CHAPTER II
MIZO BEFORE MIGRATION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MIZO

The Mizo are believed to be of Mongoloid origin and this was first described by T.H. Lewin, and this was supported by other Mizo writers. This was believed to be true as the Mizo have all the features of Mongoloid races and the Mongolian patch: a purplish, triangular area of skin at the base of the spine of babies which disappear later as described by Hoebel. According to Grierson, the language spoken by the Mizo was put in Kuki-Chin group and classified it in the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. Mizo is a generic term used for the people living in present Mizoram. The Mizo society is said to have consisted of the Lusei, Lai, Hmar and Mara who live in Mizoram and all the other Zo tribes who are presently residing in Manipur, Assam and Tripura. Previously the Mizo were known as Kuki, Chin and Lushai by the outsiders. The Kuki, Chin and Lushai were of one homogenous race and this was recognised by J. Shakespear when he wrote, “There is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins and Lushais are all of one race”. The same idea was written by Bertram S. Carey, the Political Officer of Chin Hills as, “...we may reasonably accept the theory that the Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins originally lived in what we know as Tibet and are of one and the same stock.”

2 Liangkhia, Mizo Chanchin, (Aizawl, 1976), p.1
5 J. Shakespear, The Lushei Kuki Clans (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.8. He was the first Superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills and he also served in Manipur among the various Kuki clans. As he studied in great detail about the people, his ideas appeared to be reliable.
The name Kuki is said to have been coined by the Bengalis which mean ‘wild man’ and have used it to designate the hill people who cultivated their fields by jhumming.\(^7\) Hutchinson also pointed out that Kuki was used to designate the hill people other than the Chakmas, Tipperas and Mogh tribes and that Kuki was used to apply to the tribes residing in Mizoram and Chin Hills.\(^8\) When the British came to the hill areas, they followed the Bengali term and called the hill people of Lushai Hills, Chin Hills and other tribes whom they found to have the same tradition, culture and language, as Kuki. They then have used this term till 1871-72.\(^9\) Later, the term Kuki was changed to Lushai for the people living in Lushai Hills. This change was first seen in the report of Lister’s Expedition in 1850.\(^10\) It was then commonly used by the administrators and other people since the 1871-1872 expedition.

The term Lushai seems to be a corruption of the word *Lusei*. This seems to have happened when the British came in contact with the people of Lushai Hills, they would have thought that all the people living in these hills were Lusei. But after having settled for sometime, they realised their mistake and this was observed by J. Shakespeare, “Lushai is our way of spelling the word; the proper way to spell the word is Lushei”\(^11\).

Chin is mostly used for the Mizo living in Burma. Though known to outsiders as the Chins, they themselves did not recognised the name. According to Grierson, “Chin denotes all hill tribes living in the bordering region between Burma

\(^7\) G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*  
\(^10\) Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi, reprint, 1979) p.292  
\(^11\) J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*
and Assam".12 Carey & Tuck proposed that Chin is a “Burmese corruption of the Chinese “jin” or “Yen,” meaning “man”13 Prof. G.H.Luce however mentioned that Chin is an old Burmese word for ‘ally or comrade’.14 The people however do not call themselves Chin. F.K.Lehman mentioned that “no single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but all-or nearly all- of the peoples have a special word for themselves...This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which appears as zo, yo, kząu, ñau, and the like.”15

Though the British administrators have called the Mizo by different names by following the Bengalis and the Burmese, yet, it has been claimed by some writers that Mizo or the word Zo only is the name used by the people to call themselves. Some writers have said that the word Zo is frequently used in many of the villages such as Zotlang and Zokhua to name a few.16 There are also the names of tribes which start with Zo such as Zotung, Zophei and Zo. Most of these tribes are concentrated in Burma. Vanchhunga who had done research on the history of the Mizo in Burma had said that the ancestors used to say *keini Mizo* which means “we the Mizos.”17 K.Zawla, another Mizo historian also wrote that once a man killed a sleeping wild boar with a bamboo spike. He boasted his feat and said, “I, a Mizo can kill any animal with a bamboo spike”.18 The British administrators and foreign writers also commented on the word Mizo. McCabe in his report included that the

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12 G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*, p.2
13 Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.3
15 ibid.
Lushais call themselves Mizo or Mizau. Grierson recorded that the people living in the region between Burma and the then Assam and Bengal provinces called themselves ‘zo’ variantly ‘yo’ or ‘sho’. So, it can be accepted that Zo is the generic name of the whole people of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai. It would be therefore right to agree with Mangkhosat Kipgen when he wrote “the problem of affixing “mi” to “Zo” either as a prefix or suffix is no longer great.” This is because mi means people and so whether we call Mizo or Zomi the meaning is just the same. Hence in this study, the Zo people of Mizoram would be called ‘Mizo’ and the Zo of Myanmar as ‘Zo’ simply to easily differentiate the two when studying them together.

As the Mizo did not have a script, they do not have any written records of their origin. So the origin of the Mizo is still in some obscurity. According to oral tradition the Mizo have claimed that they have emerged from a big rock or cave called Chhinlung, which means having a rock as a lid. In the modern scientific age, it would be difficult to believe that human beings emerged out of a hole. However, some believed that chhinlung could be the name of a place where they settled. This can be seen from one of Hmar folksong which tells how the composer missed the times when they lived in Chhinlung.

*Kan siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang*

*Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai*

*Chawngzil ang lokir thei changsien*

*Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai*

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19 Foreign Department External Part A, Progs. December 1892, No.43
20 G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*, p.2
21 Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture* (Aizawl, 1997) p.21
22 K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.5. The hmar have written it as Sinlung, Kuki (Thado) have called it Chinlung.
23 Rochunga Pudaite, *The Education of the Hmar People* (Sielmat, 1963) p.21
The English translation would run like this:

*Famous land of Sinlung, place where I reside*

*How I miss my ancestors land*

*If only I could recall back the times*

*How I miss my ancestor’s land.*

So Mizo historians began to question where *Chhinlung* was situated. One idea which was seen in Rochunga Pudaite’s work was that Chhinlung would have been the name of a Chinese prince who revolted against his father Shah Huangti of the Ch’in dynasty.\(^{24}\) There are others who have claimed that it is somewhere in Shan State of Burma.\(^{25}\) They have based their theory on one of the folk song of the Hmar which is as follows:

\[ Ka \ pa \ lamtlak \ a \ tha\’n \ dang \]

\[ Sinlung \ lamtlak \ aw \ a \ tha\’n \ dang \]

\[ Shan \ khuo-ah \ thapo \ in \ vang \]

\[ Tuiochawng\’n \ hran \ lu \ a \ tlunna.\(^{26}\)\]

**Meaning:**

*My father’s sons are the best*

*Sinlung’s sons are the best*

*Shan doesn’t have any good men*

*So that Tuiochawng could hang their heads*

However it could be agreed with some writers like L.K.Liana and the writers of Hualngo literature who believed that Chhinlung could be one of their settlement

\(^{24}\) *ibid.* p.21

\(^{25}\) L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thu Hla*, (Aizawl, 1994). p.4

\(^{26}\) Rochunga Pudaite, *op. cit.*, p.24
sites in the Kale Kabaw Valley in present Myanmar (Burma).\textsuperscript{27} They pointed out that the earlier historians used to gather the history of the earlier Mizo from the historians of Burma and China.\textsuperscript{28} So they said that trying to locate Chhinlung in China or very far away would be incorrect. They said that the Mizo did not live in the Shan state but rather they and the Shans lived together in the Kabaw Valley. Moreover this theory could be strengthened if we look at the oral traditions. There were no folk tales, sayings or songs from which it can be inferred that Chhinlung would be in China. The few oral traditions which could be gathered were only from the Kabaw Valley settlement. So L.K.Liana and other writers wrote that Mizo ancestors merely spoke of Kabaw Valley as Chhinlung.

Though the origin of the Mizo is not clear, most of the Mizo historians and other early British writers as well as some Burmese historians have accepted that the original home of the Mizo was in China. They have based their studies on anthropological, traditional and comparative philology. B.Lalthangliana who had done an extensive research in Myanmar and who based his theory on the works of Than Tun and Luce and other Burma historical works believed that the Mizo moved to Hukawng Valley in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D and slowly moved towards the west and settled in Chindwin Valley in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{29} F.K. Lehman believed that there was sufficient evidence to prove that the influx of the Sino-Tibetan speaking peoples and particularly of the Tibeto-Burman speakers into South Asia must have taken place during the first few centuries.\textsuperscript{30} He based his reckoning on linguistics, ethnic

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\textsuperscript{27} L.K.Liana, \textit{op. cit.}, p.5
\textsuperscript{28} H.L.C.A, \textit{Zofate Chanchin} (Tahan Kalemyo, 1995), p.8
\textsuperscript{29} B.Lalthangliana, \textit{op. cit.}, p.52
\textsuperscript{30} F.K.Lehman, \textit{op. cit.}, p.13
population spread and history of Burma. So while the Mizo were beginning to settle in the valley, Lehman believed that the Burmese and the Mizo did not wage any war against each other because he could not find any wars between them in the old chronicles of the Burmese. Citing Luce's work, he continued that the Chins (Mizo/Zo) were considered allies or comrades by the Burmese because they held this flank of the developing Burman state against its enemies such as the Sak or Thet. B.Lalthangliana also agreed that the Burmese took Mu Valley, Myedu, Khittin, Yaw Valley, Pondaung and Thilin. But they did not trouble the areas of Monywa, Alon and Chindwin Valley which was occupied by the Mizo. So it appeared that the Burmese and the Mizo did not have any trouble with each other and in fact it was believed that the Burmese and the Mizo were allies.

Historians all agreed that the Mizo settled in the Chindwin Valley and the Lusei have called the Chindwin River as Run which means river while the Paite have called it Tuikang meaning white water. Vumsom had written that some remains of Zo settlement were found in this place. The remnants which he claimed to be of Mizo origin was those of a Zo ritual ground in which a memorial stone was there which was about 13 feet high and the Burmese called it Chin paya or Chin god, a village called Chin Ywa or Chin Village and a place called Chin Suh or Chin meeting place. Vumson and B.Lalthangliana citing their evidences from the history of Burma and from old chronicles of Fan-cho, a Tang diplomat, agreed that as time passed the people had to move away from this settlement due to invasion by Nan-

31 ibid.p.22
32 B.Lalthangliana, op. cit., p.51
33 Vumsom, Zo History, (Aizawl, 1985) p.33
34 ibid. p. 34
35 ibid. p.35
chao and the Mizo moved to Kale-Kabaw Valley. Kabaw Valley is under Sagaing division in Myanmar and is about 1470 sq. mile. Different tribes of Mizo have legends about their settlement in this place. Folk tales of different tribes are quite similar and so it can be assumed that they all must have lived in this area. They also appeared to have three chiefs who ruled over this settlement. Hmar folksong tells us about the three chiefs who ruled over this area-

\[ Sima Lersia, hmarah Zingthlo \]

\[ Khawma laia Luopui; \]

\[ Luopuiin lenbuong a phun, \]

\[ Thlanga puolrangin tlan e. \]

The English translation would be:

In the south ruled Lersia, north Zingthlo

At the centre was Luopui

Luopui planted a banyan tree

Birds have found shelter on it

This song tells us that Chief Lersia ruled in the south; Zingthlo in the north and Luopui in the central area. From this song, it can also be seen that all the people did not stay together in one area. It could also be regarded that the different tribes settled together in the earlier phase but when they were about to disperse they would have settled separately according to their tribes but they still had a very close affinity between themselves. The quoted song also stated that the chief Luopui planted a banyan tree. It was believed that they planted this when they were about to leave this

\[ 36 \textit{ibid.} p.34-35; B.Lalthangliana, \textit{op. cit.} p.54 \]

\[ 37 \text{Hranglien Songate, \textit{Hmar Chanchin} (Imphal, 1958) p.22} \]
place. They seem to have said that when the branches reached the ground, the Mizo
would return to this place.\textsuperscript{38} The tree was then blessed with a song:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ka phun bungpui dawi ai ka sanna}
\textit{Mi khawih loh sa khawih loh tein}
\textit{Thangin lian la khuanuleng hualin}
\textit{I tang zar piallei a zam tikah}
\textit{Seifate 'n vangkhua rawn din leh na'ng e.}\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

The English translation would be:

\begin{quote}
Banyan tree whom I planted
May you be safe from animals and other people
May you grow with the grace of\textit{khuanu}
When your branches reached the ground
Seifa's children will come back to you.
\end{quote}

However if we study this song, it could be seen from the language that it was
composed much later. It could be assumed that this was composed when the Mizo
especially the Lusei were in Lentlang (Len range of present Chin Hills). This could
also be seen from the word\textit{seifa} (\textit{Seifa - sei-Seipui; fa}-children. It was used to
denote the people of Seipui settlement) which indicates that it was composed much
later as Seipui was one of the early settlement sites in Lentlang. So, it could be
believed that the legend of this banyan tree was passed from generations to
generations and that this particular song was composed in remembrance of the
banyan tree which was planted by their ancestors.

\textsuperscript{38} V.L.Siama,\textit{ Mizo History}, (Aizawl, 1978) pp.8-9
\textsuperscript{39} H.L.C.A, \textit{op. cit.}, p.10
It is also believed that the different tribes were closed to each other and could understand each other and even their dialects were mixed. This can be seen from one of the earlier songs which were sung.

\[
\text{Thi lovi khua awm maw, fam lovi khua awm maw}
\]

\[
\text{Laiah suangpuilung e, fam lote 'n awm na ngai.}
\]

\[
\text{A tlung e, thim khawzing a tlung e}
\]

\[
\text{Khua tinah thim khawzing a tlung e.}^{40}
\]

The English translation would be:

Could there be any village or a person that would not die

The great rock however stands forever

The great darkness had descended

The great darkness had arrived / descended upon the earth.

In this song, \textit{suang} is Paite language, \textit{fam} and \textit{awm} is Duhljan or Lusei dialect while \textit{tlung} is now used only by Lai people. So this song which was believed to have been composed during the days of their settlement in the plains of Burma indicated that the languages which were used later on by a particular tribe was mixed and could be understood by all the tribes. Many of the songs or chants which were sung after killing animals were in Lai language but were used by the Lusei also. This would indicate the various Mizo tribes oneness or their similarity in their dialects and tradition. While living in the valley, as mentioned earlier they had contact with the Burmese and lived peacefully with them. It also seems that the Mizo were influenced by the Burmese and derived many things from them. So, many of Mizo words have a

\[^{40}\text{ibid. p.74}\]
suffix with the word *kawl* which means Burmese. (*Kawl* is a term used by the Mizo to call the Burmese). For example, *kawlthum* (sword), *kawlthei* (guava), *kawlbahra* (sweet potato) are some of the words. Having *kawl* as a suffix would infer that these things were not of Mizo origin but were imported from the Burmese. Liangkhaia and K.Zawla mentioned that according to the old people whom they interviewed, in the earlier days Mizo men used to have tattoo on their forehead, chest and arms. J. Shakespear also mentioned that he saw tattoos on the forearm and the chest. The patterns were circles and representations of a mithun’s head which he was told did not have any particular meaning but some were said to be momentoes of love affairs. The Burmese also used to have tattoo on their body and this is still practiced in some remote areas. So it shows very clearly that the Mizo must have been influenced in some ways by the Burmese during this time.

They lived here for many years but could not remain forever due to some reasons. The reasons for people to migrate in bulk to other places could be of different reasons. Some people often migrated due to natural calamities like famine or flood and also due to invasions from other stronger tribes. The main reason for the Mizo to migrate from this fertile valley to the hills which was much less fertile was not clearly known. However, according to oral sources, the people were forced to leave their settlement due to a cruel king who harassed the people. According to this tradition, the cruel king forced the people to construct a fort and fingers were cut off from the ones who did not work. So the people could not bear the tyranny of the king.

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41 Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p. 69
42 J.Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.11
and wanted to move away to the hills. Moreover, they had little time for cultivation and ultimately famine struck the area which killed hundreds of people. However the oral tradition did not identify the name of the king or chief who harrassed the people to work for him. So modern historians tried to identify the reason for the Mizo to migrate to the hills. One of the Hmar folk songs tells us how they left their settlement site:

*Khaw sinlungah kot siel ang ka zuang suaka*

*Mi le nello tam e, Hriemi hraiah* 

The English translation would be

I jumped out of the city of Sinlung like a mithun

Since the opponents were too many of them.

There were some historians like B.Lalthangliana, who mainly got his source from Than Tun and Luce, when the Mizo were in this valley, the Shans also began to settle in the northern part of the Kabaw valley. It appeared that there were fightings between the Mizo and the Shans. As the Shans were more powerful and since they annexed and settled in the area where the Mizo lived, the latter had to flee from their settlement and moved to the Chin Hills. F.K.Lehman also proposed that "by the middle of the 12th century the Shan invasions into Burma had become serious. Whether the Shan irrupted into Burma, as is traditionally supposed, or whether they had, as Leach suggests, "always" been there, makes little difference. Henceforth they became a political force within Burma founding principalities here and there and contending, often successfully, with the Burman kingdoms for hegemony." While

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44 K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11
45 Hranglien Sonate, *op.cit.*, p.11
46 F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.23
living in this plain, all the Mizo tribes lived together. However once they migrated from this place, it appeared that they migrated according to their clans and tribes. Hence different tribes lived in different hills. B.Lalhingliana is of the opinion that they left this valley at around 1200 AD\textsuperscript{47} while K.Zawla wrote that it would be around 1170 AD\textsuperscript{48} and some other writers thought that it might be around 1375 AD\textsuperscript{49}. As the exact year of the migration to the hills could not be known, the dates assumed by the different writers are not exactly the same, but the period works out to be between the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D.

From Kabaw Valley various tribes began to move to Chin Hills at different times. They established villages but here they lived clan wise and their villages were also known according to the name of the clan which lived there. They might have lived separately because the geographical features made it impossible for all of them to live together as they did in the valley. Initially, the Pawi settled down at Hmunli and then moved to Sunthla, a village between Falam and Halka.\textsuperscript{50} From here they spread in different directions. Pawi is the name given to them as they tie their hair on top of their foreheads. However they call themselves Lai. The Maras moved to Haka subdivision of the Chin Hills and migrated to their present settlement. The Lusei first settled down at Lentlang. As they did not have a chief, each family grouped itself together and each clan settled in separate villages.

As mentioned earlier, Mizo history is shrouded in obscurity and many of the Mizo historians have written what they had heard from the elder people and so oral

\textsuperscript{47} B.Lalhingliana, \textit{op. cit.} p,73
\textsuperscript{48} K.Zawla, \textit{op. cit.} p,11
\textsuperscript{49} H.L.C.A \textit{op. cit.} p,18
\textsuperscript{50} Duh Cung Nung, \textit{Lai Nunphung} (Falam, 2001) P,7
sources occupies an important source to know about the earlier history. If the folk tales of the different Mizo tribes are seen, there are many similarities between them. Some of the similar stories were Ngaitieii, Chhura, Tlingi leh Ngama, Zawlpala leh Tualvungi and Liandova te unau. However the names of the stories differ and some of the locations were also different as the later generations would have tried to adapt the story to their new surroundings. But the theme and the plot of the stories are all the same. Hence it could be agreed with many Mizo historians who had mentioned that these folk tales could have originated during the period when the different Mizo tribes all lived close to each other. Chhura’s story was about a man named Chhura who was a simpleton but who had a cunning brother. The different episodes of the Chhura story recount how he was manipulated by his brother and also how he escaped from his enemies. Chhura had a wife who appeared to be more intelligent than him. Tlingi leh Ngama’s story was about the love between Tlingi and Ngama. After getting married, Tlingi died which left Ngama heartbroken. But he could go to the place of the dead with the help of some deers and visited Tlingi. In the place of the dead, everything was different and he could not adapt to it. He then went back to earth, killed himself and returned to the place of the dead and lived with his wife again. This story showed the concept of life after death which was believed by the Mizo. Ngaitieii’s story tells us about a little girl called Ngaitieii whose father had drowned in a big river. One day Ngaitieii went to the fields with her grandmother and after working for some time, she felt thirsty and went to the river to

51 H.L.C.A, op. cit., p.12. The title of the story or the names of the characters are different as they took the language of the concerned tribe, but the story remains the same. For instance, Lariuanga’s story is also found among the Mara, but the name of the character has been put as Nara.
quench her thirst. Her grandmother told her not to say anything as it was believed that Ngaiteii’s father’s spirit was there in the river. However Ngaiteii forgot what her grandmother told her and exclaimed when she saw the big river. Immediately her father’s spirit took her away. Her grandmother followed Ngaiteii into the river. In the evening, Ngaiteii’s father who had turned into a big snake returned and soon changed into a human being. Ngaiteii’s grandmother requested him to let her take Ngaiteii with the promise that she would be returned soon which was accepted by the father. However Ngaiteii did not return even after many days had passed. The father’s spirit caused the river to flood to the village and the sound of the water said “Ngai, Ngai”. People understood what the river wanted. But they wanted to save Ngaiteii and so they dropped her cloth, comb and bangles. But the flood could not recede. So, they dropped Ngaiteii into the water and soon the water receded. In the story of Tualvungi leh Zawlpala,\textsuperscript{53} Tualvungi and Zawlpala were a happy married couple. One day as they were sitting in their varandah, a rich man Phuntiha happened to visit their village. As Tualvungi was beautiful, Phuntiha asked Zawlpala about her. Zawlpala instead of saying that she was his wife, said that she was his sister. Phuntiha then asked for her hand. Zawlpala thought that Phuntiha was just joking and so in return he asked a lot of things as her bride price thinking that Phuntiha would not be able to meet those demands. However Phuntiha after a few days returned with all the goods which were demanded by Zawlpala. Zawlpala could not dare say anything and so Tualvungi was obliged to follow Phuntiha to be his wife. But Zawlpala and Tualvungi could not forget each other and Zawlpala went to

\textsuperscript{53} P.S. Dahrawka, \textit{Mizo Thawnthu} (Aizawl, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1994) pp.137-142
Tualvungi’s place. However Phuntiha poisoned him and Zawlpala rushed home just in time to die in his own house. His family members wanted to inform Tualvungi that her former husband had died, but they were afraid of Phuntiha and so they could not find a messenger. At last, a dove was sent who informed Tualvungi while she was weaving. Tualvungi could not visit her former village as Phuntiha did not allow her to go. After some years passed, she found an opportunity to sneak to her village. When she reached the village, she went straight to Zawlpala’s grave. She decided that she would not go on living while her beloved was dead. So she asked an old woman to kill her. The old woman agreed with the condition that she would have Tualvungi’s ornaments. So they dug the grave and she lay down beside Zawlpala’s bones and the old woman killed her. When Phuntiha, who ran after Tualvungi, arrived he saw that Tualvungi had also died and he too killed himself. Tualvungi and Zawlpala’s spirits then turned into butterflies and Phuntiha’s spirit into a moth.

*Liandova te umaui’s*\(^5\) story was about two brothers who were orphans. The elder was Liandova and the younger brother was Tuaisiala. Since they were orphans they were very poor and could not afford to eat properly. They faced many hardships as the people were not sympathetic towards them. Since they did not have proper tools to cultivate, Liandova made a swing on the way to the fields. Villagers while coming from their work stopped to have a rest in Liandova’s swing and he took advantage of this and used their tools to clear a small patch of land near the swing. He then sowed some grains of rice. One day as the two of them were walking around, they saw an eagle carrying a snake. They shouted at the bird and it dropped the snake. Soon after this, when they returned from working in other’s field, they were very surprised to

\(^5\) *ibid.* pp.66-82
see that there was always cooked rice and meat which they did not have in the house also. After the same thing happened for some days they guarded their house and soon saw that an old woman was responsible for the cooking. They caught her and she told them that the snake which they had saved earlier was her child and to show her gratitude she used to cook for them. They realised that the old woman was a *khuavang* (a deity which will be discussed later on). Once they went out with a hunting party and caught a huge python. The boys were given the stomach and intestines much to the disappointment of Liandova. But inside the stomach were gongs and necklaces. They later knew that the python had swallowed a Lai (Pawi) trader named Singaia and so all the valuables were his goods which he used to sell around in the villages. They hid all the goods they had found lest the other villagers would take away from them. So secretly they became quite rich. Another incident which was to their advantage was that they befriended Lersia, a chief from another village and who was regarded to be one of the most powerful chiefs at that time. Lersia asked them to visit him and when they did, he told them to take one of his mithun. Liandova then sought the counsel of an old lady and she told him the best mithun which in looks was rather weak. Liandova took the particular mithun as advised by the wise woman. The mithun produced a lot of calves and Liandova made a pen for them in the forest so that the villagers would not know about it. When it was time for harvest, *khuavang* who had helped them earlier helped them again and they could have a good harvest. So, Liandova and his brother were the possessors of many mithuns, gongs and necklaces but which were unknown to the other people. Tuaichawngi, the chief’s daughter however knew all about this from a wise woman who was from their own village. So, Tuaichawngi wanted to marry Liandova but her
father was against it. To make sure that Liandova would not be able to pay the bride price, he demanded many necklaces and mithuns but since Liandova could meet all those demands they got married. They became more and more prosperous that they could even perform the various feasts of merit. However, Liandova had a concubine and when he, his wife and concubine were crossing the river Run, Tuaichawngi was said to have slipped and got drowned in the river. In this story we find that two wise women were consulted which proved to be a turning point in their life and that khuavang who took the form of an old woman also helped Liandova when he was in need of help.

These folk tales, when interpreted in their social context tells us a lot about the society, polity and economy of the Mizo in the pre-migration period. The next sections make an attempt to reconstruct these histories from the oral traditions.

**SOCIETY**

**ADMINISTRATION:** From the oral tradition which had been mentioned, it would be seen that the people had some sort of leader amongst them since the folk song mentioned above told us that there were three chiefs or leaders when they were in the valley. However the system of administration was not exactly known. In the story of Liandova we could see that the chief Lersia had elders with him, when he went to Liandova’s village. And in the same story, we also find that all the elders were male. So, it could be inferred that the different tribes had chiefs or leaders but the system was not strongly defined. Moreover, since the elders who were seen in the folk tales were all men, hence it could also be regarded that the system of administration was in the hands of the men. This could mean that women were marginalised in the affairs of the village.
Though women were side lined in the administration, yet, in the folk tales of Liandova and Lalruanga, it was seen that there were wise women who were consulted. These wise women had played a very important role for the success of these men. The words of these women were held in high esteem and as Liandova and Lalruanga paid heed to the advices, they became successful in their ventures. So, some women due to their wisdom could mark a place for themselves in the society, and the society at large seems to have respected the intelligence of the women.

During the days of settlement in the valley, the Mizo had established the institution of bawi. References to this could be seen in the folk tales. A bawi was said to be a person who surrendered himself to the chief for some reasons. Bawi was often confused with the English word slave. But it should be noted that the term bawi in Mizo and slave as seen in English language was quite different. This was observed by Lewin as, “boi is the term in their dialect which betokens for persons who had lost the right of individual freedom of action, but in all other respects the word ‘slave’ would be inapplicable.” From the oral tradition it could also be seen that not only the Zo from Myanmar but the Lai from Mizoram also had this institution which was almost similar to the Mizo. Among the Mara it was a bit different and according to N.E.Parry, the bawi were more similar to the English term for slaves. Since these three tribes had more or less similar practice of owning bawi it could be regarded that the people had practiced bawi-ship when they all lived together. However the actual system of bawi was not very clearly indicated in the

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56 Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.177
early oral sources, so the feature of this institution can be clearly known from the works of the Mizo historians and by the British administrators. Moreover, the system of bawis was more or less similar among the various Mizo tribes, so it could be assumed that the system had not changed very much since the days of the Mizo settlement in the Valley and their early settlement in the present Chin Hills. From the works of early researchers and historians we have come to know that there were three different types of bawis – inpuchhung bawi, chemsen bawi and tukluh bawi. There were some people like widows, orphans and others who lived in poverty and could not procure their needs. They were thus compelled to take refuge in the chief’s house and they were called inpuchhung bawi which literally means bawi of the household. They were treated as members of the chief’s household. They did all the works which needed to be done and they were also allowed to acquire private property. The chief also could marry off his bawis but they would have to serve him for three years. After that they could live in a separate house. However they still continued to be bawis in name and their youngest son would still be a bawi whereas the other children would be free.

Chemsen bawis (chemsen-long knife, dao; sen-red) were the ones who after committing a crime took refuge in the chief’s house by touching the house pole of the chief. After touching this pole no one could harm him and he himself, by doing this, surrendered himself to the chief to be his bawi. This kind of bawi could live independently afterwards but he remained a bawi during his lifetime.

59 K.Zawla, op. cit., p.142
60 J. Shakespear, op. cit., p.46
61 ibid., p.47
Tukluh bawis (tukluh – surrender, submission) were the people who after a war deserted their own party and joined the victorious side and made a promise to the chief that they and their descendents would be the chief’s bawi forever. They also could live independently and also could purchase their freedom by paying a specified price.

There were also some persons called sal who were captured in raids and they could be equivalent to the English term for slave. They differed from the bawi as the latter were found only in a chief’s house whereas sal were found in other household also. They were the sole properties of their masters and they could be sold off as their master desired. They could buy their freedom by paying a ransom for it.

Thus, this is the description of a system prevalent in the society before the migrations began. We shall see later whether this system persisted among the Mizo in exactly the same form after they settled in present day Mizoram.

FESTIVALS: Mizo used to have festivals from a very long time and this can be known from the folk tale of Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi. According to this legend in the days of old when all the animals and human beings could communicate with each other, Thlanrawkpa invited all the people and animals of the world for a feast. When the feast was about to start, they requested the sun not to shine as they wanted to dance and have fun to which the sun obliged. So every animals and human beings danced and enjoyed themselves. The sun was curious to see this event and it slowly began to shine and some living beings like the earthworms could not dance anymore. The loris got angry with the sun for shining and to this day, the Mizo believe that a

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63 J. Shakespear, op. cit., p.49
64 Tribal Research Institute, Mizo Thawnthu, op. cit., p.4-11
lori would not look at the sun and would always bow down its head. There was also a great feast but the owl did not get any meat and in a bad mood, sat on the bough of a tree. A big rat thought the owl was too full and said “Buka (buk – owl) has eaten his fill.” This angered the owl who was already in a foul mood and bit the rat. The Mizo therefore say that to this day, an owl would still be seen biting the rat. In the folk tales, it is seen that in the same feast Thlanrawkpa gave presents to his guests and to the Zo (Chins) he gave a fighting dao, while to the Mizo he gave a cloth which is the reason that the Zo (Chins) are braver than the Mizo (Lusei).65 Thlanrawkpa in the legend appeared to be a great man as he could marry the daughter of khuavang (deity). This legend was supposed to be very old and scholars have not been able to state clearly when this story started so, it could be regarded that this story was one of the earliest folk tales of the Mizo. Since in this folk tale, the people had a feast and had a time of merriment, Liangkhaia assumed that festivals were celebrated even before they arrived in Burma.66 And as they migrated to different places the way of having their festivals could have changed gradually.

WARS: When the Mizo were in the plains of Kabaw Valley, they must have fought with other tribes as we find in one of the folk songs:

\[
\begin{align*}
    & Shan fa tlang khua pu tling tleng e \\
    & Ka do thlunglu bakin chhaih \\
    & Ka mi thah ka lai mi do \\
    & Thal khatin la eih den ning^67
\end{align*}
\]

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65 ibid. p.94  
66 Liangkhaia, op. cit. p.51  
67 ibid. p.11
The English translation:

The people of Shan

The heads of my enemies are pecked by the birds

I have killed my enemies

I have killed them with my arrows.

In this song we find that the Mizo fought against the Shans and that some of the Shans were killed by them. So, it could be inferred that the Mizo did not have a peaceful existence at the end of their stay in the Kabaw Valley as this folk song was regarded to be composed when they were on the verge of departing from the valley. However in the folk songs and folk tales we do not find any mention of wars against each other. After their migration to the Thantlang and settling around Run also there was no mention of any war amongst themselves. It also appeared that they did not have a hereditary chief and that the ablest and bravest man was made the leader. It was only in their settlement as different groups in Lentlang (Len range) that there was mention of wars among themselves and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

FAMILY: From the various folk tales that are already mentioned it could be seen that fathers were the decision makers in the family and that the chiefs or the leaders of the clans were men. For instance, when Liandova wanted to marry Tuaichawngi, it was her father who was the chief who made the final decision. In Zawlpala’s story also, we find that Phuntiha asked Zawlpala for Tualvungi’s hand. So it could be inferred that the society was patriarchal. During this period, it seems that parents more or less arranged their children’s marriage. Parents were very careful in selecting life partners for their children. So marriages were done with the consent of
their parents. From the folk tales we also find that residence was patrilocal since Tualvungi was taken to Phuntiha’s house from Zawlpala’s house and Tuaichawngi also stayed in Liandova’s house after they got married. From the same stories, we find that Liandova had to pay a large number of necklaces, gongs and mithuns for the price of Tuaichawngi. Similarly, Phuntiha had to pay a lot of necklaces and other goods to Zawlpala for the price of Tualvungi. So, from such oral sources, we find that bride price had existed during their stay in present Myanmar. Bride price was also practiced among the Zo, Lai and Mara which they pay to the bride’s father or brothers. The origin of bride price and the reason for the men to pay bride price could not be exactly ascertained. However it could be regarded that it was intended to compensate the girl’s family for the loss of an economically active member. On the other hand, it could also be deduced that in those earlier times, women’s population would be lesser than the men, hence women could be in high demand. So men were willing to pay a heavy price if they wanted to get married and moreover getting a wife was also beneficial for the men in terms of productivity. However, though bride price was beneficial for the parents of the girl, it could also be a bane for women as described by Virginius Xaxa, “Women were treated as mere commodities to be easily procured by men through bride price... Bride price thus became a convenient justification for men to abuse their wives and treat them as disposable commodities.”\(^{68}\)

**ECONOMY:** In the folktales of Liandova, Mauruangi and Tlingi and Ngama, there are scenes where the characters went out to their fields for cultivation. The stories

depict that men were responsible for cutting down trees and for burning the fallen trees. Women on the other hand worked in the jhum to sow, weed, harvest and carry those harvested grains to their houses. Hence women during their settlement in the plains and later in Thanthlang played an important role in cultivation. In the story of Ngaiiteii, Ngaiiteii and her grandmother were found to have worked in their fields. Similarly, other folk tales also depicted that women worked a lot in cultivating the fields and that they were also responsible for gathering other food stuffs like yam, leaves, berries from the forest. Thus evidence could be had from oral sources that women were engaged in household chores and weaving as seen in the folk tales and also in cultivating the fields. However the division of labour might not have been clearly demarcated as we find in the story of Chhura in which Chhura's wife asked him to cook and look after the baby while she went to their fields. So we find that men did not hesitate to help their wives in carrying out the household chores which was a big contrast to the later period which will be discussed in the later chapters. In the folktales which are mentioned it is also seen that women were the ones who fetched firewood from the forest to be used in the houses. It was also their task to pound rice in a mortar, clean the husks and do all the cooking for their family. They also domesticated animals like goats, pigs and dogs while mithuns were generally looked after by men. Men on the other hand were responsible for building houses, defend the village, hunt animals and also go for fishing when they liked. Thus it can be seen that division of labour was present but gender roles were not very distinctly marked out.

The tools to be used for cultivation and other household works were also the responsibility of men. It was assumed that in the earlier stage they used the antler of
deer for clearing and digging the earth and a kind of weapon made of wood for fighting.\textsuperscript{69} One of the folk songs described how the composer saw a deer and wished for its antler for working tools. The song is as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Khi sa chhuk chhoch ho chhumpui zing hmaia}

\textit{A ki riu rium riang lo thlawh nan a tha e.}\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

The English translation would be:

Up in the hills under the misty sky is a deer

Whose antlers would be perfect for hoeing.

The above song appeared to be composed after the Mizo have migrated to the hills because in this song the composer saw the deer up on a hill or mountain, so apparently this is a post migration folk song.

However in the folktale of Chematrawta\textsuperscript{71} it was found Chematrawta was sharpening his dao on a riverbank. As this story was supposed to exist during their stay in Kabaw valley, it could be supposed that the people already used metal for tools as the story tells us about a man sharpening his dao. Thus it could be inferred that metal was used by the people when they were in Kabaw Valley but when they migrated to Thantlang range, metal would be scarce and they could have reverted to using antlers or wood for their tools as the above mentioned song tells us.

Trading appeared to be carried out by the people. However all transactions between goods was done in barter system. In the story of Chhura, Chhura was seen on his way to another village to sell some pots. However as he covered some distance he felt tired and tried to shift his goods from his right shoulder to the left,

\textsuperscript{69} Liangkhaia, \textit{op. cit.}, p.22
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{ibid.} p.23
\textsuperscript{71} Lalrluanglana Khiangte, \textit{Folktales of Mizoram}, Aizawl, 1997, p.57
while doing so he turned himself around and went straight back to his village. When his children saw him, they welcomed him but thinking he had reached another village, he said to himself, "How sweet and polite are other's children that they would call me as their father." So from this story it could be regarded that the Mizo involved themselves in trading. In the story of Liandova, Liandova, his brother and some men from the village went on a hunting expedition. They caught a huge python and killed it, distributed the meat but they gave Liandova only its stomach and intestine. However Liandova took it and when his brother cut the stomach, there were gongs and necklaces inside. Later they found out that the python had swallowed a Lai (Pawi) trader named Singaia. This man Singaia was a trader in gongs, ornaments and necklaces, so Liandova and his brother took all what they had found inside the python's stomach. This story also depicts that the Mizo used to travel from one place to another selling their goods. In the story of Hrangkhupa, we find that Hrangkhupa went to a certain village to sell some skirts and these skirts were bought by women. So, not only the Mizo but the Zo also involved themselves in trading business. However all the traders who were seen to have sold their wares across the countryside were men. So, it could be assumed that women did not participate in trading but were rather confined to their villages.

Some writers have assumed that Mizo did not know how to weave and that they did not wear proper clothes before their arrival in Lentlang of Burma. They believed that the people wore coverings which were made of leaves and vines. So

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72 P.S.Dahrawka, op. cit., p.72
73 Hrangkhupa is a Zo folk tale. He and his son were said to be one of the brave warriors of the Zo people.
74 Liangkhaia, op. cit., ; K.Zawla, op. cit.,
using this material, women used to cover their upper and lower body and their dress were known as *siapsuap* while men covered only their lower body with the same material called *hnawkhal*. But recent historians have argued that while they were in Chindwin and Kale-Kabaw valley, they must have worn something else. They had this idea because while they were in the plains, they were near the Burmese who already knew about the art of weaving. Since they lived side by side and did not wage any wars with them they would have been influenced by them and would know how to weave and wear cloth. So they opined that while they were in the plains, their way of living would not be very low. In the folk tales of Zawlpala and Tualvungi and also in Lalruanga’s story, we find that Tualvungi was weaving a cloth and Lalruanga courted a girl who was weaving. So it could be inferred that Mizo women had the knowledge of weaving during their settlement in the valley. However once they left the plains, life in the hills would be very hard for them. Their first settlement in Thantlang mountain range was a rugged mountain where cotton could not be grown. This was cited by B.Lalthangliana who had gone to this place and also some people of Myanmar who were interviewed said that Thantlang was a place where cotton and rice could not be properly grown and it was not really suitable for settlement also. Moreover, since they were always on the move, they would not have time to grow cotton and weave it to make it into cloth. So the vine dress must have been worn only when they were in these areas. During those times, both men and women kept their hair long. During their stay in the Khampat region in the valley, it was the men

75 Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.22
76 B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* pp, 169-170
and not the women who wore earrings.\textsuperscript{77} In later period also, we find that men had worn earrings but during the colonial period men had stopped wearing them.

RELIGION:

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of the anthropology of religion had said that religion was born as people “tried to understand conditions and events they could not explain by reference to daily experience”.\textsuperscript{78} He proposed that religion evolved through stages, beginning with animism. From this polytheism (belief in multiple gods) and later monotheism (belief in a single god) developed. Religion was also regarded to be born out of the real tragedies of human life.\textsuperscript{79} So religion was regarded to originate to explain things that people could not understand. Since religion was regarded as having emerged to explain events and circumstances which people could not understand, it helped people to achieve certain goals, offered emotional comfort when they faced some crisis over which human had no control.\textsuperscript{80} The unknown reason for certain things which the people could not comprehend also led the Mizo to develop their own religion. Since the people could not understand the reason for sickness and many crisis which they faced they developed the idea that there were some supernatural beings that caused them difficulties and other misfortunes. On the other hand, they also thought that someone blessed them when they had abundant harvest and when they received some good fortune.

\textsuperscript{77} K. Zawla, \textit{op. cit.} p.10
\textsuperscript{78} Cited in Conrad Phillip Kottak, \textit{Anthropology, The Exploration of Human Diversity} (New York, 1997) p.336
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{ibid}, p.338
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{ibid}
When the Mizo fell sick or when they wanted to receive blessings, they wanted to pray or propitiate but did not know whom to call. They then believed that there were some good spirits who blessed them and that there were also some bad spirits which brought them sickness and other maladies. So, one of the first prayer or invocation which they uttered was:

*Pi biakin lo chhang ang che,*

*Pu biakin lo chhang ang che.*

Their prayer in English would mean:

Whom our grandmothers worshipped, answer us

Whom our grandfathers worshipped, answer us.

They believed that whatever their ancestors worshipped would also answer them and hear their prayers. And they soon developed the idea that there were some supernatural beings or some spirits who blessed them and hence they named the good spirits or the ones who blessed them as *khuanu, khuavang* and *pathian.* All of these supernatural beings were benevolent and it was under their guidance that they had harvest and other blessings. In the story of *Liandova,* we find that Liandova told his brother Tuaisiala to believe that god who is above would take care of them and that they would not be poor forever. The Mizo also believed that there were some evil spirits called *huai* who resided in the rocks, caves, large trees, water springs, holes in the earth. In fact, they were regarded to be found everywhere.  

As time passed, the Mizo began to develop their religion and this was mainly called as *sakhua.* The English word for religion was often said to be *sakhua* in Mizo.

81 Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.23
82 K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, pp.45-46. The evil spirits were *huai, tau, chawm, phungkur, maimi, tulum,* *phei chinham, khawmu and khawhring.*
language. However this needs to be explained in detail. There were two views regarding the word sakhua. Lianzika Pachuau who was said to be the last Mizo priest (sadawt) when interviewed by Larinawmi said that sakhua was inseparable and denoted one word. According to him, Mizo ancestors believed that there would be some beings that would help the people in times of trouble and sickness and they named those beings as pathian and khuanu. The people also tried to understand them better and gain access to them. Thus the word sakhua was born. On the other hand according to Rev.Liangkhaia, sa meant ownership so it could denote a family or a particular clan’s protector, and it could also be worship while khuanu meant the protector of the whole village. Rev. Liangkhaia further commented that the two words were entirely different as the means to worship sa and khua was different as sa was worshipped with a pig while khua with a mithun. Eventually the two words were combined and sakhua meant the religion or the rituals of a clan. Lalhmuaka too believed that since sa was worshipped with pig and khuanu worshipped with mithun and the two words were later joined to form a new word sakhua. The views of Rev Liangkhaia and Lalhmuaka would be agreeable as the word sa and khua are different and worshipped differently. The practice of sakhua thus appears to have emerged from the integration of the concepts of sa and khua as these were very important for the people to protect them and their village.

Pathian whom the Mizo worshipped was viewed as the creator and a

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85 B.Lalthangliana, op. cit., p.333
86 Lalhmuaka, Pum Titi (Aizawl, 1985) p.65
benevolent god. But he was in distant heaven and hence was not much concerned with the daily affairs of human. The name denoted a male gender so it can be regarded that *pathian* was a male deity. According to Mangkhosat Kipgen, "the original understanding of Pathian was that he was far removed and unconcerned - God, the onlooker."\(^{87}\) The Zo also had the same kind of *Pathian* and was called *khawzing*. *Khuavang* were regarded to be large in number and they resided in many places on this earth.\(^{88}\) The Mizo believed that there were some people who could communicate with *khuavang* and they were called *zawlnei* which means having communication or relationship.\(^{89}\) The name *khuavang* does not denote any particular sex so it can be regarded as a neuter gender. *Khuanu* (khua-village; *nu*-mother) the name denotes a female gender and so it could be inferred that this was a female deity. The people called upon *khuanu* when they were in trouble and also when they wanted to receive blessings. From the folk tales and works by writers, it could be said that *pathian* and *khuanu* were at the same level in terms of power and attaining respect from the people. The writers of the book published by Hualngo clan had said that when people get married they were regarded to be united by *pathian* or *khuanu*.\(^{90}\) Similarly, to bless someone, Mizo often used to say *pathianin malsawm che rawh se* or *khuanu in malsawm che rawh se* which meant “May you be blessed by *pathian*” or “May you be blessed by *khuanu*”. So it could be regarded that *pathian* and *khuanu* had the same power to bestow blessings upon the people. There are some writers who regarded *pathian* and *khuanu* to be the same and that *khuanu*

\(^{87}\) Mangkhosat Kipgen, *op. cit.*, p.116  
\(^{89}\) *ibid.*  
\(^{90}\) H.L.C.A *op. cit.*, p.220
was just another form for addressing pathian. However this needs to be examined from the various religious practices of the Mizo. When Mizo went to the forest, one of the things which they had to do before eating their food was to set aside or throw some portion of their food and say khua tlai (khua refers to khuanu; tlai – full, well fed). This was done so as to give thanks and also receive blessings from khuanu. According to Lalhmuaka’s version of sakhua it could be seen the term was taken from the female deity khuanu. From the name itself it could be inferred that khuanu was seen to play the role of a mother who protected and took care of her child. So it could be seen that khuanu had played a somewhat different role from pathian and it also appeared that these two deities are different. It could also be inferred that khuanu had played a very important role in the early life of the Mizo.

The Mizo also believed that there were some female deities who looked after the animals in the forest. These deities were called lasi and they were regarded to be very beautiful. In a folk tales it was said that the lasi wanted a queen and they took Chawngtinleri who was a human being. So Chawngtinleri became their queen and she was in charge of all the animals. Chawngtinleri was found in the folktale of Lalruanga and Keichala. In the story, Zauhranga, the father of Lalruanga, killed a wild boar but while he went to the village to fetch his friends, Chawngtinleri revived the wild boar and kept a small boar in its place. Zauhranga then tracked the footprints of the animal and soon he reached Chawngtinleri’s house. He then told her that he had killed the wild boar as it had damaged their crops and that it should be returned to him. Chawngtinleri then scolded the wild boar for destroying other

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91 K.Zawla, op. cit., p.44
92 P.S.Dahrawka, op. cit. p,34
people’s crop and gave it back to Zauhranga. So from this story, it could be seen that Chawngtinleri could revive the dead animals as they were all under her care. Chawngtinleri thus played a very important role in the Mizo society especially among the men. Since hunting was men’s game, they tried to please Chawngtinleri so that they would be successful in their hunting expedition. So, it is quite interesting to see that men who followed patriarchal system had to please this female deity. From this it could be inferred that women could have had played a more important role prior to the settlement in the valley and remnants of the material culture were still in practice when they arrived and settled in the valley and still followed that even after their migration to the hills.

Another feature of Mizo religious features was their belief in re-birth. They believed that when human beings die, they can be reborn as animals or some other things. This belief could be seen in the story of Zawlpala leh Tualvungi, the story is already mentioned earlier. In that story we have seen that Zawlpala and Tualvungi’s spirits had turned into butterflies while Phuntiha’s spirit turned into a moth. This belief could also be seen from the folktales of Mauruangi,\(^93\) in which her mother after being drowned turned into a big fish, and after this fish was caught, it later changed into a tree. In Ngaiteii’s story we again find that Ngaiteii’s father had turned into a big snake and could change into a human form also. Similar stories of the dead being changed into animals and even as another human being was quite common. They may have this belief from the time of living in the plains. It could be agreed with B.Lalthangliana when he suggested that this belief could have started when the

\(^{93}\) *ibid.* p, 165
Zo or Mizo had close contact with the Burmese in the valleys.⁹⁴ So, Buddhist belief in life after death might have influenced the Mizo also. Among the Zo also, we find that in the oral sources, the people believed that dead person often changed into bee while babies were sometimes born again as babies. However it should be noted that Mizo were not converted to Buddhism.

From the studies done in this chapter, we have seen that Mizo settled twice in Chindwin areas in present Myanmar. First, they settled in the Upper Chindwin and moved to the Lower Chindwin areas known as Kale Kabaw Valley. However they could not remain in this place due to the fear of the Shans. Hence they moved to the hills known as Thantlang Range which is in present Chin Hills. From the stories which were already mentioned, it could also be inferred that mother rights had not existed in the society but that patriarchy was already in existence. From the oral traditions it would be regarded that women worked in the household chores including weaving and pottery and also in the fields. They thus played an important role in the family and society. In religious sphere also, khuanu had played a very important role in the lives of the people. From the oral traditions, it could be inferred that though pathian and khuanu had the same power to bless the people but khuanu appeared to have a much important role and was regarded to be with the people at all times. Hence khuanu could be said to have a more important role in the lives of the people since she was the one whom the people turned for comfort and blessings. The importance of khuanu could denote that power relations were not concentrated in the sole hands of the men. There were also wise women who were consulted by the villagers including the men. Thus women had some amount of space and authority in

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⁹⁴ B. Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p. 171
the family and society. The existence of wise women also would reveal that they were the reservoir of traditional knowledge. However since oral traditions of this period were not in abundance, the exact system of administration could not be exactly known. But from the few oral traditions, the leaders of the tribes appeared to be all men. However since the Mizo tribes were migratory due to their method of cultivation, they could not stay in one place for a long time. Hence, from Thantlang they moved to a nearby mountain range known to the Mizo as Lentlang (Len range). The different tribes again moved to this mountain range according to their clans and groups. They soon scattered themselves in this mountain and as communication was difficult, they slowly lost contact with the other groups and clanism and separatism became more profound which led to inter tribe conflict. Thus it would be interesting to see how these developments affected gender relations in the Mizo society.
MAP NO. 4

MIGRATION ROUTE OF LUSEI

MANIPUR

TRIPURA

LENTLALING RANGE

ZADENG CLAN

ROKRUM CLAN

PALLAN CLAN

SAILO CLAN

MIZORAM

TRANOUMBUL AND NESTLE CLAN

N. TIAU

CHITMAONG HILL TRACTS (NEVEKA LUSEE)
MIGRATION ROUTE OF LAI

MAP NO. 5