CHAPTER - II
A PROFILE OF MIZORAM

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sandwiched between Burma in the East and South and Bangladesh in the West, Mizoram (earlier known as the Lushai Hills) occupies an area of strategic importance in the North Eastern corner of India. It has a total of 710 km. international boundary with Burma and Bangladesh. With an area of 21087 sq. km. the State lies between 21.95 N and 24.39 N Latitude and 92.16 E and 93.40 E Longitude. The Tropic of Cancer runs through the heart of Mizoram. Two sister States of Manipur and Assam border it on the North while Tripura lies in the West. According to the 1991 census, Mizoram had a population of 6,86,217 (3,56,672 Males; 3,29,545 Females) and the density of
population is 33 sq. km. with a decadal growth rate of 38.98 percent. The following Table shows the decadal variation in population since 1901.

**TABLE - 1**

**DECADAL VARIATION IN POPULATION SINCE 1901.**

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<td>MIZORAM</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>7.90</td>
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<td>22.81</td>
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<td>LUNGLEI</td>
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The present Mizoram was known as ‘LUSHAI HILLS’ when it was brought under British control in 1890. The name of the District remains unchanged till 1954 in which year it was changed into Mizo District. In 1972, the District was elevated to the
higher status of a Union Territory by the North-Eastern Areas (Recognition Act) 1971, under the name 'MIZORAM'.\(^3\) As a result of the historic Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front and consequently by the 53rd constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1986, the Union Territory of Mizoram was elevated to statehood status, becoming the 23rd state of the Indian Union. Mizoram is divided into 3 Districts, namely - Aizawl District with headquarters at Aizawl, Lunglei District with Headquarters at Lunglei and Chhmituipui District with Headquarters at Saiha.

**EDUCATION:**

The British Missionaries established Schools soon after their arrival in the Lushai Hills in 1894.\(^4\) They composed the Mizo alphabet in 1894 and the first Primary School was started in Aizawl in 1899, the first High School in 1954 and the first College in 1958. As per 1991 census figures, the rate of literacy in Mizoram is 81.23 percent i.e. males-84.06 percent and female - 78.09 percent. As in 1988 -1989 the total number of Schools and Colleges including those of Government, Government deficit and private were : Primary Schools -1127, Middle Schools - 709, High Schools - 194 and Colleges - 13.\(^5\) There is also the Mizoram Campus branch of the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) having the centres of study in five Discipline of the Social Sciences.

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\(^3\) The Official Hand Book Vol. II Government of Mizoram, 1973 issued by the Chief Secretary to the Government of Mizoram, Aizawl : p. 6 - 7.


\(^5\) Statistical Hand Book : Mizoram, op. cit.
subject. Mizoram lags behind in Technical Education for lack of facilities within the state. There are very few Technical and Vocational Training Institutes viz. Polytechnic School, Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Weaving Training, Nursing and Midwifery Training School, District Institute of Educational Training (DIET), College of Teachers Education Institute. Adult Education Centres and Mizoram Hindi Training Institute.6

ETHNICITY OF MIZOS:

The literal meaning of the term ‘Mizo’ means ‘Man of the Hills’ or ‘highlander’ MI = man, ZO = Hill or highland. Mizos suffer from paucity of historical literature about themselves. The only sources of information available are mainly based on oral traditions, mythology and legends passed on from one generation to another. Research into their distant past is rendered difficult further by the different names given to them by the more civilised people in their neighbourhood. However, that the Mizos belong to the Tibeto-Burman of the Mongoloid stock and that they came from the East to their present habitat had never been disputed. All the publications on the ancient history of the Mizos were written after the establishment of the British Rule in 1890 A.D. of the various views and opinion that scores of writers have expressed about the origin and abode of the Mizos, Lalthangliana in his book “History of Mizo in Burma” opined that the Mizos had once lived probably at the Tao Valley of Kawn province on the North West of China and North West of Tibet. In the seventh century A.D. they

6 Ibid.
moved into Burma; and in the fourteenth century they settled in the Chin Hills of Burma; and in 1700 they moved into their present habitat.7

According to V. Lunghnema, the original home of the Mizos was China. From China they came to Burma and settled there for quite a long time. From Burma they moved west-wards in to the present Mizoram and settled in the adjoining lands or areas now known as Bangladesh., Arakan Hill tracts of Assam. The lands which falls between Bay of Bengal and the Chin Hills of Burma is occupied by Mizo Tribes. There are about seventy dialects among the Mizo tribes of which ‘DUHLIAN’ dialect is the most popular which had been accepted and known as the Mizo language.8 James Herbert Lorrain (known as Pu Buanga among the Mizos) is also of the opinion that the ancestral home of the Mizos might have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of South East Tibet and Western China, from where they had pressed Southward and Westward to the present habitat by slow degrees through the centuries.9

Another theory points that when the Chin Dynasty after the death of Shin Huang Ti, the Hen Dynasty ruled over China for the next 400 years. The Hen armies fought with wondering tribes that lived just beyond Chinas’ Northern and Western borders and beat them and seized their land.10 In all probability, the ancestors of the Mizos might have been on of the referred to as the wandering tribes who were defeated at the hand of the Hans and also had moved towards the Shan Valley of Burma where they lived for

8 Lunghnema, V . (Unpublished) Mizo Hnam Chanchin (in Mizo).
a considerable period of time and from which they might have entered into the present Mizoram through the Chin Hills (Burma).

The different names given to the Mizos and the variations in their meaning give an interesting subject of study. Lalthangliana suggests that the "Hill people living in the North West of Burma and the North East of India are known as ‘KUKI’ to the Bengalis" and the earliest use of the name is found in 1792"¹¹ Lewin and Rowlins also have the same opinion.¹² The Hill people could have referred to some of the Mizo groups who lived near the Bengal and Manipur State are called ‘KUKI’. According to Lehman, Kuki could have been a term of Manipuri origin. CHIN is another term used by the Burmese in reference to the Hill people living in their neighbourhood. “Lushai” is another name given to the Hill people of roughly the present Mizoram. It is an anglicised word, a corruption of the word “LUSEI” or “LUSHEI”. The Lusheis are the dominant clan of the whole group now known as “Mizo”. The term Lushai is used in the wider sense and covers many of the different sub-tribes while Lusei was used only for the sub-tribe of that name. The Lusei sometimes spoke of themselves as ‘DUHLIAN’ and the general population of hills was spoken of as the Mizo.¹³ Yet another view goes like this when the Mizos lived in the Than Range (Burma) the people settled there on the plain (hot valley) named their brethren living in the Hills as “Zomi”

¹¹ B. Lalthangliana op cit., p 69.
¹² T. H. Lewin Hill Tracts of Chittagong and The Dwellers Therein, Calcutta, Bengali Press. 1869, p. 39 and Rawlins Researches Cucis and Mountainers of Tipra, Asiatic Researchers, II 1972, p. XII.
or "Mizo" meaning "People of the cold region". The name stuck and the group got identified as Mizo.14

"Mizo is generic term which applies to several tribes and sub-tribes living in and around Mizoram. According to Liangkhaia, there are about three-hundred such tribes, sub-tribes and clans.15 They inherit more or less common customs, traditions, morals, religions, beliefs and practices. The inhabitants of the present Mizoram may be broadly divided into six principal tribes: LUSEI, HMAR, RALTE, PAITE, PAWIH and LAKHER. Besides these six tribes, the Chakmas and the Riangs are the two non-Mizo groups living in Mizoram who are known among the Mizos as Takam and Tuikuk (Bru) respectively. The Lushei tribe was considered to be the dominant group in the political sphere and wielded prestige on the social realm. For this dominant position, the Lusei group had influenced the non-Lusei Language. Thus the (Duhlian dialect) became popular, as it was spoken by the dominant group. As a consequence, it has become the common language of the Mizos.

In Mizoram the feeling of clan distinction is more or less non-existant, except for the Pawis, Lakkers, Chakmas and Riangs, each of whom excepting for the last have their own autonomous districts within Mizoram. The process of socialisation and modernisation has wiped out clan feeling among the Mizos who were originally known as the Lushais. The Mizos outside Mizoram have a problem in this regard. In their case, identification with the common name and assimilation of their clan dialects into the

Mizo language is a rather slow process. Though the clan dialects have many in common the variations create enough hindrances to their adoption of the Mizo- Lushai Duhlian language. This constitutes the greatest hindrance to their identifying with the other Mizos.\(^{16}\)

The advent of Christianity in the Lushai Hills in the late 19th century also became one of the factors for the gradual disappearance of the little diversities among the Mizos in customs and dialects. Coupled to this, the growing educational and political consciousness have pulled down the dominance of the Lushei and brought equality and oneness of all these sub-tribes under one genius - “The Mizos”. Accordingly, the demand for changing of the name from “LUSHAI” to “MIZO” was accepted by the Parliament Act No. 18 of 1954 with effect from September 1st 1954.\(^{17}\)

RELIGION:

The Mizos had their own religion which was a mixture of animistic beliefs and a consciousness of a supreme God, whom they called “Pathian”. Protestant Christianity was introduced into the Lushai Hills by the Welsh Presbyterian Engling London Baptist Missionaries since 1894.\(^{18}\) The Mizos were so receptive to the gospel message of Christ the within a period of five decades, the whole tribe was converted into Christianity,\(^{19}\) and now Christians in Mizoram are 83.81 percent. Of the total

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\(^{17}\) The Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954 Parliament Act No. 18 of 1954.


\(^{19}\) Ibid p. 60-1
population of Mizoram, Buddhist (mainly Chakmas) are 8.19 percent, Hindus 7.14 percent, Muslim 0.45 percent and Sikhs 0.09 percent. The increase tendency of the other non-Christians in the State is due to the influx of Chakmas and Riangs from across the Bangladesh and Tripura borders on the one hand, and importation of Non-Mizo citizens of India from other States for the purposes of Government Services, trade and business, labour (skilled and unskilled) as temporary residents of Mizoram. Today, the Mizos consider themselves to be cent-per-cent Christians. The impact of the Christian on Mizo society is much greater than in any other. “No where else in India religion has so much influence on social political and other tempored aspects of life.”

It brought changes to their primitive customs, gave them formal Western education and indirectly made them socio-politically conscious. How Christianity has brought about far-reaching changes in the Mizo Society cannot be expressed in statistical form.

Suffice it to say that it is Christianity and its sister agent of education that have made the Mizo people what they are socially, economically and politically.

2. THE EARLY POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATION

PRE-BRITISH PERIOD (AN INDEPENDENT CHIEFTAINSHIP)

How the Mizo had chiefs is very difficult to know. While in Burma, they were in a State which was more or less like what Hobbes calls “State of Nature”. In such a State

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might was right and each clan was led by a strong man in their constant feuds against one another. One story about the beginning of Chieftainship among the Lusei tribes goes like this. There were “Hnamte Clan” who had no leader of their own. They felt very unsafe without a leader and invited “Zahmuaka” who had six sons to become their chief. His sons continued to be Chiefs and it is from this family that the Sailo Chiefs sprang up.22

The traditional political institutions centred round the Chieftainship to which all the legal authority was attached. The Chief was the traditional village head in all spheres except religions. He had the authority to enact and execute laws in his discretion. The Chief combined in himself all the three modern functions i.e. Legislative, Executive and Judiciary. However, the Chief was not wholly free from constraint. He was guided by traditional normative rules which were conventionised through customary uses. He also had to respect the wishes of the village youths who were the backbone of his power and glory. Moreover, the people could at any time shift their allegiance to some other Chiefs by migrating. This acts as a check on the arbitrary rule of the chief over his people.

In the exercise of his numerous functions and responsibilities as a ruler, the Chief was assisted by a council of elders who were known as “UPA” and who were not elected by the people but nominated by the Chief on his personal choice amongst the well-to-do, well informed, broad-minded and influential persons in the village. The foremost Upa was called “UPA MIN” (chief elder). The Chief had close associates,

22 Lalchungnanga. op. cit. pp 56-57.
besides the elders, who were “Ramhual” and “Zalen” both of whom were big and economically better off house-holds and were given the privilege of electing the Jhum site before other villagers. They in return gave double the amount of paddy given to the chief by other villagers. Other functionaries of the Chief’s local government whose services were indispensable were the “TLANGAU” (village crier), “THIRDENG” (Blacksmith), “PUITHIAM” (Priest), and “SADAWI” (Special or ceremonial priest) all of whom enjoyed certain privileges apart from the other villagers for their services. Another functionaries of the village was the “ZAWLBUK” a bachelors’ dormitory or barrack. The Zawlbuk discipline was strong and effective. In the absence of formal education, the Zawlbuk served as a centre for social and informal or non-formal education of the young people. The will or order of the Chief were implemented through the Zawlbuk.

The endowment of the Chiefs with wide powers and authority in the pre-British period did not result in autocratic rule as the traditional norms governing the social organization did not permit dictatorial power to exist. The social forces based on democratic principles had to be observed by the chief. Outside his court, the Chief was, in many instances much more like an ordinary man, having no special providence. There were no doubt instances wherein individual chiefs with strong personalities were able to portrait themselves as a strong-stern ruler. On the whole the village was much more like a little republic with the Chief as the statutory head. Normally, the Chief was
looked upon as father of all the villagers and he usually behaved so. Rebellion against
the Chief was almost totally absent.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{BRITISH PERIOD}

During the latter part of the 19th century a number of raids were conducted by
the Mizo Chiefs on the neighbouring areas like Chittagong Hill Tracts, Tripura and the
Sylhet plains which were the control of the British. This led to a series of expeditions
into Lushai Hills in 1871, 1889 and 1890 by the British. Most of the areas of Mizoram
came under the control of the British by end of 1891.\textsuperscript{24} The North Lushai Hills was
placed under the control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the South Lushai
Hills under the control of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. But on 1st April, 1898, the North
Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills were made into District known as the “Lushai
Hills District” and was placed under the control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam\textsuperscript{25}
with the charge of an Officer to be styled “Superintendent of the Lushai Hills”. The
Southern-most part of the present state of Mizoram, the Pawi-Lakher region came under
actual British control about 30 years after the occupation of the rest of Lushai Hills in
1890. Unlike the plains, in the Lushai Hills, the British rarely interfered with the
powers and functions of the Chiefs and the village organisations.\textsuperscript{26} The superintendent

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{23} H Thansanga, Government and Politics in Mizoram (Unpublished) Doctoral Thesis. p. 89
\textsuperscript{25} Robert Reid, History of Fronteir Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941. Delhi Eastern Publishing House
(Reprinted) p. 43.
\textsuperscript{26} Ramchhuani Sena Samuelson, Love Mizoram Imphal Goodwill Press, 1983. pp 17-8
\end{footnotes}
as a representative of the Viceroy of India administered the affairs of the Hills with the village chiefs. People from the plains were not generally permitted in the Hills. Entry of outside people into the Lushai Hills was controlled by the “Inner Line Regulations of 1892”. The Superintendent was the real authority, having maximum powers even in the matters of taxation and administration of justice. In brief, one can say that the Superintendent combined in his person the offices of Governor, Chief Minister and Judge of the Judicial Courts while the chiefs exercised their powers in the village administration. This led to the virtual dictatorial rule by the Superintendents and the Chiefs. The opinion of the Superintendent became law. The onslaught of the combined power forces of the Superintendent and the chiefs were a real menace to the common people.

Under the Government of India Act, 1919, the Lushai Hills District was classified as a backward area and only the Governor of Assam could extend to the Lushai Hills laws passed by the provincial Legislature of Assam with or without modifications as he thought fit. The Simon Commission suggested that some of the Hill areas of Assam (including the Lushai Hills) should be divided into “Excluded Areas” and “Partially excluded areas”. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Lushai Hills District was classified as an excluded area, over which the provincial ministry had no jurisdiction. The expenditure incurred in these Hill areas was also not voted by the Provincial Legislature because there was no representative from the Lushai Hills. The British as per the 1935 constituency, did not want to give local self government to the

27 Robert Reid. op. cit., p. 47.
Mizos and declared Lushai Hills as Excluded Areas.\textsuperscript{28} The consolidation of British Administration in Lushai Hills was necessitated not by the British commercial interest in the Hills but by the need to check the Lushais from within their territory so that they could not organise themselves and attempt to disturb the enemy who had not only established commercial strongholds on their doors but also intruded upon their lands. A. Ray is of the opinion that while the British occupied the plains with a motive of exploitation and economic benefit to themselves, the occupation of the Hills that followed was a step against the British economic interest, but which had to take place owing to the mentioned factors.\textsuperscript{29} The fact that the Lushais were not permitted to have any political activity till the 1940's and that they were divided and given to the charge and control of different regional authorities just for the sake of "Administrative Convenience" and further that they were left in that State during the British transfer of power to the ex-colonies, would go to suggest that basically the British had none or little of concern about the political future of the Mizos.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, the Governor of Assam carried on the Administration of the Lushai Hills District from 1937 to 1947 acting independently of the Government of Assam, with a separate secretariat and assisted by the Secretary of the Governor. Section 92 of the Government of India Act, 1935 endowed the Governor with additional powers to make regulations for the peace and good Government of the Lusahi Hills. When India attained Independence on 15th

\textsuperscript{28} R. N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal. op cit., p.5.
\textsuperscript{29} A. Ray op cit., pp. 15-6.
\textsuperscript{30} Lalchungnunga, op. cit, pp. 67-8.
August, 1947, the Administration of the Lushai Hills was entrusted to the Government of Assam.31

REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS:

DISTRICT CONFERENCE:

Prior to 1946, any political activity was never permitted in the Lushai Hills. When the Independence of India was imminent, A. R. H. Macdonald, Superintendent felt the need for forming a body to represent and express the political ideas and demands of the Mizos. His ideas was to institute a political forum widely and freely open to both the Mizo Chiefs and Commoners.32 He thus convened a large gathering of Chiefs and Commoners at Aizawl on 14th January 1946 in which the Superintendent’s proposal to form a body to be designated as “District Conference was agreed by everyone in the meeting. The Chiefs and the Commoners representation in the District Conference was 13 each all whom were elected by the separate electoral college for both. While the Chiefs elected amongst themselves their representatives, the commoners by indirect system of Election in which every ten households or families in a Village elected one man from among themselves.33 Before the formation of this District Conference there was no organised political body in the Lushai Hills. The Chiefs Conference which the Superintendent occasionally called gave no opportunity to

32 Chaltuakhuma, History of Mizoram (in Mizo) p. 83
33 Ch Saprawnda, Ka Zin Kawng (in Mizo) p. 127.
the commoners to participate in the administrative and political affairs of the Lushai Hills. Thus the first political institution ever found and established in the Lushai Hills, recognised and graced by the Government authority, and comprising both the traditional autocratic Chiefs and the Commoners with equal privileges and Status was formed and truely was a landmark in the political history of the Lushai Hills.

**DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL:**

The Cabinet Mission in 1946 suggested that there should be an Advisory Committee on the Rights of Citizens minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas. Accordingly, The Constituent Assembly of India set up an Advisory Committee. This Committee appointed a sub-committees known as the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded areas Committee under the Chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi. The Committee carefully studied the then existing administrative set up in these Hill areas including the Lushai Hills with a view to building up an autonomous body in the administration of the Hills, so that the tribal people might continue to follow their traditional ways of life. The Bordoloi Committee recommended a set up for the administration of the Hill areas based on the concept of regional autonomy in matters affecting essentially their customs, laws of inheritance, administration of justice, land, forests etc.

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34 For details see Report of the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee (Bordoloi Sub-Committee) 1947. Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1950.

35 Avinash Ray, op cit p., 137.
Saprawnga, Mizo Union Leaders, also joined the sub-committee. The sub-committee met representatives of different political parties and other organisations on 18 and 19 April, 1947. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India is based mainly on the recommendation of the Bordoloi committee. Though the Constitution came into force after the British had left, the immediate Constitution of the District Councils on the Hill Districts was not possible. As Government desired the Association of the tribal people with the administration of their areas, it was decided to constitute the Tribal Advisory Committees in all the Hill Districts. Accordingly on 15th April 1948, the District Advisory Council was formed in the Lushai Hills with no statutory powers, and was treated as a Provisional District Council. The commoners Representation in the Council was more than that of the Chiefs.

**DISTRICT COUNCIL, REGIONAL COUNCIL AND VILLAGE COUNCIL:**

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India provided for the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils within the Autonomous Hill Districts in Assam. The Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were set up under Articles 244 (2) and 275 (11) of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The total strength of the Mizo District council was 24 of whom 18 are elected directly on the basis of adult franchise and 6 nominated members. Likewise for the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council the total strength was 12 of whom 9 were directly elected and 3

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36 Chaltuakhuma, op.cit., p. 137.
37 Ch. Saprawnga op. cit., pp. 137-46 (see for more details).
nominated members. The Pawi-Lakher region was represented by 2 elected members in the Mizo District Council. The Chieftainship in the Lushai Hills was abolished with effect from 1st April 1955 by the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs Rights) Act, 1954 and in its place, the Village Council was established which is elected on the basis of adult franchise. Each village of not less than 30 households has an elected village council and a court. The name of the District was changed from Lushai Hills to Mizo Hills on 29th April, 1954. Under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council had been given wide extensive powers-legislative, executive, financial and judicial as well as delegated and transferred functions. However, the legislative and laws framed by the District Council required the Governor's assent who may approve or disapprove any bill in which case the Governor's decision is binding. The powers that the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council exercised were only those functions and powers, which had been conferred upon them by the Mizo District Council. In brief both these Councils derived their powers and functions from Acts, rules and regulations passed by them which had been assented to by the Governor of Assam. It thus appears from the above functions that there were some subjects where the Mizo District Council had powers to make laws for the whole District. There were again some subjects where the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Councils separately exercised Law making powers independently of each other.

The Mizo District was represented by three members (elected) in the Assam Legislative Assembly from 1952-1971. It did not have any representation in the Lok
Sabha till 1971. A. K. Nag commented that the Assam Government could not pay special attention to the needs of the Mizos.38

THE MIZORAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY UNDER CENTRALLY ADMINISTERED UNION TERRITORY OF MIZORAM.

With the re-organisation of the North-Eastern Area including Assam under the North-Eastern Area Re-organisation Act, 1971, the erstwhile Mizo District became a Union Territory by an Amendment to the Constitution (the Constitution Twenty-Seventh Amendment) Act, 1971.39 The Autonomous Mizo District Council was dissolved on 29th April, 1972 and the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Mizoram was duly constituted under Section 2 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 with effect from 29.4.1972.40

With the formation of Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the Pawi-Lakher District Regional Council was re-organised into three District Councils namely, the Pawi District Council, the Lakher District Council and the Chakma District Council.41 As per the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, part III section 12,14, the

39 V.V.Rao, op. cit., p. 322.
Union Territory of Mizoram was allotted one seat each respectively in the Council of States and in the House of the people.  

The Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram was the highest in the Union Territory and he was more powerful than the Governor of a State. He was appointed by the President of India. The Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister was accountable to the Legislative assembly elected by the people of Mizoram. The Assembly had the power to make Laws on the State list and concurrent list. But the bills passed by the Legislative Assembly had to be sent to the Lieutenant Governor who could reserve it for the consideration of the President of India. The Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram had a special responsibility for the security of the border areas and for that purpose he could issue such directions and take such measures as he might think necessary even without consulting the Council of Ministers. The Lieutenant Governor also had a special responsibility in the matter of Law and Order in the Union Territory and can act in his discretion without having any consultation with the Council of Ministers. In other matters of difference of opinion between the lieutenant Governor and his Ministers on any matter, the Lieutenant Governor had to refer it to the President of India for final decisions and had to act according to the decisions of the President. However, if a matter was, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor, urgent he could take immediate action as he deems necessary. The nature of the Union Territory administration as

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provided for by the Constitution behaves the administrator to function in line with the unitary type of administration rather than federal type.  

THE MIZORAM STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

With the signing of a Memorandum of settlement between the Government of India and the MNF, the Constitution of India by the 53rd Amendment Act, 1986 conferred Statehood to the Union Territory of Mizoram, thus making Mizoram the 23rd State of the Indian Union. The Amendment of the Constitution (the State of Mizoram Bill, 1986) provided that no Act of parliament shall apply to the state of Mizoram in respect of religions, social practices of the Mizo Customary Law and procedures and Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice involving decisions according to Mizo Customary Law. The amendment also debars regulations of ownership and transfer of land without the concurrence of the State Legislative Assembly.  

Part III Section 5, 8 and 10 of the State Mizoram Bill, 1986 provided for the State of Mizoram, representation in both the Council of State and to the House of the people with one seat each respectively, and the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the state of Mizoram to be filled by persons chosen by direct election from Assembly constituencies was forty.

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45 The Constitution of India (Fifty Third Amendment) Act, 1986


To enable a better understanding of the nature and structure of the electoral machineries devised for the conduct of elections to the different representative bodies before 1972, a brief analysis may be attempted in relation to their elections administration only.

DISTRICT COUNCIL (1952 - 1972)

The task of delimiting the constituencies and the actual conduct of elections to the Lushai Hills District was entrusted to the Deputy Commissioner of the Lushai Hills. Accordingly, the constituencies for the first 18 members Lushai Hills District Council was demarcated in the line of the existing administrative divisions wherein the entire District was divided into 18 circles, each under the supervision of the circle Interpreter. There were no drastic changes made in the boundaries of the constituencies during the Lushai or later changed to Mizo District Council period of existence. However, certain political parties and prominent politicians influence and manipulation in the divisions of constituencies boundaries could not be ruled out.

In the preparation of the Electoral Rolls for the District Council Elections, there were no manipulation, no deliberate omissions or commissions. On the whole, the elections to the District Councils were free and fair. There was no systematic impersonation and no illegal practices which materially affected the result of the
election. There were no doubt several loopholes and shortcomings but they were not done intentionally and they did not affect the result of the election.

Altogether, four general elections to the District Council were held between 1952 and 1972. With an exception, the election of the Fourth District Council was held only on 23rd April, 1970 and not in 1967 its due period because of insurgency movement, otherwise all the other three general elections were held at regular intervals after the expiry term of five years each. The administrative machinery devised for the conduct of elections was effective. The percentage of poll was more than fifty percent in each of the four general elections.


The District and Regional Councils are authorised to constitute Village Council and Village courts. The Village Council plays a key role in the Mizo politics. Whoever controls the village councils controls the Government of the state. The village Council is the lowest unit of the Government of Mizoram and its term extends to 3 Years. It was established in 1953 after the abolition of the Chieftainship. The village administration was transferred to the Village Council which is elected on the basis of adult franchise. The elections of the Village Councils was conducted by the Mizo District Council in accordance with the provisions of the Lushai Hills District (election of village councils) Rules, 1954 made by the District Council itself. The electoral roll of a constituency of

47 V. V. Rao, H Thansanga, Niru Hazarika. op cit., p. 182
the District Council as amended by the Executive Committee of the District was used in
the elections to the Village Councils. 48

Altogether, five General Elections to the Village Council were held in between
1954 and 1971. The fourth Village Councils term was extended in 1966 due to
insurgency. The fifth and the last General Election to the Village Council under the
auspices of the District Council was held in 1971. In the present set up, elections to the
village councils are conducted by the Directorate of Local Administration Department.

The involvement of party politics and self interests numerous as it were in the
day to day functioning of the Village Councils, almost all the elections to the Village
Councils were full of complaints and allegations. The main points of such complaints
were - unfair or biased activities of the polling staff, wrong and discriminate entries in
the electoral roll and other irregularities of general nature. Each General Election saw
the formation of either a reviewing committee or an election tribunal. As a result re-
elections were held in one or more villages on several occasions.


The Mizo Lushai Hills District was excluded from the Government of India
Reforms Act, 1919 and the Act of 1935. As a result, the Mizo people remained under
the personal rule of the British Superintendents and hereditary Mizo Chiefs. Since, the
district was under the excluded area, it had no representation in the Assam Legislature

48 H. Thansanga. op. cit p 333.
or in the Central Legislative Council before independence. After India's independence, the District was represented by three members in the Assam Legislative Assembly. There were three single member constituencies namely, Aizawl West, Aizawl East and Lunglei. The delimitation of the three Assembly Constituencies and the Conduct of Elections were carried out under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of the District.

A total of four General Elections and four bye-elections were held between the period 1952 and 1967. Excepting for the Fourth General Election held in 1967 which was conducted under a rather disturbed and tense atmosphere (uncontested), the percentage of poll in the other three General Election of 1952, 1957 and 1962 was much higher than the turn out of voters in the District Councils Elections. The very fact that on the three Assembly Constituencies of Aizawl East, Aizawl West and Lunglei constituted the entire District Areas, the amount of administrative problems and difficulties faced by the election machineries were enormous. The road Communication which was then poorly developed necessitated the setting up of polling stations only in centrally located centres. As a result, the distances required to be covered by voters to cast their votes at the nearest polling stations runs from 5 to 10 miles in over 100 villages or more. The convenience of the voters could not be considered due to the lack of infrastructure and backwardness of the District.

However, in the conduct and management of elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly in the Mizo District, despite the odds and barriers facing them, the election authorities have successfully carried out their responsibilities. To conduct elections
during the period of political strife and tense situations coupled with the region economic backwardness would have certainly demanded greater sacrifice and dedications upon the election administrations. The absence of any kind of electoral disputes and petitions proved the efficiencies of the election authorities.

As regards the preparation of the electoral roll, the electoral roll of the Mizo District Council has been adopted for the election of the three members of the Assam Legislative Assembly. The electoral roll is prepared in the Chief Vernacular of the region.

4. EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES:

Up to the Second World War there was no political activity of any kind permitted in the territory by the British. As a result, the Mizos had no opportunity to have political experiences inspite of the immense political consciousness that was there in the minds of the people which often manifested in the form of public protest against the autocratic Chief and the Superintendent. But the prevailing of the Mizos at the hands of the British Superintendent and the Chiefs and further widened by the Mizos returnees from the Two World Wars, the emergence of educated elites (the offspring of Christianisation of the Mizos by the British) accelerated the process of modernisation and consequently of new values. The young Lushai Association (YLA), which was formed by the Missionaries and some local youths in 1935 and later changed into Young Mizo Association (YMA) in 1947, being a non-political in nature was not
exactly appropriate for the implementation of the existing political zeal of the people. The prevailing idea of involving into deep politics led to the formation of the Mizo Union, first political party, ever found among the Mizos, on the 9th April, 1946.49

To date, there have been thirty five (35) political parties including those that have ever come and gone. Of the thirty five (35) parties, five are National and the rest Regional.50 Among the National Parties, only the Congress has been able to enjoy sustained support because of its liberalism and adaptability to peculiar local conditions. The Janata formed its branch in Mizoram. However, just as its appearance was sudden, so also was its disappearance on account of its decline at the Centre and its rigid character and centralist poise. The Janata Dal Branch of Mizoram appeared to be of no difference to the Janata Party as the party failed to strike roots in the minds of the Mizos. From the observation of the political changes in the State, the trend in the existence of National parties in Mizoram and its durability very much depend upon its performance at the National level. The Leftist Parties have been tried on Mizo soil but found no place to thrive owing mainly due to the opposition of the Church to such parties, as the Mizo people particularly the older generation considered the Leftist Parties as anti-Christian (Communism). This popular antipathy towards the Leftist Parties among the Mizo is due to the curtailment of religious freedom and persecution of Christians in some socialist countries.51

49 R Vnlawma Ka Ram Ikh Kei pp 134 - 136
50 See Appendix - for a complete list of parties and their catagorisation.
Regional Parties have come and gone. Very few of them have been able to dominate Mizo politics for any length of time. Of these, the Mizo Union, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation, the Mizo National Front and Peoples Conference may be counted as major Regional Parties in their respective periods. Before the coming of the National Party namely the Congress (1962) into the political scene, the electoral game was fought amongst the Regional parties themselves. None of the parties could be considered a minor party. With the emergence of the National Party, the fight was exclusively between the Congress vis-a-vis any single regional party while the other parties are essentially communal, confined as they are to specific tribal communities. They, therefore, constitute a form of such sub-regionalism. The Mara Freedom Parties of the Lakhers or Maras, the Chin National Front of the Pawis or Lais, the United Pang Peoples Party of the Pangs, the Hmar People Convention (only Hmar), the Paite National Council (only Paite) and the Chakma Jatya Parasad are such parties.