CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Location:

Mizoram, known as the Lushai Hills District till 1954, is now a Union Territory. Situated between 20°20'N and 24°27'N, and between 92°20'E and 93°27'E, it covers an area of 21,090 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north by the Cachar District of Assam and by the State of Manipur, on the east and the south by Burma, and on the west by Bangladesh and the State of Tripura.

Physical Features:

Mizoram is isolated from the mainstream of Indian life both by its distance and its forbidding

1. By an Act of the Parliament, the name "Lushai Hills" was changed to "Mizo District" in September, 1954. This change was made due to popular demand as the term "Lushai Hills" connotes outdated regime of the autocratic chiefs and of the Superintendents. Whereas "Lushai" comprises only a few clans or sub-clans, "Mizo" stands for all the hill people of Mizoram.

With the implementation of the North Eastern Re-Organisation Act (1971), Mizo District got the status of Union Territory on 21 January, 1972, and was re-christened "Mizoram". However, the Mizo people called it "Mizoram" since time immemorial.

terrain. Steep mountain ranges running in a north-south direction are separated by parallel plunging valleys of rushing rivers. The heights of the mountains vary from 700 metres to 2300 metres, and there is only one plateau of about 12 square kilometres in the eastern Champhai valley. Its hills are covered by tropical jungles. Lakes are few and Palak, the biggest one is situated in the southern part of Mizoram. Due to variation in altitudes, some places in Mizoram have tropical and sub-tropical climate whereas the rest has temperate and sub-temperate climate.

Large varieties of wild animals are found in the jungles of Mizoram. These include tiger, wild dog, wild bear, wild cat, vermin, varieties of monkeys and mithuns. Formerly elephants, deer, wild-dogs, porcupines and rhinoceros were in abundance. Besides several varieties of birds, jungle fowls, several kinds of pheasants, leopards, black bear, etc., are also found.

Climate:

Lying astride the Tropic of Cancer, Mizoram

3. Ibid., p.3.
has an equable climate - temperatures averaging 16°C in winter, and 25°C in summer. Monsoon from May to September brings an average annual rainfall of 254 centimetres, leaving the winter season rain-free. During the monsoon season, it rushes down the hill-sides causing some rivers to raise as high as sixty to eighty feet.

The Mizos and their Sub-tribes:

The word 'Mizo' is a generic term applying to all the Mizos living in Mizoram and its adjoining areas of Manipur, Tripura, the Chittagong Hill Tract and the Chin Hills. 'Mizo' literally means (Mī= people, zo=highland) 'Highlander', an apt term to describe the short, stocky, muscular people who, with great physical vigour, easily climb the steep hills.

The Mizos include several sub-tribes. The Military Report of 1930 recorded 15 sub-tribes such as:

- Lushai
- Punte
- Poi
- Khawlhring
- Renthlei
- Lakher

To this list, Zatluanga, a Mizo historian adds four more sub-tribes - Pautu, Tlau, Zawngte, and Vangchhin. Other historians like Liangkhai, V.L. Siama, and K. Zawla add some more sub-tribes such as Mirawng, Darlawng, Bawng, Biate, Hrangkawl, Dawn, Tlanglau, and Mualthuam.

Ethnological evidence indicates that the Mizos are of Mongoloid stock having "straight, coarse black hair, dark brown eyes, sparse beard, complete and sharp fold of the eyelid across the inner couthum and tendency towards a medial downward slant of the palpebral opening, a frontal and lateral projection of the molars, shovelling or inner scalloping of the incisors, light tawny or yellowish skin colour and round headdress".

Language:

The Mizo language belongs to the Assam-Burman branch of the Tibeto-Burmese family of language\textsuperscript{13}. The following few words are given below to illustrate that the Mizo and the Burmese languages are of the same family, thereby suggesting the fact that their forefathers had in long past been living together in a common land\textsuperscript{14}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mizo</th>
<th>Burmese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kun</td>
<td>Kun</td>
<td>to bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kam</td>
<td>Kam</td>
<td>bank (of a river)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha</td>
<td>Kha</td>
<td>Bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>Mi</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meikhu</td>
<td>Mikhu</td>
<td>smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmui</td>
<td>Mhwe</td>
<td>sweet smell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vawk</td>
<td>Wak</td>
<td>pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That</td>
<td>That</td>
<td>to kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawng</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thla</td>
<td>La</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>Ne</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>pain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mizo sub-tribes could be termed as dialectic group since each of them had its own dialect. After crossing the river Tiau, they found a place for permanent settlement where the dialect of the largest ruling family is.


the Lusei (or Lushai) called Duhlian served as the lingua franca of the people and it came to be known as Mizotawmna (i.e. Mizo language). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this dialect had absorbed almost all other dialects. A few sub-tribes who are confined to a particular area and are majority in that area, however, still use their own dialect. But all of them can speak and understand the Duhlian dialect.

Folktales:

The Mizos are rich in folktales. Most of these are now collected and compiled into books. The Mizo folktales may be classified into three main categories: (1) legends of creation, and other phenomena; (2) those relating to hills and rivers; and (3) those similar to Uncle Remus's tales of Brer Rabbit.15

One of the most popular and best known folktales of the Mizos is about Chemtatrawta. It relates to a quarrel between a hunter named Chemtatrawta and a prawn. As the story goes on the case became more and more complicated as many others like a climbing plant, a jungle cock, an ant, a wild pig, bats, an elephant, and an old woman were involved in the case. Chemtatrawta is probably the most

popular bedtime story told by the Mizo mothers to put their children to sleep.

Population:

The total population of Mizoram in the 1981 Census is 4,93,757 with 2,57,239 males and 2,36,518 females, and the density of the population is 23 per square kilometre. The growth-rate of population is high. In 1901, the population numbered 82,435 and the density was 11 per square kilometre. In the decade of 1951-61, the growth rate was 35.61 per cent, but in 1961-71 it was only 20.91 per cent. But in 1971-81, the growth rate rose again to 46.75 per cent. With the exception of a very small number of immigrants, the inhabitants of Mizoram are Mizos. B.C. Allen enumerated that 93 per cent of the inhabitants of Mizoram in 1901 had been born inside the boundaries of the district. The bulk of the immigrants came, at that time, from Nepal and served in the Military Police battalion. The non-Mizos at present include Nepalese, Bengalees, Santalees, Assamese and Chakmas who formed about 16 per cent of the total population in 1981. Of these the Chakmas alone constitute about 8 per cent.

Since 1966 the percentage of the urban population increased greatly. The disturbance which broke out in that year made life insecure in the rural areas and also caused the scarcity of foodstuff. As a result many families moved out from the villages and settled in the towns where life was peaceful, secure and prosperous. The towns of Aizawl and Lunglei alone account for 19-20 per cent of the total population of the territory. 72.11 per cent of the population are cultivators, and 27.86 per cent are other workers. Women workers number as high as 57.70 per cent of the total women.

The following table shows the increase in population since 1901.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Decadal variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>39,004</td>
<td>43,430</td>
<td>82,434</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>43,028</td>
<td>48,176</td>
<td>91,204</td>
<td>+ 1,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>46,652</td>
<td>51,754</td>
<td>98,406</td>
<td>+ 7,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>59,186</td>
<td>65,218</td>
<td>1,24,404</td>
<td>+ 6,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>73,855</td>
<td>78,931</td>
<td>1,52,786</td>
<td>+ 28,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>96,136</td>
<td>1,00,066</td>
<td>1,96,172</td>
<td>+ 37,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,32,465</td>
<td>1,33,598</td>
<td>2,66,063</td>
<td>+ 65,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,70,824</td>
<td>1,61,566</td>
<td>3,32,390</td>
<td>+ 66,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2,57,239</td>
<td>2,36,518</td>
<td>4,93,757</td>
<td>+ 1,61,367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Villages and Houses:

Villages are built along the ridges of the mountains on the tops of the hills where the air is fresh and the breezes blow. These sites were chosen in the olden days primarily considering the strategy of defensibility against surprise raids by their enemies. This, of course, has a disadvantage because water supply is a perennial problem, and it has to be fetched from springs below in bamboo tubes.

Houses are usually built in two parallel rows along a ridge, with a road in between. Formerly, the chief's house and Zawlbuk were constructed at the centre of the village. The chief's house usually accommodated a number of people who could not support themselves, and as such it was usually large. Houses are set on posts fixed on the slope of the hill, and some of them have to be very high to level the floor of the house. The length of the posts depends on how steep the slope of the hill is. Wooden pillars provide the framework of the houses, and woven bamboo matting forms the walls. Roofs are made of bamboo and thatch. An open verandah outside the main door provides a place for grinding rice, spinning cotton, and weaving cloth. More recently, houses in larger towns are made of mud-brick with asbestos or corrugated iron roofing. A number of re-inforced cement concrete buildings are coming up these days. But the materials for these
houses not being locally available are brought in from other parts of India.

The churches and school buildings are now the most important buildings of every village. The church is usually built on the highest spot within the village and the best materials available are used for its construction. The school buildings are also big enough so as to accommodate all the village children who are of school age.

**Occupation:**

The economy of Mizoram is predominantly agricultural. For centuries the people have been practising slash-and-burn shifting cultivation, known as *jhuming*. Each village controls a certain extent of land, of which a portion is cultivated each year. When the spring comes the village council or council of elders arranges a day when every family makes a choice by drawing lot. After the selection of plot by each family, the trees and bushes are cut down and are left to dry up for burning. On a chooser day such areas are burnt, and everyone is alert on such day so that the fire may not burn the reserved forests. The burning not only kills weeds and insects, but also provide ashes for fertilizer²².

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Mizoram is no longer self-sufficient in food. Flat areas, suitable for proper cultivation, are scarce. The jhuming system being a wasteful type of farming does not produce enough food for the whole population, and terracing cultivation which is introduced to increase food production mainly depends on monsoon rain. However, the mountain soil requires chemical fertilizers which are imported from other parts of India, and this has proved to be very expensive.

A few small-scale industries based on agricultural and forest products have been introduced. These include fruit preservation, food processing, lumbering, tea, coffee and rubber plantations, rearing cocoon for silk and bee-keeping. Handloom materials and handicrafts of Mizoram are being sold throughout India, and even abroad on a small scale.23

Origin and Migration:

Where did the Mizos originally come from is a matter of conjecture. According to tradition, the Mizos came out of a very big stone cave called Sinlung or Chhinlung.24. The Mizo folk-lore and folk-songs throw some light on this:

24. The literal meaning of Sinlung or Chhinlung is "a stone that is covered". It is traditionally regarded as a place from where the Mizos originated. In modern scientific age such statement is hard to believe and it may be absurd to accept that men can come out of a hole. Sinlung is a poetical form of Chhinlung.
claim; one of which runs:

Kan siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.
Chawngzil ang kokir thei changsien
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.

When translated it means -

Famous Singlung - my motherland,
Home of my ancestors,
Could it be called back like Chawngzil
Home of my ancestors?

This song clearly describes the feeling of the Mizos at
Chhinlung. It expresses their pride in it and a deep attachment
to that place, and also a wish to go back there if they could.

A minor section of the Mizos think that they are
the descendants of a lost tribe of Israel. Whereas some of
them claim to be the descendants of the tribe of Mannose.
There is not enough evidence to substantiate such claims,
and nothing is gained by making such claims.

The Burma Census Report of 1891 which is taken
to be the most reliable source, says that the Kukis of
Manipur and the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins
originally lived in Tibet and are of the same racial stock.

26. Lalpa Zawnchhuah Mizoram, n.n., Aizawl : Venus Press,
1979, n.p., p.11.
The Kabaw Valley or the Shan State Settlement:

The Mizo tradition does not go much beyond their settlements in Burma. On the basis of their folksongs, it is learnt that there was a big settlement in the Kabaw valley extending up to Khampi area in the north and as far south as Kale in Burma. It can be gathered that this settlement was ruled by three Mizo chiefs, Luahpuia ruled the town of Khampi, Zingthloh, ruled in the north believed to be the Khampi area and Lersia ruled at Kale town which is now identified as Kalimyo. The following verse bears witness to these accounts:

Sima Lersia, hmara Zingthloh,
Khawma laiah Luopui (Luahpuia)
Luopui-in lenbuang a phun,28
Thlanga pualrangin tlan e.

[Lersia in the south, Zingthloh in the north. And in between Luopui (Luahpuia) ruled
Luopui planted a banyan tree
Whereon hornbills from the west feed.

Their victory songs still sung to praise their valour
suggest much fighting between them and the Shans who occupied the northern part of the Kabaw valley.

Shan khua thlang-fa pu tling tleng e.
I do thlunglu bakin salh;
Ka sawmfa thlaw, ka lami than 29
Thal khatin lan eih de ning.

29. Ibid, p.21
[Sons of western Shan state looked honest.
But you sounded out only war,
With abundant harvest and men killed in war.
We will make of you a springtime festival.]

The Mizos lived in the Kabaw valley for about 700 years, but had to leave that place due, perhaps, to the outbreak of a severe famine, known to them as Thingpu lam when they suffered immensely. Their sad plight is expressed in the following verse:

Shan khuoah lenpur a tlakin,
Mi raza tlan thiera e;
Chung Pathienin Shan zuk siem\(^{31}\)
Shan khuo lung ang ngir na e.\(^{31}\)

[Shan village, built by God,
Stood like a rock;
Then on came a famine,
From Shan people fled.]

Their tradition says that the Mizos, before their dispersal from the Kabaw valley, they planted at Khampat a banyan tree known to them as Khampat Bungpui to commemorate their dispersal with a promise that they should go back to that place for resettlement when its branches pointing towards three directions touched the ground.\(^{32}\)

In their incantations in some sacrificial ceremonies recited by the Mizo priests, reference to their settlement in Shan land is come across. Thus -

30. Ibid., p.21.
31. Ibid.
32. This promise was fulfilled during the first part of the 20th century according to Rev. Thanhranga, Kawl Rama Mizo Lut Hmasate Chanchin, Part I, Aizawl: R.O. Press, 1984, p.1.
A khu khual khu khawi khual maw?
San khual ka ni, Sanzawl khual ka ni;
Keimah Sanzawl chungtland muvanlai, 33
A thla chante kan ang na law maw?

[From whence that stranger came?
I'm a stranger from Shan,
I am a skylark of Shan State,
Do I not look like its variegated wings?]

This song reveals their history about the Shan State settlement where the Mizos lived quite prosperously in the bygone days.

**Chin Hills Settlement**:

Down from the Kabaw valley the Mizos moved in groups, tribe by tribe at different times 34, to the present Chin Hills of Burma where they established villages and settled down clan-wise, and thus gave clan-names to their villages. The Lusei clan settled at Seipui, the Khawkawk at Khawrua, the Ralte at Suaipui and Saihmun, the Belmual at Lungchhuan, the Hauhnar, the Chuango and the Chuauhang at Hauhnar-tlang 35.

It is mainly due to the nature of the hill ranges in the Chin Hills that the Mizos lived at scattered villages, and therefore could not build a big town like that of Khampat. During the Chin Hills period, however, the Mizo population greatly increased owing to the growing prosperity and comparative peaceful life despite inter-clan feuds. At the same time the scattered nature of their villages encouraged the growth of clanism or separatism.

33. K.Zawla, Mizo Pipute, p.10.
leading to disunity among the Mizos.

Their Present Settlement:

It is believed that the Mizos entered present Mizoram at three different times and accordingly they were known by three different names\(^\text{36}\). Those who came first were called "Old Kuki" are Hrangkhawl, Biate, Langrawng, Pangkhua and Mawk. The "New Kuki" are the Changsen, Thado and some others. The coming of the "Old Kuki" to the present Mizoram could not be later than the 15th century A.D. or the beginning of the 16th century A.D. for they find mention in the account of the Tipperah Raja, Chachag, who ruled at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. Sopitt brings the date to the middle of the 16th century\(^\text{37}\). The third group, the Lushai, came to the present habitat between the 17th and 18th century by driving out the "New Kuki" and other tribes\(^\text{38}\). The migration from the Chin Hills to their Mizoram was probably due to the constant pressure of the Pawi tribes like Zanai, Hualngo, Tlang Tlang of Falam.

On their arrival at the present habitat, they fought and defeated the earlier clans under the leadership of the Sailo clan and this made the Sailo chiefs virtually the rulers over the people.


SOCIO-POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Patriarchal Society:

A solid patriarchal hierarchy has been found in the Mizo society. In the past, the father exercised arbitrary powers in the family. On the death of the father, the power devolved usually to the appropriate person, who, like the father, exercised the power in the same manner. The children belonged to the father, and the mother had no share. Even right to inheritance was reserved for paternal descent. The youngest son inherited most or all of the father's property and thus he was responsible to look after his parents in their old age. In the absence of a son, the nearest male relative became the heir. The lineage was also traced through the line of a male descendant.

Marriage is usually endogamous regarding the clan, and exogamous regarding the family. The male's family pays a marriage price in bull or cow, or its equivalent in rupees, to the girl's family. The marriage price is distributed among the girl's relatives, who then assumed a responsibility for the girl if she should fall into difficulties. In case of divorce in which the wife is at fault, the marriage price must be returned to the husband's family.

Ethics of Tlawmngaihna:

The Mizo code of all activities is known as Tlawmngaihna. It is an outstanding characteristic of the Mizo society and is deeply rooted in it. The word Tlawmngaihna is so peculiarly Mizo in sound, meaning and connotation that it seems to have no exact equivalent in any other language. In theory, Tlawmngaihna should enter into every area of Mizo life. A man who practices this code is respected. It calls upon everyone to be "courteous, considerate, hospitable, kind, unselfish, prompt, courageous, endurance, honest, sincere, industrious and must always be ready to help others to the greatest extent". A perfect Mizo is one who has Tlawmngaihna in the fullest measure. In certain contexts, it is synonymous with the word 'Mizo' itself when used as an adjective. Thus when one says of a Mizo that he is un-Mizo, he means that that man is lacking in Tlawmngaihna, and to a Mizo there can hardly be a worse censure than that.

A lot of achievements have been made through Tlawmngaihna in the recent past. All the construction of roads, houses, water-holes, digging of graves, etc. were

done in response to a very judicious appeal of tlawmngaihna. People have expressed the view that tlawmngaihna is now on the wane, and may not continue much longer to be the moral force that it has been in the Mizo society. The late poet Rokunga's invocation to precious tlawmngaihna to dwell among the Mizo's finds a sounding echo in the heart of every Mizo. It runs thus -

Aw tlawmngaihna hlu, aw nunna par,
Kan tlang ram nuam hmun sangah hian,
Kum sang tam tak pawh ral mahse,
Zamual liam lovin ding reng rawh.

[Oh, precious tlawmngaihna, blossom of life. Though thousand years may pass, We bid you to dwell ever with us, In our pleasant highland abode.]

Village Administration:

Before the British rule started in Mizoram, each village was an independent unit under its Lal (chief), who was aided by his council of Upas (elders) and Puithiam (village priest). Decisions were usually made by a consensus of this council which met in the Chief's house or Zawlbuk (bachelors' dormitory). The next morning a Tlangau (village crier) would go down the street announcing the decision. The opinion of the strongest warriors of the village exerted considerable influence on the decisions made by the Chief and his council. Though the chieftainship was abolished by the Government of India in 1955, the old village council provided the basis for
local democratic organisation.

Zawlbuk:

Zawlbuk primarily served as a common dormitory for all the young lads of the village. Excepting the children who were below ten years of age, all the unmarried males in the village were under the discipline of Zawlbuk, their lives being almost completely shaped according to the practices and conventions prevailing therein.

Even though Zawlbuk was under the overall authority of the village chief, it was placed directly in the charge of Val Upa, the man who established himself as the most industrious and efficient organiser as well as the most courageous and skilled hunter amongst the group. There were two distinct groups in Zawlbuk, those who were above the age of ten called Tlangval, and those below ten called Thingnawifawm. No woman, young or old should visit a Zawlbuk.

Zawlbuk was a large public building almost invariably situated at the central place of the village and was very near to the chief's house. As a social

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43. Nirmal K.Bose, Tribal Life in India, p.59.
46. Such boys were duty-bound to carry out the orders of tlangvals in washing their shirts, running on different errands, collecting and carrying fire-wood for Zawlbuk.
institution, Zawlbuk had a three-fold function. It served as sleeping quarters and recreational centre for unmarried as well as young married men. It imparted training and taught discipline to young boys. It also served as an inn for visitors from outside the village. Zawlbuk was, therefore, a very powerful institution which exercised the greatest sway in establishing social norms and customs among the Mizo people.

Zawlbuk was the best indigenous institution in early Mizo society. It functioned as a boarding house of modern public school, the main difference being that the activities and the discipline prevailing therein were all conducted through self-government. It was indeed a highly potential instrument for the overall social education of the village folks and succeeded magnificently to weave out a pattern of their personality wherein the claims and requirements of family and those of village as a society were nicely harmonised.

Even though Zawlbuk had no formal arrangement for the education of its inmates, the activities the boys performed during their stay in Zawlbuk gave them the required knowledge for playing an effective role in the life of the society. It shaped a boy into becoming a mature

48. Ibid.
adult through a process accepted by the youth without abhorence or any serious dislike. This is what the Zawlbuk with all its corporate living and functional activities achieved. It provided opportunities to the youths to learn co-operation, fellow-feeling, sympathy and tolerance. This was, as it were, the training ground for the youths for all forms of social service. It helped the youths to acquire tlawmngaihna.

Warfare and Head-hunting:

Until the British occupation of their land in 1890 the Mizos were known to the outside world as daring head-hunters, whose periodic raids were a source of terror to their more peaceable neighbours in the low hills and plains of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Encyclopedia Britannica says about the Mizos (Lushais) thus:

The main occupation of the people in hunting and warfare. From the earliest times the Lushais have been notorious for their sanguinary raids into British territory, which are said to be instigated by their desire to obtain human heads for use at their funeral ceremonies.

They carried out head-hunting for some reasons. First, it was done not for the sake of the head, but for the sanctity of the head as the seat of the soul. Secondly, much warfare took place as a result of the ever-increasing

cycle of revenge for previous killings. The more important motives for head-hunting, according to McCall, were to propitiate evil spirits, to attain Pialral (Paradise) after death, to prove prowess over enemies, and to gain the respect of a prospective bride. A man who had killed non-Mizos was given higher regard than one who had not, and therefore, when a man did kill a person he brought home the head to show that he was speaking the truth. The Mizos also raided and fought inter-clan wars for loot and slaves for they needed slaves to work in their jhums as well as at home. It is evident that killing of people for head was not the main cause of raids.

In olden days, the weapons consisted of bows, arrows, spears and chempui (a kind of broad sword), and later the gun - the flint-lock musket which became their best weapon. Their method of attack was surprise. Emerging suddenly from the jungle at dawn they attacked an unresisting sleepy village and carried off the captives laden with booty.

**Bawi System**:

One of the oldest institutions of the Mizo society.

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was the Bawi. A person who surrendered himself to a Mizo chief for any reason was commonly called a bawi. If such bawis were able-bodied, they were expected to work for their master; and in any case, such bawi thenceforward had no anxieties as to his future for the chief provided him with lodge, feed and clothing. There were several kinds of bawis. The poor, orphans, and the destitutes could take refuge in the chief's house and were called Inpuichhung bawi. When a man after committing a crime took refuge in the chief's house no one could touch him because he had protection of the chief and he became Chemsen bawi. In war or feud, when a person, after deserting his own party, joined the victorious side and promised to obey the chief, he and his descendants were called Tuklut bawi. Generally bawis were decently treated, but they remained as bawis with their children and descendants unless ransom money was paid to their masters for their freedom.

Position of Women:

Perhaps, the worst treatment was received by women in the Mizo society. A woman had no right either in the family or in the society. In body, mind and spirit, she belonged from her birth till her death to her father, brother, or her husband. Her menfolk could treat her as they liked and a man who did not beat his wife was scorned.
by his friends as a coward. A woman possessed nothing though she did most of the work. She began her day's work before dawn and continued it unceasingly till late at night. She might not go to bed till her menfolk retired, who would sit smoking late, while she cooked the pigs' food for the next day, and then spun the cotton for cloth. She could not go out without the permission of her menfolk.

The following are some of the Mizo phrases and idioms indicating the position of women in the traditional society:

(a) Hmeichhe finin turkhur raı a kai lo (women's wit does not go beyond the waterpoint, which is usually just outside the village).

(b) Hmeichhia leh pal chhia chu thlak theih an ni (a wife and an old fence can be replaced at any time).

(c) Hmeichhia leh chakaiin sakhua an nei lo (women and crabs have no religion).

(d) Chakai sa sa ni suh, hmeichhe thu thu ni suh (Just as crab meat is not counted as meat, women's word is not regarded as word).

(e) Nupui vau loh leh vau sam loh chu an pawng tual tual (unthreatened wife and weeds of the field not properly cut are both unbearable).

Position of men:

Men always occupied a high and respected position not only in the family, but also in the social life as a whole. They were solely responsible for their family affairs. All hard works like clearing the jungles for the jhum, hunting, fishing, and the like were done by men. In their spare time those elderly men used to stay at Zawlbuk and bachelors were engaged in courting girls, and sometimes they also accompanied them to the jungle to collect firewoods.

Dress:

In early times, both men and women kept long hair alike. A woman wore a kind of skirt called Siapsuap, a small piece of broad cloth woven from the reeds or the bark of trees. More than one piece would be worn together, tied round the waist reaching only above the knee. A man had Hnawkhal made of the same material as the woman's Siapsuap but woven in larger pieces. It was used to cover the upper part of his body to protect him from cold. This was subsequently replaced by a Puanhlap, an ordinary cloth made of cotton. Later, Dawlrem kawr was added. In the same way, women's dress also improved by the addition of Hmaram Pawnfen (petticoat) which was coloured and designed.

Games and Sports:

Their traditional sports included different types of wrestlings called inbuan, inchai, and weightlifting called chawilung. These were played in the Zawlbuk as a matter of routine exercise. Visitors to the village were challenged by the local young men and the competition continued till one of them was defeated. These games were held either in the morning or in the evening.

Among the many games played by the Mizo children, in-uleu, inkawi vawr, inbuh vawr, invai lungthlak, in mati, etc. are common games among the Mizo boys and girls. Inkawi hnawk or inhnawk meaning a "bean game" was favourite among boys. Boys also played a kaihbu (a spinning top) and kalchhet (stilt).

Festivals:

The Mizos had three main festivals which they called Kut namely, Pawl Kut, Chapchar Kut and Mim Kut. Kuts were the only occasions when they worshipped God corporately and thus had religious significance behind their performance. In these festivals, stories of their sojourn in the fertile valleys of Tiau and Run rivers in Burma replete with anecdotes were enacted.  

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was observed at the end of the harvest and was more a festival for children although the adults too joined in it. Chapchar Kut was a spring festival celebrated just before the beginning of jhum cultivation. Before its performance, rice-beer (zu) was prepared and the menfolk went out hunting and other eatables were collected for the grand community feasting associated with it. Very often people looked forward to the advent of Chapchar Kut with great eagerness as it was the most popular and enjoyable Kut. Mim Kut was held in honour of the departed souls when the first fruits or crops were ready for the feast. They offered such fruits or crops to the dead ones. Hence, it was sometimes called Mitthi Kut (Festival of the Dead).

Drinking:

Drinking zu (rice-beer) was compulsory at victory celebrations, ordinary social gatherings, the three main ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death, and at the three annual festivals. All ceremonies and festivals involved feasts and sacrifices with dancing and drinking. Some feasts lasted three or four days depending upon the quantity of zu available, so that the whole villages might be drunk for several days at a time. However, drunken brawl were practically unheard of.

56. Ibid.
Dances:

By nature, the Mizos love social gatherings. From the early period, singing, dancing, and drinking zu accompanied all social gatherings. In former days wer performed only on certain festive occasions. The three most popular dances are Cheraw, Khuallam, and Chheih Lam.

Cheraw is the most colourful and distinctive dance. Because of the use of long bamboo staves non-Mizos often call it a bamboo dance. Traditionally, this dance was performed to wish a safe passage and victorious entry into Pialral (Paradise) or Mitthi Khua (village of the dead) for the soul which had just departed from this earthly existence. Khuallam is a group-dance performed in colourful profiles to the tune of gongs and drums. Originaly, it was a dance performed by the honoured invitees while entering into the arena where community feast was held. Chheih Lam is a dance over a round of rice-beer in the cool of the evening. The lyrics in thelets were normally fresh and spontaneous, and on-the-spot compositions recounting their heroic deeds and escapades, and also praising the honoured guest in their midst.

There were often forms of dances like Puma Zai, Saker Lam, Sarlam Kai, Chai, which are now strictly preserved and taught in almost all the secondary schools in Mizoram.

THEIR OLD RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The Concept of God:
The Mizos believed in the existence of one Supreme God whom they called Pathian, a God of all humanity and goodness. Corresponding to the great God they also imagined that every village had a guardian God who was called by the name Pathian, poetically called Khuanu. Sacrifice was made only twice in a year to Pathian—before and at harvest. They also recognised the presence of other supernatural beings such as Yanchung Nula (Maiden of Heaven), Khuavang Lasi, and Ramhuai (Demons or evil spirits) The last one had several forms such as Tau, Chawm, Khawhring, Phung, Hmuithla. Lasi was the guardian spirit of all wild animals. It was believed that hunters who were possessed by Lasi, called Lasi Zawl, were successful hunters. Lasis were numerous in number inhabiting the jungle.

Sacrifice to Evil Spirit:
The Mizos believed that life was subjected to the control of a number of spirits who could only be

appeased by sacrifices. They believed that every big tree, hill, big stone, and such other objects and places were inhabited by various spirits, and they were responsible for sickness, death, drought, storms, bad crops or accidents which befell the people. They were often careful not to incur the displeasure of the spirits which might harm them. Even before taking meal in the jungle, a small portion of food would be given aside for the spirit by saying "Khuatlai" (meaning 'let the spirits be satisfied'). They, therefore, lived in constant fear that these spirits if not properly propitiated might harm them. Consequently, the pre-christian religious activities of the Mizos were all centred on propitiating the spirits, and the sorcerer's magic was in demand to determine what animal should be sacrificed to appease a particular spirit.

Of the many sacrifices, Khal was a sacrifice to the spirits which supposed to have caused one's health and misfortunes. Khal sacrifices were Ar Khal, Vawkte Khal, Kel Khal, Vanchung Khal, Khalchuang and Lasi Khal. During such sacrifices, according to Challiana, no membe

62. V.L.Siama, Mizo History, p.25.
64. J.Shakespeare, op.cit., p.21.
of the family should speak to strangers for three days. 
Daibawl sacrifice was offered outside the village for 
the recovery of a sick person. Besides, there were other 
sacrifices connected with hunting, killing and agricul­
tural prosperity and for various sicknesses. All 
the sacrifices to spirits were performed by Bawlpur or 
an exorcist.

Priests and ceremonies:

The priests were called Puithiam and were 
responsible for the performance of traditional cere­
monies and rituals. Each clan had its own puithiam 
and the method of performance vary among them. The 
Puithiam occupied an important place in the Mizo society 
for no religious ceremony or ritual could be performed 
without him. Saiaithanga says that the Puithiam who per­
formed traditional religious ceremony and he was res­
ponsible for invoking the blessings from God for the 
people was called Sadawt whereas the other puithiam who 
performed the rituals to propitiate the evil spirits 
to cure sicknesses were called Bawlpur.

Among a series of religious rituals the Fane 
Dawi, one of the most important ceremonies was performed

1982, p.38.
Mizoram News Magazine, Winter Issue, No.2. Direc­
torate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR). 
67. Rev.Saiaithanga, Mizo Sakhua, Aizawl: Maranatha 
Press, n... , pp.9-10.
to ensure good crops and to prevent too many mosquitoes. It generally takes place in the month of June. Among other sacrifices Hnuaite, Hnuaisal, Sedawichhun, Sekhuang, and Mitthi rawp lam. The Mizos also performed several ceremonies to achieve certain goal in their individual lives. Khuangchawi was performed after the repetition of Sedawichhun. A man who performed such ceremony was known as Thangchhuah.

There was another type of Thangchhuah called Ram lama Thangcchuah. For this a man had to kill a number of certain prescribed wild animals such as Sayawn (bear), Sakhi (barking deer), Sele (wild gayal), Sazuk (sambar deer), Sanghal (wild bear) Rulngan (a large poisonous snake), Muvanlai (hawk). Thangchhuah was the most coveted goal which every Mizo longed to perform, and thereby their whole endeavours throughout life centred in trying to achieve this goal.

Zaudawh is the highest feast a Mizo could achieve and could performed after the Khuangchawi feasts. There were only few who could perform it, because it required at least 14 gayals and 13 pigs and

68. N.E.Perry, A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies, p.91.
69. Thangchhuah was a title given to a man who distinguished himself by giving a number of public feasts. The possession of the title was regarded as the passport to Pialral (Paradise or abode of the souls of the elite).
70. Challiana, Pi Pu Nun, pp.54-56.
zu (rice beer) of about 1000 ngan (pots). A man who completed the whole series was called Zawhzawze and such men were rare indeed.

**The concept of life after death:**

The Mizos believed in life after death and the existence of Mitthi Khua (dead men's village) and Pialral (paradise) somewhere beyond this world. The people who earned Thangchhuah in this world go to Pialral where life was bliss, and others go to Mitthi Khua where they continue work and toil like they do in this world. This belief in Pialral and Mitthi Khua was instrumental in shaping the norms and values of the Mizos.

At death the soul escaped through the crack on the skull and wandered about in the vicinity of the village for three months. During this period, his usual seat at the family meal was kept vacant and some food was set aside. In case of the death of her husband, if a married woman misbehaves with other man during this period she would be treated as an adulteress. In case of an ordinary man, it was believed that his soul...

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72. Liangkhaia, Mizo Sakhua, p.11.
was taken to Rihdil, a lake in Chin Hills about three kilometres from the present Mizoram-Burma border. After crossing Rihdil it came to a hill called Hringlang tlang, from where it had the last glimpse of its dear and near ones and became full of sentiments. But it forgot all its desires and longings as it plucked Hawilopar (flower of no turning back) and put in on its hair. They also drink water of a mythical spring called Lunglohtui after which it completely forgot the past and was in haste for its destination. On reaching the gate of Mitthi Khua, Pawla, a giant with a huge pellet-bow met it. If the man whose soul it was, had not performed any ceremony and had not killed a man or animal, Pawla shot him severely which had a painful effect for many years. But Pawla dared not shoot a Thangchhuah at all. He also did not shoot at soul of infants who died at birth. He may not shoot the soul of a young man who had enjoyed three virgins, or one who had enjoyed seven different women, even if they were not virgins. He, however, always shot at women. From the house of Pawla, the road diversified - one to Mitthi Khua, the other to Pialral.

SCOPE AND AREA OF STUDY

Before the advent of Christianity, the Mizo people were living under constant fear of displeasing evil spirits which was detrimental for the healthy and free development of personality. But many of their superstitions were based on their ignorance and lack of understanding of the natural processes. Education which was brought by the Christian missionaries acted as a liberating agent from superstitions. It freed men and women from their difficulties and constraints, internal as well as external, which tend to hamper the development of a full and complete humanity.

The people were also too ignorant to take proper care of their body. They knew nothing about sanitation and healthy personal habits, nothing about nutrition, proper diet and cleanliness. Major Cole, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills (1906-11) remarked them as one of the filthiest men on earth. Savidge and Lorrain, when they arrived in 1894, did not see any Mizo remarkable for their cleanliness, either as children or adults. As a rule, they said, that a baby was not washed since its

77. Major Cole, in his meeting with Welsh Mission Executive Committee, Shillong, in 1906, was quoted to have said this, and is reproduced in the Welsh Calvinist Methodist Foreign Mission Report, 1906.
birth until it became three years old, and a middle-aged person after becoming forty often bade good-bye to water for the rest of his natural life. As a result of their ignorance regarding sanitary living, there was a high death-rate especially among the infants.

The absence of political consciousness and the consequent oppression of the people by others in the last period of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, made clear the urgent need for provision of schools in the area. The political system was rigid at the time. No one dared to speak against the chiefs or criticise them for their acts. There was no political agency and political consciousness to voice the people's aspirations and grievances. Any such voice was silenced by the chiefs and the Superintendents. In one instance, when a politically conscious group from Kulikawn, a locality in the southern part of Aizawl, demanded for representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly, they were imprisoned and they were kept in jail for some time. Such instances clearly depict the conditions of life.

in Mizoram even in the early decades of the 20th century.

The people of Mizoram were mainly cultivators and the adult hardly find free time to spend with the children, and the children were left to themselves to do what they please since there was no teacher to guide and direct them, and there was no school building in which they could be housed and looked after. As a result, they either engaged themselves in many anti-social activities or listened to the silly superstitions and quite often harmful tales of ignorant old persons. They thus developed unreasonable fears and wrong attitudes towards many things and even life itself. It was education that could do away with and reduced the misuse of leisure and make a good use of children's free time.

As already mentioned, during the pre-British period, the Mizos were constantly engaged in warfare and in raids on their neighbours. They knew little about other people and the civilized way of life. The British occupation of Mizo hills in 1890 brought to an end all such raids, and inter-clan fights among the Mizos. The introduction of education slowly broke down their isolation from the rest of the world, broadened their outlook and moulded them as responsible citizens out of a savage and barbarous race. Education also provided the individuals with the necessary skills in shaping economic, political and sociological structure of their society.
The year 1894 is a significant landmark in the history of the Mizos, for in that year the Pioneer Missionaries came to Mizo hills, introduced the alphabet and laid down the foundation of education among the Mizos, which ultimately led them to claim the fourth highest literacy percentage among the Indian States. During the next fifty years, till 1947, which marks the end of the British colonial rule in India, far reaching changes took place in the Mizo society transforming from its primitive character to a modern civilised society. Thus education which acted as one of the most important factors in moving individuals from traditionalism towards modernity is the scope of this study.

By the time the Mizos got formal education from the missionaries, in other parts of North East India they had already established their educational institutions and the government had also established their own institutions and made grants to mission schools. For instance, the first English school in Assam was established at Gauhati in July, 1835 with 58 students, with Mr. Singer as Headmaster receiving a monthly salary of Rs.100/-.

The first educational work among the Khasis was first

79. General Committee of Public Instruction, Bengal. Gauhati School; Jenkins to Southern land, 22 July. 1835, No.118.
started by the Serampore Baptist Missionaries in 1833. but was closed down in 1838. In 1841, Rev. Lish of Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission started three schools for the pupils of Khasi-Jaintia Hills at Cherrapunji, Mawsmai and Mawmhut. The Mission work in Garo Hills commenced with the arrival of Mr. Stoddard at Tura in 1868. The Second Assam Triennial Conference, 1898 reported that there were 1180 church members, 1072 students at 54 schools in Garo Hills. The first school in Naga Hills was opened at Barpather in 1871 with 39 students. In 1876, another school was started at Kohima and attended by 43 pupils. By 1891-92 there were 40 aided schools with 686 scholars in Garo Hills, 9 schools with 167 scholars in Naga Hills, and 141 schools with 2881 scholars in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. During the same period, in Mizoram there was neither alphabet nor formal education in the modern sense.

The Christian missions played a very important role in the introduction and expansion of education in the North East India. In fact there is no greater contribution of Christianity to the people of this region.

than that in the field of education which helped them to adjust to find themselves following the imposition of British administration. In the hill areas, particularly in the southern hills, the Christian educational activities had a greater impact than in the plains due to the fact that the government gave the Christian missions a virtual monopoly on education until Independence. Education, therefore, is considered the most powerful instrument of social change. Such change is more rapid in the hill areas than in the plains.

But the percentage of Christianity as well as literacy is much higher among the Mizos than among other peoples in the hill areas of the North-East. In these areas, too, the missions who ran education had the same authority and also received the same amount of encouragement from the government. How did then the literacy percentage among the Mizos become the highest in the North-East within a short span of time is the question to be investigated in this work.

This study begins with a picture of the Mizo society as it was on the eve of the arrival of the Christian missionaries towards the end of the 19th century.

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It is followed by the coming of Christianity and introduction of formal education among the Mizos.

Christianity and education went hand in hand and responsible for the upliftment of the Mizo society. This study analyses the progress of education in Mizoram at different stages, making a detail study of the types of schools, number of schools, enrolment, attendance, curriculum, examination, the teachers and their salaries, female education, grants received from the government, and so on. It further attempts to investigate the various problems which arose from time to time in the field of education.

Certain works had already been made in the case of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Khasi and Jaintia Hills on various periods and aspects of education. Of these, mention may be made of Archanna Chakravarty's *History of Education in Assam, 1826-1919*, (a D.Phil. Thesis of Gauhati University, 1971), which deals, as the title indicates, with the history of education in Assam. *Progress of Education in Assam 1882-1937* (a D.Phil. Thesis of Gauhati University, 1971) by Renu Devi stresses on the activities of the Government agencies for the progress of education in Assam. Rama Shankar Nagar's *Development of Education in Manipur* (a Ph.D. Thesis of Gauhati University, 1977) is mainly concerned with Manipur whereas
Devika Saikia's *Sociology of Elementary Education in Khasi and Jaintia Hills* (a Ph.D. Thesis of Gauhati University, 1978) deals with the elementary education of Khasi and Jaintia people. But nothing has yet been done on the progress of education in Mizoram with special reference to the Christian missions who had done so much among the Mizos.

The present study is entitled as *Education in Mizoram, 1894-1947: A Historical Study with Special Reference to the Role of Christian Missions*. While it deals with the progress of education in Mizoram since the introduction of formal education till Independence, a special emphasis is given to the role of Christian missions, and also made a comparative study with the other hill areas and Assam.

In the additional chapter entitled "Epilogue", a rapid survey of the progress in education after 1947 is made though this is not within the scope of this study. This is done for two reasons. First, it is to provide a further account of progress and development that occurred in Mizoram after 1947 when the missionaries no longer played an active role in it. Secondly, the period after 1947 is very important to the Mizos due to the fact that most of the mission schools had been replaced...
by the government schools, and new set ups were introduced such as the creation of the Directorate of Education with its various wings - Science Promotion Wing, Scouts and Guides Wing, Physical Education Wing, State Council for Educational Research and Training, etc., and also the opening of a University campus with postgraduate departments in four disciplines.

Material for this study is drawn from historical documents and contemporary sources left by the missionaries and the British administrators in their reports, accounts, correspondences, etc. Some materials have also been drawn from contemporary documents, personal interviews with knowledgeable persons who could give first hand information of the educational system in Mizoram before 1947. There are some books written by the Mizos themselves giving accounts of their own. Though these books are inadequate to throw enough light on the history of education during the period covered by this study, they are utilised as secondary sources.