be presented as we configure the various groups as they struggled amongst themselves in these hills.

Folk tradition description alludes to the Ralte as the primary players in the Lentlang phase. Other clans who figure at this point are the Pawi, Lusei, (which includes Hauhnar, Chuauhang, Chuaungo,), Hmar, Chawngthu, Khiangte, Ngente, Punte and Parte. These clans were living in separate villages scattered between the Run and Tiau rivers. Apart from these, there were smaller groups - Chawngthu at Sanzawl and Bochung; Khiangte at Pelpawl, Belmual and Lungchhuan; and Ngente,

Punte and Parte at Chawnglawi and Siallam, respectively. In the hill range (a little to the west of Lentlang) named after them, the Pautu made their settlements alongside the Rawite, Chente, Chawhte and Maipawl. A clearer and more detailed account of these clans are thoroughly traced.

General features of the Society

From what has been presented above, we may make an assessment of the nature of society while contrasting it with the previous phase – the society during the settlement at Thantlang. There are certain new features of the society that are clearly discernible after they moved to the Len Range. These may be presented as under –

Agriculture

Agriculture was the main occupation as it provided the basic means of sustenance. The method of cultivation was slash and burn or shifting cultivation. Rice, millet, sweet potato, maize, and a large bean called Fangra were the main agricultural crops. The cultivation of these crops was a complex process but in essence, with rice being the main staple, the cultivation of it determines the agricultural cycle (one year) which consists of several stages such as clearing the jungle (*Lovat*), burning the field (*Lo hal*), gathering the un-burnt logs (*Mangkhawh*), sowing (*Buhtuh*), weeding (*Hlothlawh*), and harvesting (*Buhseng*). A certain level in division of labour prevailed established mainly on the basis of sex and age. The task of clearing (being the most strenuous work and which often caused fatal injury) and burning (with its own hazards) were executed exclusively by the adult males while the

remaining work that followed involved both sexes including even children above the age of eight.

In the social level, there was a form of cooperation called *Lawm*. *Lawm* was a simple principle of mutual assistance cooperation among the young men and women of the village. However, even married persons, widows and orphans who did not have anyone to look after them could join in.

Agricultural products

With the ability to cultivate rice and cotton, agriculture had become a dominant economic pursuit. This had a direct as well as profound impact upon the society – far beyond the mere increase of food and the production of cloth. Lentlang reveals a noticeable change in dress.

As there was some amount of surplus from the yearly harvest the extra produce beyond the need of daily meals afforded the brewing of *zu* (rice beer) which became a necessary beverage used for a number of occasions – primarily to relieve fatigue from exhausting labour, rituals and sacrifices, for social functions and festivities. Thus, drinking of *zu* became as much a luxury as a social necessity.

Hunting

Hunting was carried out by male members alone. There was individual as well as collective hunting. The spear was the main weapon used for hunting in those days. Hunting with spear could be both individual and collective labour. Collective hunting required complex cooperation among the hunting parties. They would be divided into two groups: *Changtu* (*lying in wait*) and *Huallut*, (*to surround*). The group (*Changtu*)

armed with weapons would be positioned at a strategic place and attack the animal driven to the spot by the beaters who surround the animal and drive it to the spot where the armed men lie in ambush. In the event of a successful hunt, the head and lungs are given to the person who brings down the animal and the rest of the meat is divided equally among the band of hunters. Trapping small animals was an individual activity.

Fishing

Fishing was an occasional collective activity. There were different methods of fishing depending upon the season. In monsoon seasons when the river became bigger and when new fish swim downriver, fish was caught by damming of the river with bamboo leaving outlets in which weirs were placed. For this the method was known as *Ngawidawh* (*ngawi-weir, dawh-to place*). As the fish swim through these outlets, they are caught in the weirs. *Ngawidawh* required much extended cooperation among the members. The whole community was involved. Another method was the use of the roots and leaves of poisonous creepers (*Ru*), shrubs and trees, This method fishing with poison collected from jungle foliage was called *Sanghavua*. By beating the particular creeper (*Ru*) or the leaves of a poisonous tree into pieces, and dipping them inside the water several times, the poison from these herbs stupefy the fish making them easy to catch. .

Use goods and items

There was a profusion of use goods and items which were not there in the Thantlang phase. These are borne out by the entry of brass gongs, amber beads and tools and weapons which were clearly procured from Burma clearly indicated by the

way they were referred to with the local name prefixed by *Kawl* – a Mizo word which designate a Burman or things Burmese. Most of these seem to have been procured as finished goods from Burma. At this stage metal weapons and agricultural tools also make their appearance. Though greatly dependent upon import of tools and weapons from Burma, tradition alludes that they knew and practiced blacksmithy and forged their own domestic tools and weapons, such as hoes, knives, and spearheads.

Conflict

There is a noticeable and marked increase in the scale and intensification of struggle and strife. In Lentlang, things had taken a drastic turn. While in Thantlang, inter-village conflict was resolved with the two champions of the two rival villages settling the issue in fair and single combat. Now, even between close kin groups, matters conflict resolution did not end so amicably. They did not hesitate to involve and secure the help of other clans in order to belittle their own clan members of other villages. Large forces were mustered and there was a resorting to unscrupulous means and outright bullying. The winning side did not hesitate to indulge in slaughter. Apprehension leading to outright murder and abduction for ransom was also rife.

Slavery

Conflicts often resulted out of desire for the acquisition of slaves. There were numerous occasions when raids were made on (by) a village with the intention to capture for slaves. However, it would seem that these slaves were not intended for the purpose of bonded and servile labour as it is unlikely that the *Bawi* system – of retaining servile labour, was instituted at this time. It would seem that slaves were procured as prisoners mainly for ransom and for sale or exchange with goods. In other

word, slaves became an item of trade, as items of goods in transaction with other villages. Burma supported the trade in slaves and these tribes served as the hinterland for its procurement. In this way, even the tribes in the interior were able to procure goods and valuables from Burma through this network of slave trade.

Chapter 4: Lusei hegemony

The success of the Lusei seem to rest upon three important principles – one was that they had better unity and were more able to uphold and sustain cohesion amongst themselves, second was that they devised a means to augment their strength in a village, and third was that they endorsed the office of a political chief. Given that, with the exception of the Pawih, the various clans were more or less under the dictates of the same ecological factors working on them, their success or failure depended on their ability to garner strength within the limits of adaptation that human intelligence and fortitude could muster. One important factor that seems to have helped the Lusei at this critical juncture was that they were, initially, weaker than the other clans. They were weaker in the sense that they were lesser in number. As compared to their nearest neighbours – namely the Ralte and the Pawih, they were a younger clan. With fewer numbers, there was more closeness and the conscious need to rally together when threatened by bigger groups. Thus their disadvantage in size gave them a keener perception and ability to make compromises and adjustments within their clans and also at the same time to devise strategies in handling the odds against whom they were pitted. Therefore, the Lusei, unlike the Ralte, as a standard measure, never engaged in open confrontation with the Pawi. Also, while not fleeing away from the vicinity, they put themselves at a distance from the Pawih without having to take the

brunt of their incursion and depredation. In other words, they always tried to put a buffer between themselves and the Pawih. They were more measured and calculating in their relationship with other clans and were more unscrupulous. Because of this, they began to occupy a central position in Mizo folklore from the time that the clans were settled along the banks of the *Run*.

Folk memory gives a good account of the initiation of Zahmuaka to chieftainship. The story unfolds with the Lusei settlement in Seipui. At this time the harassment from the Pawi was particularly virulent. Under these circumstances, the Hnamte clan, who lived in their own villages of Tlangkhua and Khawrua, near Seipui, lost their leader, Chlanpiala. Upon this, the Hnamte went to look for a replacement from Seipui. In the event, as they approached one house after another, there was no one bold enough to accept the Hnamte offer. Zahmuaka was initially reluctant to accept the invitation, but upon his wife Leileri's insistence, Zahmuaka relented. The Hnamte then persuaded him to stay on promising that he be given a share of the rice produce of each and every household of the Hnamte village.

Thus, a milestone was laid in the annals of Mizo traditional history. The date of this important event has been estimated at around 1580-1600 A.D. The contract between the Hnamte and Zahmuaka opened a new dimension in social formation within the village and the tribal social structure that prevailed there. It affected a departure from the established norm where social relations and roles were considered and determined exclusively and inclusively within the framework of the clan. Most significantly, it was an endorsement of specialization that cut across clan affiliation. With the recognition of a paid chief the society began to enter into a new phase – a

society with a defined polity where roles and functions become more delineated and professional; as against or in contrast to the simple one where one's position and obligation in society stemmed out and was effectively determined from the familial relations and social fabric within the framework of the clan. On the whole, once instituted, chieftainship was there to stay. Therefore, from the time of Zahmuaka, we see the movement and dispersal of the Mizo led by chiefs. There was a broad pattern in the social format of these groups which formed separate units as villages.

CHAPTER-5: ASCENDANCY OF SAILO CHIEFTAINSHIP

It was the momentous move of the Thangur chiefs which ultimately determined the demographic, linguistic and political map of Mizoram. In the process of migration and amidst endemic strife and struggle, fission and fusion, there was a slow but steady process of the building of a homogenous society. The bulk of the clans which constitute the Mizo people today, were, often with the Lusei as the dominant clan, organized as homogenous communities but scattered in villages integrated together under the Thangur chiefs. This integration was in course of time, there was a struggle for supremacy among the Thangur chiefs. In this, the progenies of Lallula, a branch of the Sailo (grandson of Thangur) emerged as the most dominant. However, with no paramount authority established over them, even the Sailo, as autonomous and independent chiefs, were caught up in constant quarrels and fights. However, though there was conflict between the villages, they were knit together in language, polity and in language. With the exception of the Pawih and Lakher tribes, who retained their own dialects and certain distinctive features, the

whole area had been unified within a framework of culture that subscribed to a common ethos.

What constitutes the larger part of Mizoram today has been evinced out of the villages ruled by Sailo chiefs. And, in this connection, the role played by Lallula is highly significant. Lallula was the most successful chief among the Sailo. The fourth generation of the line of chiefs counting from Sailova (Zahmuaka great grandson) from whom the clan got its name, he had four sons viz; Lalpuiliana, Lallianvunga, Mangpawrha, Vuttaia and one daughter named Ridawpi. Prior to his time, we see no reference of the name Sailo attached to a chief except Sailova, their ancestor. Lallula's identification of himself as Sailo may have inspired others (other than his own progenies) to follow him in revoking and forwarding that title. Though the Sailo entered Mizo Hills at least half a century before Lallula's time they became dominant only with the rise of Lallula.

Most of Lallula's descendants became chiefs of their own villages. They predominated in the northern part of present Mizoram. The total number of Lallula's descendants reached more than fifty villages, bearing testimony to the greatness of this chief. Within the torrid state of affairs that encapsulated the Mizo tribes in pre-colonial times there was hardly a possibility to evince any permanence. However, within the given constraints the achievements of Lallula and his sons are noteworthy. Their ability to rally people and to cohere diverse tribes and clans under one banner was unequalled. In this regard they were able to integrate various groups and popularized and forwarded the use of a dialect for all these clans and sub-tribes. To them is credited the use of the *Duhlian* dialect which is the standard and common

dialect which the better number of these tribes speak and write today. It was from the villages ruled by Lallula descendents that most of today's Mizoram was evinced.

CHAPTER-6: THE MATURE TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

There were various social institutions that were established in the process of migration and development of society. For further elucidation and clarity, these institutions may be grouped in two broad categories – those that stemmed from food production and those that were induced by war and social conflict. However, since these social institutions are abstract notions and necessarily stem from the interplay between man and nature, it is necessary to first present the background and physical reality that determined the conditioning of social life.

The Village

Since, the Mizo people were acquainted with, and practiced agriculture, they could live together in groups - thus villages. However, shifting cultivation and the rugged and densely forested hills prevented large settlements. These factors made them break up into different groups who soon became hostile to each other. Therefore, life, aside from being a continuous struggle against nature, hung in perpetual peril from the perpetration of other kindred groups, and ensconced in an ecological niche where the main consideration of these 'wild tribes' was necessarily that of safety, the considerations that impinged upon these people at this time made them settle on the top or side of hills and to conglomerate together for added strength and security. Naturally, a preferable sight for a village was on the top or high slope of a hill overlooking the neighbouring landscape so that it could be easily defended -

despite the difficulties of having to fetch water and to carry whatever was needed up the hill slopes. As the Mizo also considered the hills to be naturally more healthy and pleasant than the plains, it was natural to select the higher slopes for their settlement.

INSTITUTIONS THAT STEMMED FROM FOOD PRODUCTION

As food is the first and basic need of all living beings, the primary institutions that were developed were in the realm of food production. As already noted, the Mizo survived on the dependence of food produced from agriculture combined with animal rearing, hunting and foraging. In the need of food and the pursuit that it entailed, while it was a social concern, within the tribal communal ethos, the society provided a scope for individual distinction. For this there were set and specific undertakings formally laid out. Upon the accomplishment of an undertaking the individual secures a special position with a designation for the deed performed. The benefits that accrued from these meritorious designations also overlap beyond temporal life to the realm of the spiritual as they are interwoven within the framework of the eschatology. The institutions that stemmed directly from incentive given to food production are *Thangchhuah* and *Pialral*.

Pialral

This eschatology evinced by the Mizo has interesting dimensions. *Pialral* is concomitant with productivity – or rather, to bolster and promote productivity. It emphasizes on rewarding of individuals with the ability to produce food surplus, which surplus is ultimately dissipated among the denizens of the village. At the same time, it clearly reveals a society where a certain level of social differentiations had developed. This could only happen in a society with a sizeable population where a

certain amount of surplus food was frequently produced. The surplus production was shared in the form of feasts by the whole community in the event of this *Inlama Thangchhuah*. The concept of *Pialral* emerged after they reached the eastern side of present-day Mizoram by around the time of Selesih. Thus we may place it as sometime before or in the early part of the eighteenth century.

Thangchhuah

Thangchhuah is the combination of two words *thang* (famous) and *chhuah* (express), and this is the highest position that could be attained by an ordinary person in the society. Operationally, as there were two broad areas of enterprise within the tribal economic framework – agriculture and hunting, in following, the ordination of *thangchhuah* was also established along the same lines.

The rewards that accrued to a person who had attained the status were manifold. Securing rite of passage to *Pialral* was only one side of it. *Thangchhuah* first enjoyed respect and distinction in the temporal world. His attainment of the status was symbolically expressed in wearing a special shawl and headdress in social occasions. Also, through the performance of the required rituals and ceremonies, the performer secured immunity from the attack and invasion of malevolent spirits in his house. While the common folk sought security in their hearth by not daring to leave any aperture that would serve as inlet to the demons and evil spirits, the *Thangchhuah* could proudly have windows. This particular privilege is significant. Though not mentioned directly, the successful performance of *Thangchhuah* indicates very clearly a triumph over evil spirits and demons, seen as virulent adversaries in the struggle of life, not only intimidating, but inimical to human wellbeing.

INSTITUTIONS THAT WERE PROMPTED BY CONFLICT

There was a process of change due to the steady increase in surplus – surplus food and population. The advance of society in food production with a regular surplus gave a new dimension to the conditions of living and these ushered in tandem the closely interrelated institutions of *Saphun*, chieftainship, and *Bawi*. The institution of *Saphun* clearly predates the institution of chieftainship, whereas the *Bawi* system is clearly an offshoot of chieftainship. So we will discuss these in order of precedence.

Chieftainship

As mentioned already in the previous chapter, chieftainship became formally instituted with the chief occupying a separate office secured through a contract for mutual benefit between the host village and employed warrior. For rendering time and effort as a fulltime sentinel, Zahmuaka was given a share of the rice produced from every household of the Hnamte village. The probable date for this period is 1600 A.D. This was a departure from the kind that grew out of the tribal ethos. Previously, there were two norms followed for award of leadership. One was the natural hierarchy which stemmed from the familial connections within a clan, the ties of kinship that threaded families together which emphasized on seniority. As against this, the other norm that developed for determining leadership was through attainment of *Thangchhuah*. This was quite a deviation from the biological seniority determination as it clearly denoted and emphasized strength, prowess and performance at the individual level. Here, leadership was earned, not inherited. The performer of the *Thangchhuah*, by giving food and feast, secured against the whims of capricious and malevolent spirits, gains the appreciation of the whole village. The case of Zahmuaka

is a more extreme departure as here we have a case of outright purchase of service outside the given tribal norm of designation of leadership. It was a case of extreme conditions necessitating extreme measures. It was mercenary in character. While a *Thangchhuah* earned his position through his provision of food and braving enemies and predators, with nothing given in return by the villagers in kind, Zahmuaka was given grains collected from the villagers he served. It was clearly political. Zahmuaka was not a member of the Hnamte clan, in fact not even a close kin.

Interestingly, all these three norms of establishing leadership prevailed. In that sense, many clans never had a chief established along the principles that were laid down by the Hnamte clan and Zahmuaka. So long as the clan could retain a certain amount of numerical strength and cohesion to establish a village, it continued to function on the normal pattern of order and hierarchy as outlined by paternal kinship affiliations while performance of *Thangchhuah* was encouraged and accredited.

However, it would seem that out of these three systems, it was the political chiefship which dominated most. This indicates clearly, as it owes its origin to warring clans and villages, it was the system best suited for the circumstances. No doubt political chieftainship had inbuilt characteristics that could integrate the various propensities of tribal society which grew out of the microcosm of swiddening and hunting. It did not sever the prevailing bonds and ties of kinship or the means which society had ordained for bestowing of status and leadership; nor did it suppress, it merely superseded over them. Simply put, political chieftainship was an addition to, and not a subtraction, of the existing norms. In fact, the basic norms and custom of tribal ethos not only flourished, but were aggravated after political chieftainship had

been established firmly and succession granted to a lineage. As such, chiefs were obliged to show exemplary action in line with the established norms they were wont to exert themselves for attainment of *Thangchhuah*.

Bawi

There have been quite different opinions among writer in the understanding of *Bawi*. However, as contrary to some opinion, the little margin of difference that sets them apart from the *sal* would disqualify them to be called slaves. Unlike *sal*, they could not be sold, and secondly, they were only for the chief to keep. There was also no stigma attached particularly to their status that places them as inferior as against common denizens of the village. In fact, there were many benefits that could be enjoyed by a *Bawi* since godfathered by the chief. The understanding of *Bawi* may be clarified by presenting them in their relationship to the chief. Categorically, there were three types of *Bawi* differing in status on the nature of their entry into servitude of the chief- *Inpuichhung Bawi*, *Chemsen Bawi*, *Tukluh Bawi*.

Zawlbuk

The *Zawlbuk* was primarily and effectively a building in which the village war machine was established and used as a barrack for the mobilization of the young men for execution of speedy, concerted and collective force for the defense of the village. While it was the sleeping quarter of the bachelors, it doubled up as a dormitory for itinerant males. In the days before the *Zawlbuk* was established and in times of impending danger, the young men slept together at the corridor of the chief's house. The *Zawlbuk* provided for concentration of potential man power in case of emergency in the village. e.g. digging graves, fire fighting, resisting enemy attack etc. The

Zawlbuk members were kept in readiness to resist any enemy attack or fight against the enemies as and when required by the circumstances. The first reference to *Zawlbuk* came to light during the time of Selesih settlement and the probable date is 1740 A.D.

Social Life

A strong communal ethos necessarily prevailed. It was nakedly clear that, even given with the hoe and axe against the elements, life was in constant peril. Cooperation was the best defense, and therefore the constant factor that underlined social relations. The demands of collective survival generated in the communal life of traditional Mizo was furthered by the invention and promulgation of the word '*Tlawmngaihna*', a Mizo customary ethical code, which spurred and motivated the capacity for hard work, bravery, endurance, generosity, selflessness and industriousness.

When freed from the regular demands of agriculture, hunting was a major preoccupation of all able bodied men. *Kawngpuiisiam*, a formal ceremony to assure hunting success for the village, is one of the most important occasions in the annual calendar of a Mizo village. Hunting trips and raids were also occasions which provided initiation and training of young men in discipline, in survival, in the arts of war, where their dedication, courage, patience, and perseverance were tested. The thick jungle and underbrush teemed not only with myriad of animals, insects and plants, besides having pockets of other human groups, it was host to the most dreaded creatures of darkness which constantly stalked and consumed the Mizo. For this reason the Mizo had a special position reserved for the hunters and warriors.

The dry season, i.e. after the completion of harvest, was marked for the conducting of auspicious ceremonies and festivities and spelled ambition and hope for replenishing of diet with meat, for enhancing the larder, for gaining material assets. Thus, with the completion of harvest, the village bustle with activity and bristle with anticipation. As given to their own position and disposition, the inhabitants are busy with making preparations for various activities. At the domestic level, it was the time to cut wood and bamboo, to repair house, to fashion tools and appliances; for those who had stored up resources, to perform the *Khuangchawi* Ceremony; for young couples, to get married. On the other hand, for the warriors and hunters, and for the young bucks in particular, it was the time to go for long hunting excursions and forays outside the bounds of the village and agricultural perimeter. It afforded them the chance to bring home vital resources and win respect and glory through bravery against the challenges of the wilderness and prowess in the theatre of war. Therefore, excitement over the prospect of the chase and escapades by which they win their worth in society and admiration and popularity of the maidens fill them with ardour.

However, it was a season fraught with ironies and paradoxes. Beneath the calm of nature, the atmosphere was highly volatile. As it was, the same conditions applied to all kindred of other villages all vying for the same. Therefore, this season of high anticipation of elevation often brought sudden and tragic reversals. Mizo folk lore is replete with the suffering incurred by a village on the onslaught of a raiding party suddenly bursting upon the unwary in the midst of their merriment while enjoying the *Khuangchawi* Ceremony.

CHAPTER-7: THE FINAL PHASE

This chapter examines the last phase of Mizo migration (1840s to 1890).

This changed with the westward migration of the Sailo as it brought with the people to their southern and northwest boundaries namely Chittagong, Sylhet and Cachar from whom (through trade and raids) they procured guns, iron and salt. Thus, from 1856 onwards there was a relative reduction of war and raids conducted upon them by the Pawih. During those times the Sailo villages not only possessed guns but, in turn, even sold them to their eastern neighbours. But no sooner had they ousted their rivals and halted the Pawih menace, the Sailo soon started to squabble amongst themselves. This culminated in fratricidal war between the southern and the northern Sailo chiefs in the years between 1850 to 1856 AD.

From the 1840's it is evident that the Mizo social formation witnessed certain features in the society due to their contact with the plains people. Raiding and trading went hand in hand. However, as they had little to offer by way of trade, they more than often took recourse to raiding and plundering. According to T. H. Lewin, most of the people captured from raids were children, women and young lads who could be easily domesticated while an asset to the village. The material life of the Mizo tribes was greatly enhanced with their ability to exploit the resources of their new hinterlands.

By the 1870s the Sailo chiefs felt so elevated that they boasted "*Sailo ni leh thla kara leng*" – that they occupied the space between the moon and sun. The condition began to change when the chief, apart from the regular dues, began to insist

upon new ones and some even confiscated the valuable properties of the people.⁴⁰⁴ In these the chiefs transgressed far beyond the normal rules of conduct as set by tradition. Ultimately, it reached a breaking point in the last quarter of the 19th century (1882-1883) resulting in a general revolt against the Sailo chiefs. This occasion is called *Lal sawi*.⁴⁰⁵ However, though the chiefs were quelled down for a time, they soon regained their position.

In general, Mizo society had undergone substantial change with access to iron for agricultural implements and slaves reduced to servitude enhancing the production of food, goods and services. Labour became more specialized and organized, and hierarchical. A village may be roughly divided as composed of four visible categories people. The first were the chief, followed by the *upa* (village elders) who composed the chief's council with its members chosen from the *Ramhual*, (agricultural specialist) *Zalen*, (blood relations of the chief and exempted from giving *fathang*, or rice dues) *Thirdeng*, (blacksmith) *Pasaltha* (warrior), *Sadawt*, (the chief's appointed shaman) *Puithiam* (people's shaman) and *Tlangau* (village crier); the third were the commoners; the fourth were the *Bawi* (pauper) and *Sal* (captive slave). However, except for the position of the chief, these distinctions and boundaries were neither fixed nor static, but rather, fluid and flexible. A commoner by virtue of wealth could attain the status of chief's council member; likewise, the slaves and *Bawi* could buy their freedom.

⁴⁰⁴ Certain movable properties which were kept as treasures; these were guns, gongs, ornament such as necklaces, bracelets, hairpins etc. These properties were generally obtained from the Burmese frontiers. When they settled in Mizoram these things could not be obtained easily and therefore, became valuable assets of the Mizo.

⁴⁰⁵ *Lal Sawi* is a compound of two Mizo words in which *Lal* means 'chief' and *Sawi* means 'discipline' or 'Revolt'. Therefore *Lai Sawi* means "to discipline the chief and his chieftainship or to revolt against the chief."

By the last decade of the 19th century, the Mizo under the Sailo had become more entrenched in their respective locales with villages orbiting within a radius of twenty miles or so. To the British, in accord to their territorial location, they came to be known as eastern, western, northern and southern Lushais. When the British finally came to occupy the Mizo in 1890, there were four groups of the Sailo chiefs who ruled over the then Lushai Hills. They were- (1) Western Sailo - the descendant of Suakpuilala, (2) Eastern Sailo - the descendant of Vuta, (3) Northern Sailo - the descendant of Vanhnuailiana, Southern Sailo - the descendant of Tlutpawrha. The first three were the descendant of Lallula and the fourth one is the descendants of Lallula's first cousin Lalchera.

The principal trend in the Mizo socio-economic development on the eve of the British annexation had been peculiar conception of wealth as conceived by the hill men. Disposal of good had been the primary objective of the Mizo economy rather than accumulation of resources. We see the sharing of resources by means of *Khuangchawi* or feast of merit for the whole village. This attitude towards the disposal of goods had its impact upon the period of transition from barter to cash system. The introduction of cash has advantage as they could be kept for long time, rather than giving feast to public. The Mizo also undertook new ventures with the new economic choices brought by the opening of markets in their adjoining areas. With the rapid change in the increasing purchasing power of the Mizo commoners, there came a change in the tribal values from pride of distribution and dissipation to pride of possession.

CHAPTER- 8: CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is a discussion of the major findings of the study.

Scholars have classified and put the Mizo and their cognate clans in the Tibeto-Burman group in terms of linguistic affiliation. Therefore, the migration of the Mizo ancestors can be studied and identified in terms of the general movements of the Tibeto-Burman groups. According to F.K. Lehman, among the Tibeto-Burman, the ancestors of the Mizo, moved south-westward on the line of Irrawaddy and Chindwin by around 8th century A.D. and disbursed along the mountainous regions of Indo-Burma and of Burma on its western side. It is very likely that from the Chindwin plain the ancestors of the Mizo migrated westward towards the Kabaw Valley of Burma. It is apparent that, while living in Kabaw Valley, the Mizo had a close relation with the Burmese. Some important points may be presented here:

1. The study examines the Mizo claim that their first known settlement was at Khampat in the Kabaw valley of Burma from where they were obliged to move out. The time frame of their departure from the Kabaw valley, particularly Khampat, was studied from the ancient chronicles of Pong and Manipur. From these it can be assumed that 1475 A.D. could be the time of migration from Khampat. These chronicles also support the idea that migration from Kabaw valley was not a single movement. A series of migrations must have been prompted by the subsequent power contest amongst the Burmese, Shan and the Manipuri kings in the period between 1400 to 1700 A.D.
2. A good effort at understanding the geography of the Chin Hills was made. Though exact locations of village sites and routes of migration cannot be established, the study

of the topography enabled a fairly good idea of the migration routes and settlements. These, for the first time, have been put down in maps.

3. From the field work, the researcher made a thorough study of Thantlang and Lentlang. It vindicated the folk tradition which states that the Mizo antecedents were obliged to cultivate maize in Thantlang. The details of Thantlang and Lentlang are given in the main text. Here, it is sufficient to state that Thantlang rises up to a height of 8871 ft and is unsuitable for the cultivation of rice. On the other hand, Lentlang, though ascending up to a height of 8551 ft at its highest point, has a general level of 5000 ft above sea level. This range of hills can support the cultivation of rice. The social formation in the Chin Hills was determined by the geographical terrain and the available technology, and these were heralded in the form of chieftainship, slavery, communal living, *Sakhua*, Agriculture and hunting etc.

4. The study reveals that the success of the Lusei (dominant group among the Mizo) seem to rest upon three important principles – one was that they had better unity and were more able to uphold and sustain cohesion amongst themselves, second was that they devised a means to augment their strength in a village, and third was that they endorsed the office of a political chief.

5. The ascendancy of Sailo chieftainship has been put in clear light. There were many branches of the Sailo but there has been no presentation, till date, of the particular lineage that the Sailo who predominated as chiefs in the 19th century sprang from. This study clearly established the fact that they sprang from Lallula, one of the great grandsons of Sailova.

6. A deeper study of the eschatology evinced, namely *Pialral*, reveals the fact that it was conceptualized when the Mizo had entered into present Mizoram. This enables a rough dating as to when this idea was formed and also establishes the fact that the Mizo did not come with the concept as part of established cultural baggage from the Chin Hills. The study also provides the social dynamics that went towards the establishment of the eschatology.

7. The mature traditional Mizo society, as generally understood today, reached its climax when the Mizo under the Sailo chiefs dominated the present day Mizoram. Thus there were various social institutions that were established in the process of migration and development of society - the village, *Pialral* ideology, *Thangchhuah*, institution of slave and *Bawi*, and chieftainship.

8. From those who have contributed to the study of Mizo history, a general statement is made of the depredations made by the Pawih upon the Lusei. These writers are vague as to the real identity of these Pawih. Further, they have never questioned, nor provided the reason why the Pawih incursion stopped. A proper investigation was made which establishes that these so-called Pawih were tribes from Halkha and Falam. As given in greater detail in the main text the Pawih incursion ceased when the Mizo evened out the playing field with their getting of guns and iron from the neighbouring plains of Cachar, Syhlet, Tripura and Chittagong.

9. The migration was practically halted with the coming of the tribes into the borders of Cachar, Syhlet, Tripura and Chittagong. Each of the chiefs was confined within a radius of twenty miles or so. Though without very clear or fixed boundary, they had

become territorial. A building up of the chiefs' power resulted in tyranny. There was a reaction to this from the commoners called *Lalsawi* – revolt against the chiefs.

GLOSSARY

- Bawi** : A slave
- Chung** : One kind of sacrificial ceremony which was performed to appease the spirit who had a power over the sun and the rain.
- Darbu** : A set of gongs
- Darkhuang** : A large gong
- Diar** : A striped turban used by Thangchhuahpa
- Fungki** : Fungki is a flask of Mithun's horn. It is used for keeping gunpowder. It is beautifully coloured ornamented and well-polished with animals' fat or oil. The flask is tied round with cane which is beautifully plaited and from there a string is tied for carrying. The open end of the flask is covered with a cut piece of bamboo knot
- Hachhek** : An adze
- Hlamzuih** : The dead of a child after birth shortly.
- Hlang** : A wood frame for transportation of stone from the site or sources to the place of erection
- Hnuaipui** : It is another kind of sacrifice in which a full grown female pig was sacrifice to worship the spirit who inhabited the lower region of earth.
- Hnuaite** : It is one kind of sacrifice in which a female piglet was offered to the Lasi, a spirit believed to stay around the house.