

from the Kabaw Valley could be traced back from the tradition of different groups. Regarding migration from the Kabaw Valley, there was no concerted effort and some groups like the Ralte, Hualngo migrated from the eastern part of Kabaw valley whereas Paihte and Pawi moved out from southern part of Kabaw valley (Kale-Kabaw Valley). Mizo tradition alludes that the period of settlement in the banks of Run River was full of war and conflict among different groups. There was constant mobilization of the groups which resulted in the restructuring the society by inclusion of the weaker group in the village to form a larger society. The constant pressure from the stronger groups compelled the weaker groups to migrate to the Lentlang areas.

CHAPTER-4

THE LUSEI HEGEMONY

As seen from what has been presented in the previous chapter, the establishment of clans and villages by the various tribal groups from the Lentlang phase significantly introduces the various groups that constitute the Mizo today. However, while much of the characteristics that denote the society in terms of polity and religion were evinced here they come into clearer outline after these groups left Lentlang and crossed the Tiau River to occupy the areas on the eastern side of the present state of Mizoram. While search for better cultivable land impelled regular movements and migrations, they were often at war in contest for prime land. In fact, there was an increasing intensity of war closely following upon the increase of population and the improvement in material conditions. As agriculture afforded a certain amount of regular surplus in food, inter-clan and inter-village wars

became important for securing the human means of production. By raiding other village and capturing women and children, the victors gained productive work force. Besides manpower, livestock and other property were captured and taken as booty. War necessarily became an economic activity in the Mizo social formation.

Thus, as with the general insecurity of life, the clan structure was severely tested. The success and failure of a clan depended much upon its ability to cohere and in its fortitude to make necessary adjustments and compromises. While some were left with no choice but to flee to more remote areas, others took stock to cope up with the situation and devised various means and methods in order to bolster up their strength. In as much as number was important, unity and cohesion at the clan level within a village, or stretching across villages, was an important consideration. It was also important how they made alliances, within and without, of the clan structure and the village, with members of other clans and other villages.

In these circumstances, the Pawih had an added advantage over the others. Their proximity to Burma gave them a whip hand as they had more or less direct access to better technology from the valley civilization of Burma, while at the same time they stood between this important source and the other tribes.¹³⁹ They were better equipped by way of tools and weapons - iron blades and subsequently, guns. Added to their strategic location, they maintained a strong bond and contact amongst their close kindred and villages. With the advantage they enjoyed, the Pawi exploited the other tribes in a number of ways. Tribute was the standard fare. They pressed against these tribes demanding and making off with whatever they could extort – from bison to all kinds of prestige goods. As against this, they

¹³⁹ B. S. Carrey and H. N. Tuck, *The Chin hills*, TRI, Aizawl, 1976(Reprint), p.135

often resorted to outright collection of booty and slaves by sacking a village.¹⁴⁰ Having none but slaves to exchange for their needed articles from Burma, direct plunder, if incurred with minimum of damage on their side, was certainly more paying, and hence, more suitable. They also resorted to means considered highly obnoxious and unsporting by the Ralte and the Lusei – such as ambushing and murdering solitary travelers and commuters. Because of this, they were feared and hated. There were instances when they suffered reversals. The Ralte inflicted heavy damage on their war party when trying to attack their village.¹⁴¹ However, the Ralte were not united, or strong enough, to launch a direct offensive against them. Therefore, the Pawih, being in a commanding position, could not be withstood by the other groups. As they pillaged upon the other groups time to time, they also exacted a regular tribute. In general, they slowly drove the ones before them, who in turn, obliged the ones ahead to flee further on.

It was in this fluid and volatile ecological niche that the process of social formation of the Mizo tribes unfolded. As conditioned by these circumstances, within each village, the denizens naturally formed a close working and sharing society to combat against the natural elements in order to secure food; they were also induced to organize themselves in order to mobilize for the defense of the village against the predation of their own kindred.¹⁴² With these given demands, the society had to be highly organized and yet elastic and accommodating. The considerations of survival demanded a high premium of each and every individual in society. In the wake of the village becoming composite, it became difficult to maintain cohesiveness of the society while constant war with others made organized defense imperative.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 137

¹⁴¹ K. Zawla, *Mizo Pipute leh An thlahte Chanchin*, Modern Press, Aizawl, 1964, p.68

¹⁴² Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh Avela Hnamdangte Chanchin*, Department of Art and Culture, Mizoram, 1994 (reprint), p.35

In this connection, an important development in the process of social and polity formation of the Mizo during their migration was the role played by the Lusei clans. While folk memory recounts the Ralte clans as the primary group during the early phase, there was a gradual process of their dominance being whittled away as they proceeded onto the west. While they continued to occupy an important element in society, they were superseded by the Lusei in the power struggle.

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, as a standard measure, the Lusei, unlike the Ralte, 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*. In the light of these, from here we shall unfold the process of migration and social formation with particular reference to the Lusei.

As already mentioned¹⁴³ the earliest account in folk memory of the Lusei group is of them settled at Sumpui on the western bank of the Run River, near present Falam.¹⁴⁴ On their westward move as the inter-clan rivalry and feuding became rife, the Lusei developed certain principles that helped to promote the solidarity within the clan even in the ecology of strife and struggle. As they spoke a particular dialect called *Duhlian*, bundled their hair on the back of the head, and acknowledging that they were kindred, they devised various ways of confrontation within their group without necessarily indulging in manslaughter. One of such devices, and upon which the first known conflict amongst them was noted, was on the contest known as *Vawklu invuak thlak sak*¹⁴⁵ – knocking down pig skulls. From those days on, the pig was the chosen animal for performance of a necessary household ritual.¹⁴⁶ After the pig was killed and consumed, its skull was hung up on a post outside the house. The suspended skull became the target of the aggression between rival clans. Assertive clans boldly strode to other villages knocking down their pig skulls. On this issue, those who hailed from Muchhip - the Chhangte, Chawngte and Tochwawng were noted for their bravery and they kept up a tradition of leaving their sacrificial pig skulls outside while others were obliged to keep them within the safety of their four walls for fear of the humiliation of getting them knocked down. According to most scholars, during the times when such clans

¹⁴³ See chapter 3

¹⁴⁴ B. Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, Remkungi, Aizawl, 2001, p.107

¹⁴⁵ Liangkhaia, Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, LTL Publications, Aizawl, 2002 (reprint), p.52

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.52

were practicing *Vawklu Invuakthlaksak*, they were located in the neighbourhood of Lentlang, sometime between the middle of the 15th century and the latter part of the 17th century¹⁴⁷.

This practice sacrificing a pig and hanging up the skull was a very significant development. It symbolized the insignia of the clan, a sort of religious practice related to ancestral worship. As it represented the identity of the clan, it stretched to the individual level. It became a ritual that initiated the beginning of a new household. When a man got married, his first duty was to perform this ritual to signify and formally proclaim that he has set up a separate household of his own. This practice was called *Sakhua*.¹⁴⁸ The purpose of this ritual was to invoke upon the spirits of the ancestors to recognize the individual as a member of the clan in their custody. The chants and incantations are made to implore upon these deities to extend their guardianship and also to give blessing to the sacrificer. Thus *Sakhua* was a necessary ritual for the initiation and integration of a man into the fold of the clan. In other words, when setting up a separate household, a man was not automatically an extension of his father's lineage unless formally initiated into the clan fold through this ritual. Conversely, it also meant that unless the man subscribes to the *Sakhua* of his father, he is also severed from the clan. By principle, it also meant that a man could, by choice, sever his ties from his own clan and gain membership to another clan. This was exactly what applied as an extension of *Sakhua*. This was called *Saphun*.¹⁴⁹ Thus, a man could forfeit his own clan and adopt (or be adopted), by going through the said ritual and honouring the *Sakhua* of the adopting clan. Of course, he first had to get the formal approval of the person to whose *Sakhua* he was committing himself. Then the person performs a ritual in order to assuage the anger of his own *Sakhua* for his abandonment. After this he pledges his loyalty

¹⁴⁷ B. Lalthangliana, op.cit, p.110

¹⁴⁸ C. Chawngkunga, *Sakhua*, Depart of Art and Culture, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1997, p.32

¹⁴⁹ *Saphun* is a term to describe a process in which a member of a clan changes his clan membership from one to another by adopting the name and religion of the imitated clan. The term is derived from two Mizo words- 'Sa' means guardian spirit of the village, 'phun' means to affiliate

to the guardian spirit, *Sakhua*, of the host clan. From then onwards he is integrated into the clan and forfeits his own lineage. It was also obligatory on the part of the village denizens to accept his new identity. Mention or remarking on his previous affiliation was strictly forbidden and offence on this was punishable by way of a heavy fine imposed on the transgressor. The system of *Saphun* was a needed institution in the face of intermittent war between rival clans and villages. It was a useful instrument for the absorption of new members into the clan and through which the clan, and subsequently, the village, was reinforced in strength. It helped to integrate different clans into one community. It facilitated the settlement of helpless and hapless refugees in times of war.

As the Lusei inducted members of other clans within their fold through this innovation, they also learned the advantage of forming a bloc against other clans and usually succeeded in the tussle against other kin groups. While they prevailed with little damage inflicted to each other, they also, from time to time, were able to form alliances against other clans. Many a time they raided other groups who were around at their surroundings. One folk song indicates rivalry between Ralte and Lusei in Lentlang which goes:

*Ka do Lutmuala te u, Duhlian zathum tui an seng aw ti,
Tui an seng ngai lo, ka do kimah zan ar ang ka kah.*¹⁵⁰

You of Lutmual, my enemy, Duhlian¹⁵¹ never bow down,
I kill my foe like chicken.

At this time, the Lusei organized their villages in such a way as to enhance their defense. There was a regular watch round the clock by a party of ten (10) men

¹⁵⁰ B. Lalthangliana, op.cit., p.104

¹⁵¹ Duhlian is effectively a synonym of Lusei

who stayed out in the village surroundings in order to forestall against surprise attacks. All the able bodied men of the village took turns in this duty of keeping vigil.¹⁵² The duty entailed each member to put in five days five days out in the jungle as a sentinel at a stretch. There is a folk song in which the young bachelor expressed their nostalgia over their girl friend, the song goes:

Ka nu ka ngai ka ti,

Ka nu tak ngai lovin,

Sialdum phaw ral venna,

*Tincheri ngai ing e.*¹⁵³

I miss my mother

But not my real mother

With the shield of bison skin

I miss my girl friend.

Because of these measures and innovations of the Lusei, by the third quarter of the 16th century, they were able to establish Seipui, which represented a stable settlement so that, relying upon its defensive power, such groups as Vuite, Vaiphei, and Ralte came to live within the limits of Seipui.¹⁵⁴ Thus, many non-Lusei clans fleeing from the Tedim area became slowly absorbed within the Lusei fold from this time. There was a continuous flush

¹⁵² Vanchhunga, op.cit., p.33

¹⁵³ Op.cit., p.33

¹⁵⁴ B.Lalthangliana, op.cit., p.28

of people who migrated from Tedim due to the fratricidal war between the various lineage segments that had emanated from Cimnuai. At this time, the clans who were prominent in the Tedim area and who were engaged in inter-clan feuds were the Mualbem, Vaiphei, Guite, Thado, and Yo. Knowing of their presence from a distance these various branches of families or clans could not be distinguished and were therefore ordinarily referred to as a group by the Lusei as Paite. The familiar distinguishing feature that set them apart from the Lusei was that these commonly bundled their hair at the top of their head and spoke a dialect that was distinctive.

As can be seen from here, the defense of the village took a heavy toll on the braves and warriors. It was upon these circumstances that the institution of chieftainship was born. This institution was not the invention of the Lusei. As they were able to hold their own against other groups, it fell upon the weaker in order to formulate a social organization where a certain amount of privilege was given to a war chief. It seems that at this time, neither the Paite, Pawih, the Ralte nor the Lusei were so stressed to consider and allow for the defense of their villages to be given to a member outside of their own clans. They considered it to be their own responsibility and not a specialized role but a part of the social obligation that fell to each and every able-bodied male member of the village. The various responsibilities that were shouldered were worked out within the framework of the clan and the village as a unit, with chores directed and regulated by the village headman. In the same way, the village headman also rendered service as part of his obligation to the clan and the village. All these functions and roles were worked out within the household, or family, so to say.

However, smaller villages and clans were especially vulnerable and exposed to raids. Thus, there were clans who could not prevail within the set mechanism of the social

structure and system of governance that developed in a kin based village. As mentioned earlier, in the face of these situations, before extreme conditions should befall them (such as falling in captivity to be sold off as slaves or even extinction) there were two regular options open to them – to bolt or board. In fact, this was the given order of things. However, interestingly and most significantly, at this juncture, there was a deviation from these ‘trodden ways’ by the Hnamte. The Hnamte clan, who lived near the Lusei village of Seipui, was hard pressed by the Pawih incursion and with their small size and acute shortage of manpower, instead of succumbing to other clans and boarding their villages, or bolting, decided to make a stand and resolve their problem in a rather unconventional way.¹⁵⁵ From Seipui they got Zahmuaka to stay in their village and defend them from enemies, for which every household would give a share of their produce as due, to him. Thus, in their desperation, the Hnamte evinced the institution of chieftainship among the Mizo tribes.

The Mizo word (in *Duhlian* dialect) for chief is *lal*. Mizo writers attribute Zahmuaka as the first person to have gained this title and position. This is somewhat in contradiction with some of the earlier narratives in folklore which mentions chiefs before the time of Zahmuaka. However, there are two important factors that relate particularly to the case of Zahmuaka that has secured him this primacy and position. One is that he was not the head of the village or clan who were also ordinarily called *lal*. Rather, his status at Seipui was low. Zahmuaka’s father was Chhuahlawma, whom, the Chhakchhuak, (a segment of the Hualngo, a Lusei clan) in Seipui had captured from Tedim¹⁵⁶. He was adopted by them as their son. When he grew up and got married, his first son was named Zahmuaka. So, in this

¹⁵⁵ A. G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 2003 (reprint), p.36

¹⁵⁶ It is established clearly that Zahmuaka’s pedigree was the Guite, a prominent clan of Tedim. Zahmuaka’s grandfather was Ngek Nguk. The name Ngek Nguk in Guite, (Nge Ngu in Sihzang, Ngekguka in Lusei) then represented a significant family of the Paihte line of the Tedims.

connection, Zahmuaka was the son of a prisoner of war, *sal*, effectively a slave. From this position he suddenly rose to the position of a chief of the Hnamte. Therefore, the significant factor in the chieftainship of Zahmuaka is in its uniqueness. Until then, chiefs were the natural outgrowths of kinship relations where the eldest of the patrilineal line was generally accorded that position. So, as a chief was from within the clan, he was the head and representative of the clan, his own blood and kin – the clan which established the village. However, the most important factor in the chieftainship of Zahmuaka was that his appointment was a direct political appointment. It was settled upon a contract. The rules were clearly drawn and defined. His was to protect the village from external threat while it was obligatory on the part of the villagers to give him his due in kind. He was set apart from the villagers. His was a paid office; his position and obligation did not stem out of familial relations with the rest of the villagers. This opened up and defined the seat of the chief as an office. Another point to consider in this regard is the established fact of an unbroken record of his lineage whereby his descendents, spanning over fourteen generations, continued as chiefs until the abolition of chieftainship in Mizoram in 1952.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, as against this, the other chiefs alluded to before the time of Zahmuaka have no successors to make their stamp on history, these legendary chiefs figure today in the realm of folk memory subscribed to as myth – that hazy twilight zone between fiction and fact.

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, Chhanpiala.¹⁵⁸ Upon this, the Hnamte went to look for a replacement from Seipui. In the event, as they

¹⁵⁷ In 1952, chieftainship was abolished in the then Lushai Hills District.

¹⁵⁸ V. L. Siama, *Mizo History*, Lengchhawn Press, 2009, (reprint), p.11

approached one house after another, there was no one bold enough to accept the Hnamte offer. It necessarily entailed placing oneself in hazard and which clearly portended a suicidal undertaking and hastening oneself to the grave. Cowed down as they were, as prospective householders declined one after another, they could only venture the repeated suggestion "Invite Zahmuaka, he has many sons." Ultimately, when the party reached his house and the offer was made to him, Zahmuaka's first reaction also was one of refusal. But his wife Leileri interceded on the matter. She suggested to her husband that such an offer made to them, poor and humble they were, should be given a good consideration. Prompted by his wife, Zahmuaka relented. But after a short while, Zahmuaka was not happy and decided to go back to Seipui. But 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.¹⁵⁹

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.¹⁶⁰The 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.

¹⁵⁹ V. L. Siama, *op.cit* pp.11-12

¹⁶⁰ B.Lalthangliana, *op.cit.*, p.107

Zahmuaka's chieftainship was particularly important as it heralded a new stage of social formation by providing a useful instrument of integration and amalgamation of people belonging to different clans. In one sense, one may say that it made the village more secular. Until the establishment of his chieftainship, each village was established by and for an exclusive clan.¹⁶¹ Therefore the unity of the denizens of the village was established through the worship of a common ancestor-through *Sakhua*. In this context, we may say that a village was also a religious community whose inhabitants were centered round the worship of a common deity, namely the ancestor. However, while Zahmuaka did not belong to the *Sakhua* of the Hnamte, he was welcomed and endorsed as their protector. Therefore, the political exigency compromised the religious consideration. Tradition does not give any information to this little detail but it is unlikely that under these circumstances Zahmuaka was obligated to accept the *Sakhua* of the Hnamte. It is more likely that he continued with his own – namely that inherited (which means the Chhakchhuak *Sakhua*) from his father who was adopted by the Chhakchhuak clan. The result of this was that it allowed for different clans to live together in the village while retaining their own clan if they so chose. Before and after the emergence of chieftaincy, the Mizo social developments were characterized by lineage segmentations. There were about thousand sub-clans and lineage segments in the Mizo society. Some clans were less segmented while other clans were segmented more than other clans. To illustrate the range of lineage segmentations, the Lusei clans were divided into twenty seven sub-clans and more than two hundred lineage segments.¹⁶² As already mentioned, there was the process of the powerful clan integrating the weaker clans through *Saphun* which seems to have been initiated by the Lusei.

¹⁶¹ V. L. Siama, op.cit., p.9

¹⁶² Liangkhaia, op.cit., p.12

However, this does not mean to say that *Saphun* as a system of absorption and induction into a clan became redundant and was abandoned. Rather, it continued to function and was practiced until the colonial period. What is important to note here is that chieftainship paved the way for the village to become characteristically a mixed population. Thus, as the situation demanded, it increased the scope for a village to augment itself by incorporating different clans under one banner, not of a religious kind but of a secular one. Therefore, significantly from the time that chieftainship gained popularity, the village was known by the name of the chief, not of the clan. On the other hand, without the support of a strong clan, it was impossible to establish a village of standing. In order to evince a strong village, it was important to take into consideration the various variables that could win one. In this, the chief and the dominant clan(s) had to great exercise wisdom and fortitude in order to amalgamate the denizens into a cohesive unit. While the chief was the first citizen of the village, he had to be astute in the management and direction of manpower more by example than precept; likewise, the clan leaders needed to keep a good hold on their members as conflict at the clan level could easily result in chaos and self destruction.

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.¹⁶³ While there were villages dominated by clans who composed the bulk of the population in a village in which new entrants (members of different clans) were insignificant, the trend was towards a composite village. The larger population of those who compose the population of Mizoram, as clans, with the exception of such clans as the Pawih, Lakher and Paite, became spread and scattered and in the process, were absorbed into the *Duhlian* fold.

¹⁶³ Interviewed with Khuangchhungi, who is 107 years old, in 2007.

Usually, since (with the exception of the Ralte)¹⁶⁴ they did not comprise a substantial number, linguistically and politically, they merged with the Lusei. Thus, a village became a mix of various clans put together who spoke Duhlian as the major *lingua franca*. This hegemony of the Lusei and their dialect was carried forward by the progenies of Zahmuaka.

Zahmuaka had six sons. They were Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluah, Thangura, Rivunga, and Rokhuma.¹⁶⁵ They all became established as chiefs, each having his own entourage. The next episode of continuing migration of the Mizo as recounted from folk memory was chiefly under their banner. And, as the process of lineage segmentation continued unabated, it further developed into fratricidal war among them. However, before these fratricidal wars occurred they displayed a certain amount of unity when against the Ralte and the Pawih. However, as each of these brothers left the Chin Hills at different times and took different routes, it was sometime before their paths would collide. Of all these sons of Zahmuaka, the line that emerged from Thangura became the most successful. Before the onset of the migration of Thangur's progenies, his elder brothers' progenies, namely (in order of seniority) those of Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Rokhuma, and Rivunga, moved ahead to the present Mizoram. The Palian moved down the central part of Mizoram, Zadeng and Rokhum chiefs towards the northern part, while Thangluah took to the south and Rivung deeper south. Thangur's progenies were the last groups to move. They took the route of the Palian, moving to the central part of Mizoram. Let us configure and plot the route of these migrations.

¹⁶⁴ The Ralte, whose dialect was non-*Duhlian* or Lusei, and who compounded a sizeable portion of Mizo population retained their dialect until the spread of education by the British in the *Duhlian* dialect.

¹⁶⁵ V. L. Siama, op.cit., pp. 12-13

Palian

There is an interesting oral narrative of the conflict between the Palian chief and the Hualngo. This was before they crossed over the Tiau into the political boundary of Mizoram today. This gives reference of a squabble between a Palian chief Lianpuia, and Lalvunga, a chief of the Hualngo arising out of a dispute over settlement of land on the banks of the Tiau River. Folk songs clearly indicate the problem between them, and the song goes;

Tlan rawh, tlan rawh, Lalvung, Tlan rawh ral an ti,

Tual khal ralah Lalvung ka tlan ngai lo ve,

Lalvunga nu, tap tap lo la I chau vang,

I fa Lalvung Sahlamah a uai zo ta e¹⁶⁶

Run, Lalvung, run, your enemies come,

I never run away for mere rumours.

Stop crying lest you tire, Lalvunga's mother,

Your son is hanging on the post.

Here, the first couplet relates to the setting. This scene is set in Lalvunga's village, Farzawl. Lalvunga occupied the site against better judgment. The second couplet is about the plea made to Lalvunga – that he should flee from enemies approaching. Lalvunga, however, undaunted, retorts back that he never fled for mere rumours. The third couplet

¹⁶⁶ Vanchhunga, op.cit., p.69

depicts the scene of the aftermath – a taunting of Lalvunga’s mother who, bereaved on her son’s sudden and tragic death, is weeping in sorrow.

This story is important as it captures the significant change that had set in on conflict situations. Here, the way with which Lalvunga was slain shows a digression from the previous practice of settling disputes by the two villages’ champions fighting in single combat. While not forming part of the song, the narrative alludes that the Palian, forming a combined force of some villages, marched to Lalvunga’s village. While he was still indoors, the Palian tampered with his door ladder. After much taunting from the Palian, Lalvunga rushed out to meet his besiegers. His feet not finding the ladder, Lalvunga fell down helpless. Upon this, the Palian fell upon him and pounded him to death.

There is little mention of the Hualngo following this incident. However, ongoing reference to the Palian following this incident is there. The Palian gradually moved towards the central part of Mizoram where they partially absorbed and dispersed the Darlong, Biate and some Hmar clans who were already settled in the area. These groups who fled from the Palian made their appearance in the Cachar by 1780, later to be categorically named as part of the ‘Old Kuki’ by Shakespear.¹⁶⁷

Mizo oral tradition allude that the first village of the Palian in Mizoram was named Lianpui¹⁶⁸ in honour of Paliana’s son Lianpuia.¹⁶⁹ From this village, which was located about four kilometers of the Tiau River, they shifted to the western side and, at a distance of about twenty kilometers from Lianpui, and they established a village named Dungtlang. This

¹⁶⁷ J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, TRI, Aizawl, 2000 (reprint), p.182

¹⁶⁸ About 4 kms from Tiau river

¹⁶⁹ Liangkhaia, op.cit., p.68

Dungtlang was the first known big settlement of the Lusei in Mizoram. It grew in size for a number of reasons. Three Palian chiefs, Pu Buara, Huliana and Bulpuia conglomerated at Dungtlang. They were joined by Sianthuama of Paihte and his people. These Paihte who joined the Palian chiefs became known as Dapzar Paihte. About this time, a famine struck Lentlang and forced some of other small groups to join the settlement at Dungtlang. The probable date of Dungtlang settlement is roughly put in the beginning of the 18th century. At its height, the village totaled to about 3000 households.¹⁷⁰ However, once the land around it was exhausted, the denizens were obliged to scatter again from there.

Some account of the dispersal from Dungtlang is kept alive in folk memory. Pu Buara, with sizeable following, took a western route. Along the route, the noted village Pu Buara and his followers established was Pukzing, followed by Saithah¹⁷¹, where they were raided by some unknown people. Subsequently, Pu Buara was subjugated by the Zadeng and the Sailo chiefs in collaboration with the Takam (tribe belonging to Tripura) in the year 1830.¹⁷² The other group that moved out of Dungtlang was headed by Huliana, the son of Bulpuia. This group took a little diversion to the northwest from Dungtlang. Thus, as they journeyed to the central part of present Mizoram, they established villages such as Thinglian¹⁷³, Sialhau¹⁷⁴, and roughly eighty kilometers further on, Chipui on the Zampui range of present day Tripura.¹⁷⁵ Another Palian chief, already settled in the region at this time, was the erstwhile Sibuta. To this day, at Tachhip¹⁷⁶, there is a memorial stone erected by him. The Palian chieftainship did not last long. Not known for their benevolence, were uprooted when caught up by their kindred.

¹⁷⁰ J. Shakespear, op.cit., p.6

¹⁷¹ About 30 kilometers north of Pukzing. (map)

¹⁷² V.L. Siama, op.cit., p.17

¹⁷³ About 25 kilometers from Dungtlang.(map)

¹⁷⁴ About 10 kilometers northwest of Thinglian.(map)

¹⁷⁵ Roughly 80 kilometers from Sialhau. (map)

¹⁷⁶ 20 kilometers south of Aizawl (map)

Zadeng

The Zadeng were the most dominant chiefs before the crossing of Tiau River. During the last phase of Lentlang, they defeated some of the Ralte clans, massacred many, taking the remaining as their subject and also their famous gong called *Siallam Dar*. When the Zadeng reached the eastern part of present Mizoram, particularly Champhai areas¹⁷⁷, they defeated another Ralte chief named Mangkhaia. After that incident they also captured Mangthawnga, father of Mangkhaia. Apart from this, certain groups of Ralte under the leadership of Thawnglura joined the Zadeng. From Champhai they took a northwest direction. Their next known settlement was Tualbung, sixty kilometers from Champhai. From there, they took a westward direction to establish a village at Tuahzawl,¹⁷⁸ Kawrthah was the next settlement after Tuahzawl;¹⁷⁹ after this most of them were subjugated by the descendants of Lallula while a sizeable portion of the group migrated to Zampui range in the present day Tripura.¹⁸⁰The passing of the Zadeng rule was not regretted by the ordinary people for they were harsh rulers, cruel in alike in war and peace.¹⁸¹

Rokhum

The Rokhum migrated westward close to the Zadeng and got protection from them. Their migration route indicates that they passed Mizoram from the northern part. The first known village was at Ngentiang, located in the eastern side of present day Serchhip

¹⁷⁷ J. Shakespear op.cit., p.3

¹⁷⁸ 40 kilometers from Tualbung (map)

¹⁷⁹ About 25 kilometers northwest from Tuahzawl.(map)

¹⁸⁰ Liangkhaia, op.cit., p.67

¹⁸¹ A. G. McCall, op.cit., P.37

district.¹⁸² Another group who followed the Zadeng was settled at Sihfa, about fifty kilometers northwest of Champhai. After this they migrated westward and about thirty kilometers further on established a village at Arbawm.¹⁸³ This was the last known settlement established by them. They did not account to much significance and the Rokhum line seemed to have dissipated and disappeared altogether from here. However, nothing in particular is in account of their having lost out against the other lineages, but seemed to have petered out on their own. Thus, there was no continuity of this line and, having no villages, they disappeared as a chieftain clan.

Thangluah

The Thangluah chiefs and their people crossed River Tiau and settled in the present North Vanlaiphai. After that many of them conglomerated at Chawngtui. Villages of the Thangluah composed of different clans like Ngente, Punte, Rawite, Parte and Chente. Oral tradition mentions Chawngtui settlement as the most glorious time ever on their history. But lack of good agricultural land coupled with the Pawih pressure from the east compelled them to move on and disperse. From Chawngtui, one group migrated to the southwestern part of Mizoram to reach Thehle, ¹⁸⁴ They moved further on to Uiphum¹⁸⁵, which was the last settlement established by them. The other group took to the central part of Mizoram and established a village at Thorang.¹⁸⁶ From Thorang, they migrated south to reach Tlabung.¹⁸⁷ This line sustained their hold on the area until the time of the coming of the British. The most prominent chief of the Thangluah was Rothangpuia. He became known

¹⁸² Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, The Mizoram Publication Board, 2000, p.357

¹⁸³ B. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p.213

¹⁸⁴ About 60 kilometers from Chawngtui.(map)

¹⁸⁵ About 60 kilometers south from Thehle.(map)

¹⁸⁶ About 65 kilometers from Chawngtui.(map)

¹⁸⁷ About 35 kilometers from Thorang.(map)

particularly on account of his relationship with Mr. T.H. Lewin by around 1870's. He was an important instrument for Lewin serving as an intermediary with other Mizo chiefs.

Rivung

The Rivung took to the south. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the year of their migration from the Chin Hills of Burma. The first known settlement of the Rivung in Mizoram is at Senglawng, southern part of the present Lunglei District. Oral tradition said that they achieved their highest in Senglawng. The song composed during that settlement goes:

"Tlawng hnara mi ri khum khum e,

Senglawng Zopui ka kai zo ding maw?"¹⁸⁸

We heard the sound of noise in the Tlawng River,

Could they be like Senglawng in happiness and security?

The villages of the Rivung were chiefly composed of a population which was an admixture of Dapzar Paihte, and Ralte sub-clans like Awmhro, Chhawnlen and Fathei.¹⁸⁹ From Senglawng, they migrated further northwest to establish a big settlement at

¹⁸⁸ B. Lalthangliana, op.cit., p. 211

¹⁸⁹ K. Zawla, op.cit., p.78

Longtoroi¹⁹⁰ under chief Vanhnuaitanga. After the death of Vanhnuaitanga, his village was raided and destroyed by Sailo chief Vuta¹⁹¹ following which the majority of the citizens migrated eastward to Sakhan range in Tripura. From here onward, they had little significance.¹⁹²

Another known chief of the Rivung was Chawngpuithanga. Of the story told of this chief was that he was so cruel that his subjects wanted to abandon him. So they made him drunk and made good their escape. Upon waking up, his fury was unleashed in beating up the lone village crier who had remained loyal to him, and while doing so, asking him as to why he also did not follow the rest. Gradually, those with the Rivung abandoned them for the Sailo.

When the Lusei first arrived within the area circumscribed within the political boundary of present Mizoram, they witnessed the presence of Mirawng (Rongmei) in the north east corner of Mizoram, to whom they attributed the erection of huge stone monuments at Lungphunlian, Vankaltlang, Selam and Tualcheng.¹⁹³ The Darlong, who today, inhabit the state of Tripura, were spread out in the eastern part of Mizoram, particularly between the two rivers-Tuipui and Tuichang. Several rivers, such as Tuirial, Tlawng and Tut were named by them. It is noted in folk memory that before moving further westward, they conglomerated at Darlawngtlang, which is the present Tlungvel village. In terms of Mizo

¹⁹⁰ Located inside the state of Tripura

¹⁹¹ J. Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p.4

¹⁹² The Youhlung, a clan of the present Chohte of Manipur state claim descendant from the Rivung.

¹⁹³ B. Lalthangliana, *op.cit.*, p.107

folklore, in particular, two legends, namely Hualtungamtawna and Tawia Nghalphusen, are attributed to them.¹⁹⁴

CHAPTER -5

ASCENDANCY OF SAILO CHIEFTAINSHIP

As stated earlier, among the descendants of Zahmuaka it was the progenies of Thangura who were the last to leave the Len Range and cross the Tiau River over to the present territory of Mizoram.¹⁹⁵ It was a momentous move as it opened the final chapter in the shaping of traditional society and the conflict that accompanied these kin groups that emanated from the beginning of their sojourn from Burma. While it was not they who decided its conclusion, they prepared the groundwork for a homogenous social and political order upon which a community with a common ethos could be built. The Thangur chiefs effectively uprooted their brethren who had advanced before them and built the largest settlements through which the impressionistic ideas of social life and standards were imbibed, conveyed and imprinted in the minds of the tribal ensconced in this ecological niche.¹⁹⁶

However, this does not mean to say that conflict was ended, as it was neither in their consciousness, nature or ability to drive for peace. Conflict was inbuilt deeply within the mind as it was concomitant to their struggle for life. There was a continuous process of growth of population and clan segmentation, of fission and

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ V. L. Siama, *Mizo History*, Lengchhawn Press, Aizawl, 2009, (reprint), p.18

¹⁹⁶ J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kiki Clans*, TRI, Aizawl, 2008, (reprint), pp.5-6