CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Scope and Nature of the Study

Till now not many research works have been done of the Mizos. During the pre-Independence period, a number of administrative reports and a very limited number of monographs had been published by the British administrators. It was only in post-Independence period that serious works on the Mizos have been attempted. Of these, mention may be made of C. Vanlalauva's *Religious Beliefs and Customs among the Mizos Before the Advent of Christianity* which deals, as the title indicates, with the pre-Christian Mizo religious beliefs and customs. *The Impact of Christianity on the Life of Mizos* by Chitta Ranjan Maw stresses on the activities of the Christian missionaries. B. B. Goswami's *The Mizo Unrest* is mainly concerned with the politicisation of the Mizo culture with reference to the political movements in Mizoram. *The Lushai Hills 1890-1947* by Lalrimawia is a study of the administrative developments that had taken place during the period. Besides, there are some other books written by the Mizo
themselves giving mainly, accounts of their own. But they are still inadequate especially on the study concerning the "changes" that have taken place in the social life of the people. This important aspect of Mizo social life still remains to be dealt with.

The year 1890 forms a significant landmark in the history of the Mizos for in that year the English, an alien people with their alien culture had come to the Mizo Hills and established their political domination ultimately leading to the extinction of the independent entity of the Mizo chiefs. During the next sixty years till 1947 which marks the end of the British colonial rule in India far-reaching changes had been introduced into the Mizo society transforming from its primitive character to a modern civilized society.

The following pages intend to draw a clear and precise picture of the Mizo society as it existed on the eve of the British occupation of the Mizo hills towards the end of the 19th century A. D. and delve into the reasons it had undergone changes at various levels till 1947. It also makes a detail study as to what factors and forces brought about that transformation in its historical perspective. This attempt is not intended to give a theoretical analysis on either the society or its
social evolution. It is not anthropological or sociological in its treatment, but is historical in its approach.

The scope of the period is, however, extended by an additional Chapter under the title "Epilogue" containing the changes which occurred after 1947. This is done for two reasons. First, to provide a connected account of changes that occurred in the society after 1947 without which some areas of change are left incomplete. Secondly, the period after 1947 is very important to the Mizo society due to the fact that several traditional institutions had been done away with and new set ups were introduced such as the abolition of the chieftainship and the introduction of the District Council and subsequent political activities leading to the secessionists movement which broke out in 1966.

Several factors influenced the social change among the Mizos. The establishment of an administrative centre at Aizawl\(^1\) was instrumental in introducing new ideas among the Mizos. The establishment of an administrative centre at Aizawl\(^1\) was instrumental in introducing new ideas among

\(^1\)Prior to the year 1970, the name Aizawl was officially termed "Aijal". It was only in 1970 that the Mizo District Council declared a change from the hitherto "Aijal" to the more acceptable and meaningful "Aizawl" Proceedings of the Mizo District Council Emergent (64th) Session, 9th July 1970, p. 15. In this study "Aizawl" is used; however, in places where the former spelling "Aijal" is used, it is done through convenience especially in the reports, quotations, etc. because it was the term used by the English officially. In the same manner, instead of the former spelling "Lushai Hills" the newly coined word "Mizoram" North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, Section 6, is used in this investigations, but the former too is used in quotations and where it is more convenient.
the inhabitants. The British administration was responsible for the abolition of feuds and some of the notorious Mizo customs like head-hunting. Soon the Christian teachings appeared in the field. The spread of Christianity was rapid among the Mizo and within a short spell of time the many native inhabitants embraced the new faith which in its wake brought about changes in the Mizo society. The role of education which was first introduced by the missionaries, as a means of spreading Christianity was no less significant in the process of the social transformation of the Mizo society. All these factors brought about a remarkable change in the Mizo society. Besides these, other factors too also worked as instruments of change.

Their century-old institution and festivals like chieftainship, Zawlbuk, bawiship, kut, sacrifices and their animistic religion gradually disappeared from the Mizo society. On the other hand, new things, new ideas and new customs had been introduced in the social life of the Mizo. Instead of zu (a Mizo rice-bear) drinking, tea became common, new types of clothes were exchanged for the old type, food habit changed and people began to smoke tobacco rolled with papers instead of dry leaves, and often cigarettes.
The response of the people to such changes was generally favourable. But sometimes there were social tensions, for instance, among the believers and non-believers but had no serious result. Barring such minor events, the people generally welcomed changes. The policy of continuing Zawlbuk as an institution was, however, vehemently opposed by the people because they considered it as an obstacle to progress.

Thus during the period, the Mizo society had undergone various changes. In place of animistic belief, the people were now imbued with Christian beliefs. The absolute power of the chief was first curtailed and then abolished altogether.

Material for this study has been drawn from various sources like contemporary documents, personal interviews with knowledgeable persons having information of the traditional Mizo society, and traditions, myths and legends current among the Mizos. But by far, the largest amount of material is drawn from historical documents and contemporary sources left by the British administrators in their reports, accounts and correspondences etc. Available missionary works have also been consulted. These are supplemented by secondary sources including published and unpublished research dissertation.

The People

The term "Mizo" is a generic term and as such the different tribes or clans who inhabit the entire perimeter of the present Mizoram and whose culture, traditions, dialects, etc. are similar are commonly designated by the term "Mizo". They may be broadly classified into two groups. The first group consists of the Lusei, the Malte, the Hmar, the Chawngthu, the Pawi, the Khawlhring, the Khiangte, the Chawhte, the Ngente, the Renthlei, the Tlau, the Pautu, the Rawite, the Zongte, the Vangchhia, the Punte, the Paite, the Fanai pawi, the Thahdo, the Lakher, the Pangkhua and the Mawk with their many sub-clans. They inhabit the northern and the middle parts of the territory forming the bulk of the population.

The second group is formed by the Pawi and the Lakher with their different sub-clans who are concentrated in the south and the south-eastern parts of Mizoram bordering Burma. The Lakhers who also call themselves "Mara", however, maintain a somewhat different dialect.3

Besides above mentioned groups, there are two more tribes who live in the south-west and the western belts of the territory known as the Chakmas and the Riangs who came

3The details of the different tribes of the Mizo is given in the Appendix - A.
from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, now Bangladesh, and Tripura State. They speak different dialects having no connection with the Mizos. Most of the Chakmas are Buddhists whereas the Riangs, aside from their animistic belief, are in the process of embracing Christianity. Officially treated as Mizos, these two tribes are, till today, not counted as Mizos by the Mizos themselves.

According to the 1981 census, the total population of Mizoram is 4,93,757. The density of population is 23 per sq. km., and 72.11 per cent of the people have been cultivators. The apparent trend is that the Mizos are striding towards permanent type of cultivations. Among them, the percentage of literacy is comparatively high and according to 1981 census, it is 59.88 per cent being third in the national level. Ethnically, they belong to the Mongoloid stock of the Kuki-Chin group with Tibeto-Burman group of language. Their language is written in Roman script.

The Land

Mizoram formerly known as the Lushai Hills was occupied by the British in 1890. It was first administered by a Political Officer with his headquarters at Aizawi.


6Foreign Department External, Part A, April 1890, Progs. No. 255. Also, AR; J. Shakespear, Note on the Lushai hills, its inhabitants and its administration since 1888. No. 1895 J. 29 April, 1905, Shillong.
In 1952, it was elevated to the status of an Autonomous District, and in 1954, by legislation, it was renamed as Mizo District.\(^7\) The North-Eastern Reorganisation Act of 1971 granted it the status of a Union Territory under its present name Mizoram.

Covering an area of 21,087 sq. km., Mizoram lies between 20°20' North and 20°27' North latitudes, and 90°20' East and 90°29' East longitudes. It is bounded on the north by Cachar District of Assam and the State of Manipur, on the east by Manipur State and Burma and south by Burma and Bangladesh and on the west by Bangladesh. From the month of May to September the entire area comes under the spell of the south-west monsoon thus causes heavy downpour. Consequently the average rainfall is as high as 254 cm. per annum.\(^8\)

Mizoram consists almost entirely of low hill ranges running towards the north and south directions with a tendency to rise in the east of the territory and tapering both to the north and south. Hill ranges are separated from one another by ridge and furrow. The average height of these ranges is about 900 metres.\(^9\) The Phawngpui,

\(^7\)The Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act 1954, No. 18 of 1954, para 2.

\(^8\)Government of Mizoram; *Enchanting Mizoram*, Aizawl, November, 1977.

otherwise known as the Blue Mountain with a height of 2,063 metres is the highest mountain in Mizoram.

Its climate is pleasant with a cool summer and a temperate winter. The winter temperature varies from 11°C to 24°C and the summer from 18°C to 29°C. This climatic condition is reflected on the economic and the social life of the Mizos. In the past, the people usually selected their village sites on top of the hills. This urge has now disappeared due to a variety of factors. The people are now building their houses wherever they find any suitable place.

The land is very rich in forest resources. Its forest area being 7,127.22 Sq. Km. accounts for about 34 p.c. of the total area. Three types of forest such as tropical wet evergreen, tropical semi-evergreen and montanne sub-tropical are found in Mizoram. Many of the forests have been destroyed by large-scale jhuming practised by the Mizos over the years without any attention to plantation. However, in late years, due to the efforts of the Government of Mizoram, the hills are slowly regaining its old picture with new plantations of pine, fir, ucaliptus, sal and teak and many other local species of trees.

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11 Ibid.
The soil is composed of sandstones and slabs of terrriary age, thrown into long folds. So far no valuable mineral deposits have been discovered in Mizoram. Only some thin seams of lignite coal have been reported.

Agriculture is the main occupation of about 90 p.c. of the Mizos. The method of cultivation practised from time immemorial was jhuming. But efforts are being made by the Government to induce the cultivators to change over to permanent system of cultivation. There has thus been a change from jhuming to wet-rice cultivations. Rice, ginger, pineapple, sugar-cane, orange and bananas are the main crops. Maize is also abundantly grown.

The rivers are fed by monsoon rains, and as a result most of these swell rapidly during the rains and dry up quickly during the winter. Only the Tlawng, the Tuirial, the Karnaphuli and the Tut are navigable for boats throughout the year. The rivers flow either to the directions of the north or the south.

In the past, wild animals were extremely numerous but their number has fast decreased due to the devastation of forests and indiscriminate killing. Elephants, tigers, leopards, bears, wild dogs, wild mithun, deer, wild pigs and birds of several varieties are still teeming in the western parts of the region.

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 4.\)

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 24.\)
The Terms Kuki, Chin, Lushai and Mizo

Previously to outsiders the Mizos were known by various names such as "Kuki," "Chin" and "Lushai". Parry uses the term "Shendu" to Pawi and Lakher tribes who live on the east and north-east of the Blue mountains. All these names are said to be foreign origin.

It is generally speculated that the Mizos came to the present Mizoram in three waves of migration. The first batch which arrived in Mizoram at an unknown date were driven out by the second batch and the former had proceeded to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (now Bangladesh). Lewin reports that these people, known as Kuki, Shendus, Mrungs (Mirawng):

dwelt on our borders and traded in our frontier marts, and who occasionally made forays into the British territory for the purpose of taking heads and obtaining slaves.

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According to Grierson, reference to the Kukis were found during the reign of Tipperah Raj, Chachag who flourished about 1512 A.D. This suggests that the Kukis had settled in the Tipperah and the Chittagong Hill Tracts a long time before.

"Kuki" is said to be a Bengali word meaning "wild man" which they used to designate all hill people who cultivated their land by jhuming. The Bengalis classified hill men into two categories - the friendly tribes who lived along the Chittagong border called "Joomahs" and the other hill people, especially if they were unable to speak their tongue i.e. Bengali, they were called "Kookies". Since the Bengali came into contact with the Kukis at a much earlier date, the English, the late comers to the hills picked up the word and applied it to all the tribes inhabiting the Lushai and the Chin Hills.

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19 Ibid., Also, T. H. Lewin; *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the "Dzo" or Kuki language with Vocabularies and popular Tales*, p. 1. Hereafter cited as T. H. Lewin; *Progressive Colloquial Exercises*.

whose social and cultural affinities were more or less similar. According to Hutchinson, the term "Kuki" was coined by the plainsmen to designate all the hill tribes other than the Chakmas, Mogh and Tippera tribes. He further says that in more recent years the term "Kuki" was applied to the tribes residing in Mizoram and Chin Hills which had been annexed to the British India. Thus the term "Kuki" evidently embraced the Mizos.

From the above, it is certain that "Kuki" was used as a generic term applying to the hill people of the region till 1871-72. It was Edgar, the then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, who was the first to use officially the new term "Lushai" instead of "Kuki". But the old word "Kuki" already "too well established to be given up" so early was continued to be used for sometime more. Some

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British officials used terms like "Hrangkhaol (Kuki) Lushai" and "Jansen (Kuki) Lushai".  

The origin of "Chin" by which name the Mizos were known in Burma, is not known. Some writers are of the opinion that it is a Burmese corruption of the Chinese word "Jin" or "Yen" meaning "man". According to Grierson, "Chin" in Burmese denotes all hill tribes living in the bordering region between Burma and Assam. A. S. Reid agreeing with the Burmese origin of "Chin" says that the word is synonymous with Khyen (pronounced as Chin). But the meaning "bamboo basket" given to the word "Chin" by B. Lalthangliana thus interpreting the Chin people as "man with bamboo basket" appears to be far from the truth for several reasons. First, the word "Chin

24Soppitt classified Kuki under two heads (a) Hrangkhol, co-tribe Bete (Biate), sub-tribes Sakajaib (Sazek), Langrong etc. (b) Jansen, co-tribe Tadoi (Thado), sub-tribes Kotang, Sluk etc. C. A. Soppitt; A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhot (Hrangkhol) - Lushai Language, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1976, Reprint, p. iv.


26G. A. Grierson; op. cit., p. 2.

27A. S. Reid; Chin-Lushai Land, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1976, Reprint, p. 5.

when applies to mean "basket" is pronounced as Khran (Khrang). It is pronounced as Khyan (Chyin) or Khyang (or Khiang) when applying to mean "clan" or "tribe" of the Chin. In Arakanese (or Rakhiang) language, too, the word "basket" is Khang while clan's name is Chhang.

Secondly, it is not the Chin people alone who carry things in bamboo baskets, rather all the tribes of South-East Asia use similar baskets to carry their loads. According to F. K. Lehman, "the Northern Chin comprise nearly all the Chins of the Haka, Falam, and Tiddim areas, and also the Lushai and the Lakher on the Assam side." He also informs us that Chin are zomi because "they lack the civilization of the Burman." From the above accounts, it appears that the term "Kuki" or "Chin" or jointly "Kuki-Chin" had been used to denote the various clans or groups of the Mizo.

As has been pointed out earlier, the word "Lushai" came into common usage since the 1871-72 expedition undertaken against the Mizo, though the term was known to the English as well as the Mizo themselves even earlier. The word "Luchye" a variant of Lushai first

30 Ibid., p. 55.
occurs in a Report of 1853 by Colonel Lister who conducted the first major operation against the Mizos in northern Mizoram on the 4 January, 1850 known as "Lister's Expedition".  

Various derivations have been suggested for the word "Lushai". Some interpret it as $\text{Lu} = \text{"head"}$, $\text{shai} = \text{"cut"}$ and some others as $\text{Lu} = \text{"head"}$, $\text{shei} = \text{"long"}$. R. B. McCabe thinks that it was a nickname given to this tribe by its neighbours on account of its custom of wearing the hair long and fastening it in a knot at the back of the head. A similar explanation is given by Reid. Another writer says that there were ten tribes in Burma and Luse or Lushai was the tenth. This he does by rendering the word $\text{Lu}$ as "people", $\text{se}$ as "tenth", hence the "tenth people".

We, however, think that the origin of the word lies elsewhere. It was the custom of the Mizos to derive the name of the tribes or clans after the name of their noted

31Alexander Mackenzie; The North-East Frontier of India, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1979, Reprint, p. 292.
32Foreign Department External Part A, December 1892, Progs. No. 43.
33Ibid.
34A. S. Reid; loc. cit.
35B. Lalthangliana; op. cit., p. 70.
and popular chief or place. We would like to trace the origin of the Lushai to this end, and the word Lushai appears to have been originated after a person called Luseia who was supposed to be the progenitor of the Lusei clan of the Mizos.

The term "Lushai" is only an English transliteration of the word Lusei. Similar English transliterations of Mizo words were made by the English in Mizoram on a number of names and places, like Aizawl, the capital of the now Mizoram State as "Aijal" and Lunglei as "Lungleh". Major J. Shakespear, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, who was also an authority on the Mizos, admitted this style of transliteration when he says, "Lushai is our way of spelling the word; the proper way to spell the word... is Lushei...". When the English first came into contact with the Luseia, assuming from where they came were named as "Lushai Hills" that all the people inhabiting the hills were Luseis. It was only after their permanent occupation of the hills the British discovered that all the clans did not call themselves Lushais. In the same way, the Sailo, a sub-clan of the Lusei, was once thought to be a tribe.\(^36\)

\(36\) J. Shakespear; "Lusei or Dulien" cited by G. A. Grierson, Ibid., p. 127.

\(37\) AR; J. Shakespear; "Note on clans in Lushai Hills", Census Note No-I, 17 August 1900, p. 1.
The above discussion leads to several conclusions. First, following the Bengali identification, the English called the Mizos, whom they found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as "Kuki". Second, following the Burmese who called the Mizos as "Chin", the English too called the Mizos living in Burma as "Chin". Third, the English called the Mizos of the erstwhile Lushai Hills district as "Lushai" after the 1871-72 expedition. The word Lusei was thus picked up by the English as Lushai and was applied by them to the hills inhabited by the numerous tribes thinking that all the people living there belonged to same tribe. But subsequently it was found that these people did not belong to one clan or tribe nor did they speak one common dialect. T. Gougin rightly observes:

"The words like 'Kuki', 'Chin' and 'Lushai' are foreign words for the express reason that these words are completely alien to the languages of the Zomis, (Mizo). They are not, therefore, the original names of the first born Zomi."

Various derivations are suggested for the etymology of the word "Mizo." While the Lusei dialect is called the Mizotawng meaning "Mizo language" the Lusei clans alone do not constitute all the Mizos. Vanchhunga who had had intensive investigations on all about the Mizos in Burma, claims that the forefathers of the Mizos used the phrase.

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T. Gougin; loc. cit.
Keini Mizote chuan meaning "We the Mizons". A. W. Davis, the late Superintendent of the North Lushai Hills, says that the term Mizo, variantly pronounced as "Mezo" or "Mizau", includes all inhabitants of the North Lushai Hills, except Pawi. In his report McCabe, too, says that the "Lushai" whom they understood as such call themselves "Mizo" or "Mizau". All these suggest that the word "Mizo" is not of recent origin.

It is often said that the word "Mizo" means ($M$ = "man" or "people" and $z$ = "a cold place at a high altitude") "a people from a cold place". If this inference bears any truth, all the other tribes inhabiting the hill regions of the North-Eastern India should have been known as Mizo. On the other hand, the Mizos do not call these tribes other than themselves as "Mizo", instead they are generally termed as tlangmi meaning "men of the hills" or "hill-man".

Some of the British writers have referred to the inhabitants of a large area comprising the present Chittagong Hill Tracts, the present Mizoram, the hilly Tripura and of the Chin Hills of Burma by the term "zo". Lewin puts all the hill tribes inhabiting within the parallels of latitude

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40 A. W. Davis; "Gazetteer of the North Lushai Hills", cited by Grierson, op. cit., p. 128.
41 Foreign Department External Part A, Progs. December 1892, No. 43.
22° 45' N. and 25° 20' N. and between the meridians of longitudes 20° 30' and 93° 45', who wore their hair in a knot resting on the nape of their neck under the name "zo". Grierson holds a similar view when he says that the people living in the country between Burma and the then Assam and Bengal Provinces called themselves "zo" variably "yo" or "sho". Atkinson is of the view that the Lushai language is spoken by the "Dzo" of the Lushai high-lands, thereby suggesting that Lushais were in fact the "zo" people. Waddell shares the same view when he says that the Lushais call themselves "Dzo" or "Zho", and it is only the Bengalis who called them "Kuki".

Several points can be derived from the views given above. First, that the terms "Dzo", "zo" or "Zau" are only variants of the word "yo" or "yao". Secondly, the term "zo", a shortened form of Mizo is not of recent origin. It appears that the word Mizo, variably "Mi-dzo" or "Mi-zao", is the combination of the two words "miao" and "yao" together as "Miao-Tzu" or "Miao-yao" or "Miotzu" by which name the widespread hill tribes inhabiting Yunnan, Szechwan,

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42 T. H. Lewin; *Progressive Colloquial Exercises*, loc. cit.
43 G. A. Grierson; op. cit., p. 2.
45 L. A. Waddell; *The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Sanskaran Prakashak, Delhi, 1975, Reprint, p. 51.
Northern Laos, Northern Vietnam and Thailand are known to the Chinese. Therefore, it is more likely that the word Mizo is derived from two words having the same meaning (*Miao* (mi) = man and *Yao* (zo) = man) as we have *run in* which means (*run* = house and *in* = house) in (house).

The use of the name Mizo has become common amongst the Mizos themselves only in recent years because they have developed a feeling for a separate identity for which they require a stamp of unity as well as a representation of their political ideology. Political parties, in order to strengthen their position amongst the people exploited the sentiment and soon the Mizo Union Party[^46] submitted a memorandum demanding change of name from Lushai Hills to Mizo Hills. The Government of India, too, recognised this sentiment of the Mizo people and in 1954 changed the name accordingly. In 1972, when it attained the status of a Union Territory, the name was changed to Mizoram in response to the populists' demand.

[^46]: The Mizo Union Party was founded on 9 June 1946 and it is the first Political Party ever exists in Mizoram.
Ethnology of the Mizos

T. H. Lewin, the late Deputy Commissioner of the Hill Tracts of Chittagong described the hill tribes with whom he dealt as having Mongoloid origin. He writes:

The general physique of the hill tribes is strongly Mongolian. They are, as a rule, short in stature... Their faces are broad; the nose flat, with no perceptible bridge; the eyes narrow, and set obliquely in the head, high cheek-bones, and no beard or moustach.47

Other writers like Keane,48 McCall49 and Donnison50 also agree with the view.

In so far as their language is concerned, Grierson names it Kuki-Chin and puts it into the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.51 Other writers52 also connect the Hizo dialect with the Tibeto-Burman family. This indicates that on linguistic ground the Mizos are descended from a common ancestor. There is a traditional belief among the Mizos that all the people of the Mongoloid races have birthmarks just on the pelvis irrespective of males and females.

This mark, however, slowly vanishes when they

51G. A. Grierson; op. cit., pp. 3 & 10.
attain two to three years of age. This mark is believed to have been absent in other races.

**Origin of the Mizos**

According to tradition, the Mizos came out of a very big stone cave called Sinlung variantly Chhinlung.\(^53\) In the modern scientific age such statement is hard to believe as fact and it may be absurd to accept that man can come out of a hole. However, recent historical writings and other works throw some light on this claim. Songs, which depict that they came from Chhinlung, are sung; one of which runs:

Kan siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang,
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.
Chawngzil ang koki thei chuangsen
Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai.\(^54\)

**meaning**

My motherland, famous Sinlung
Home of my ancestors,
Could it be called back like Chawngsil,
Home of my own ancestors.

The stanza clearly describes the feeling of the Mizos on Chhinlung after they left it. It says that they were proud of it and they had a deep attachment to the

\(^53\)Sinlung is a Hmar dialect which is same as with the modern usage of the word Chhinlung, literally meaning "a stone that is covered". Now Chhinlung is traditionally regarded as a place from where the Mizos are originated.

place. The song also narrates that they wished they could go back there.

Some think that they left Chhinlung due to their inability to repulse their enemies. Still some others conjecture that they left the place to avoid severe punishments from their cruel rulers like Cheng, identified as Shih Hwang-Ti whose repressive policy forced them to rigorous labour in constructing the Great Wall of about 2500 miles in length.⁵⁵

Khaw sinlungah kot siel ang ka zyang suaka,
Mi le nello tam e, Hriemi hraiah⁵⁶

Meaning—

Out of the city of sinlung,
I jumped out like a siel⁵⁷
Innumerable were the encounters
With the children of men

The song indicates that hurriedly they left Chhinlung like a mithun jumping out of the cage. There had been some compelling factors for which they had to leave Chhinlung.

Earlier, there had been wide speculations regarding the location of Chhinlung. It may be identified it with


⁵⁶L. Hranglien Songate; Hmar Chanchin (Hmar History), Press, Churachandpur, 1977, p. 11.

⁵⁷Siel (Sial) is a domesticated animal among the Mizos and the tribes of North-east India and Burma. In ancient time it played a very important role in their social life. Prices were determined and measured in terms of sial. It was a sacred animal for the Mizos. The British called it mithun and sometimes as goyal.
the Chinese city of Chhinlung (or Xinlong)\textsuperscript{58} at longitude degree $101^\circ 03'$ and latitude degree $31^\circ$ in the Szechwan Province of China. Its height is 1742 cm. above the sea-level. The city is situated on the western side of the Yulung river and on the east of the Yantze Kiang river. Old walls and defence fortifications which once surrounded the city are still visible. It had been the district headquarters under the various Chinese rulers and is still regarded as one of the most important cities in the Province. During the Imperial period, it had been an important port.\textsuperscript{59}

They claim that this is the same Chhinlung of the Mizo tradition from where the people moved down to the present habitat via Burma. But whether this Chhinlung has any connection with that of Prince Chinlung of the Ngai-Lao people who founded the principality in Yunnan in the first century of the Christian era,\textsuperscript{60} is another problem that requires deep study. The original home of the Ngai-Lao people is believed to be the Lao-Shan and the Kiu-lung mountains in Szechwan. Prince Chinlung and his followers left their home and settled in Yunnan due to Chinese

\textsuperscript{58}The Readers' Digest Association; \textit{Great World Atlas}, London, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{59}C. Chawngkunga; "Speech" delivered on the occasion of \textit{Hmar Inkhawmpui} (Conference) at Churachandpur from 25 - 27 October, 1982, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{60}Padmeswar Gogoi; \textit{The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms}, Gauhati University, 1968, p. 38.
pressures from the north and the northeast. But the story coincides with the traditional tale of the Mizos that Prince Chinlung and his followers left their habitat on account of the growing conflict with either his father or brothers.

Some sections of the Mizos, however, think that they are the descendants of a lost tribe of Israel in the House of Ephraim, the tenth tribe. The theory has been current among them for quite some time. The Karens also have a similar story. However, the majority of the Mizos feel that the case is not a proven fact and nothing can be gained just by such claim.

Traditional Home of the Mizos

The original home of the Mizos is still shrouded in obscurity. Hall is of the view that the earliest known home of the Tibeto-Burmese speaking peoples was somewhere between the Gobi desert and northeast of Tibet, also possibly Kansu.

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61 Ibid.
63 Lalpa Zawnchhuah Mizoram; (n.n.) Venus Press, 1979, (n.p.) p. 11.
64 H. I. Marshall; The Karen People of Burma, University of Columbus, Ohio, 1922, p. 10.
Earlier, we have seen how Tai and other non-Chinese people like the Lolo, Miao and other tribesmen had come to Yunnan from Sze-Chuwan, Kuichaw and other provinces due to pressures from the Chinese. As a result, Yunnan is found to be the home of tribal peoples, and is still largely populated by Lolos and Miasos. There are 18 larger minority Nationalities in China. Hence Lolo, Miao, Yao, Lisu, Lashi, Li (Lai), Yi (li), Pai and others are the prominent tribes. Of these, the Mizos have linguistic affinity with the Lolos as shown below which indicates that both the peoples had been together somewhere in southern China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Mizo</th>
<th>Lolo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>ni</td>
<td>ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pig</td>
<td>vawk (vok)</td>
<td>va</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nine</td>
<td>kua (pakua)</td>
<td>kue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close affinity of the Mizos with the hill tribes of southern China in languages, mode of living and culture etc. leads us to a belief that they came from a common place and had common ancestors. It is possible that while the Mizos were in southern China, they came in contact with other hill tribes and as a result there were mutual borrowings of language and culture. It is more likely that like other

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non-Chinese tribes of southern China, the Mizos too, moved down to the south due possibly to the pressures of the Chinese. So all evidences go to support that the Mizos had come from the east, and probably southern China.

It may, therefore, be said that though their original home is veiled with obscurity, the Mizos, most probably, while living with the Ngai-lao group of Tai, Lolo, Miao and other tribes in the Kiulung mountains had been disturbed by the Chinese. From there they came to Yunnan Province and stayed there for some time. Therefore, the southern part of China, particularly, Szechwan, Yunnan, Kwichow provinces and, in wider context, the entire fringed of eastern perimeter of the plateau between Kansu and Burma, may be considered as the original home of the Mizos.

**Coming of the Mizos to Their Present Habitat**

When and by what route the Mizos made their journey from southern China are not known. One thing is, however, certain that they moved southward. The history of their migration is a history of long centuries of struggles against natural hardship and their enemies. It appears from their account of migration that they did not remain long at any place on their way down except in the Kabow valley of the present Burma. It seems, "they came in small numbers, but it
is possible in a steady stream.\textsuperscript{68} Their migrations and settlements may, therefore, be traced in the light of the study made by historians and researchers on the movement of the Burmese, Shans or Tai, Karens, Kachins and others.

It is known that the Pyu, a Tibeto-Burman tribe, were the earliest inhabitants of Burma who had any records.\textsuperscript{69} They were followed by the Karens and they may have been one of the earliest of all.\textsuperscript{70} Much later, the Shans entered the country in the early Christian era from the eastward.\textsuperscript{71} And still later the Chins (Mizo), Kachins and others entered Burma.\textsuperscript{72} In the case of Karens, they were expelled from south China by Kolofeng, the Nan-Chao king in 778 A.D.\textsuperscript{73} Some scholars think that the area now occupied by the Chins was occupied before by the Burmans.\textsuperscript{74} The Burmans entered into Burma in the 9th century A.D., probably between \textsuperscript{\textit{849}} and \textsuperscript{1044} A.D.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{68}W. S. Desai; \textit{A Pageant of Burmese History}, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1961, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{69}Reginald Le May; \textit{The Culture of South-East Asia}, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1956, Reprint, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{70}G. E. Harvey; \textit{History of Burma}, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1925, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{72}W. S. Desai, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{73}Padmeswar Gogoi; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.


\textsuperscript{75}D. G. E. Hall; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 122.
These races or tribes came, owing to various causes, in successive infiltrations. According to Marshall the route that was followed by the Karens from Yunnan to Burma was by way of the Mekong or the Salween into the Upper part of modern Shan States. The other route which was possibly followed by the tribes was a caravan route from Suifu in the western Szechwan to Bhamo in Burma on the east of the Irrawaddy which was only over six hundred miles in length.

The Mizos probably followed the same routes followed by the Karens. One of the grounds was that the two tribes had the same traditions of migration. But the story of cutting muk tree on their way suggests that the Mizos took land routes while coming down to Burma.

The Kabow (Kubo) Valley or Shan State Settlement

The Mizo tradition does not go beyond their settlements in Burma. From the stories current among them they speak

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76 H. I. Marshall; op. cit., p. 12.
77 C. P. Fitzgerald; op. cit., p. 40.
78 Muk is a kind of tree that has an obsolete or pale look soon after it is cut. In the story of the Mizo migration the tree has played a significant role. Traditionally, it is said that the first batch cut the trees to indicate their followers that they followed that route. But once they cut the muk tree and when the next batch saw the cut that looked so old, they thought that it seemed impossible to overtake them, then they settled down in the vicinity leading a permanent separation with the forward party. The same story is told by the Karens.
of a place Awksatlang where they lived for a longer period. This place has been identified by some writers as Auktawng, a corruption of Awksatlang, situated in the Kabow valley of Burma.

On the basis of folksongs sung by the Mizos, it is learnt that there was a big settlement in the valley extending up to Khamti area in the north and as far as Kale in Burma in the south. It can be gathered that three Mizo chiefs ruled over this settlement. Luahpuia, a Mizo chief, ruled the town of Khampat where they planted a bunyan tree; Zingthloh, another chief ruled in the north believed to be Khamti area; Lersia (Thadozumbudi) the third chief ruled at Kale town which is now identified as Kalimyo. The following verse bears witness to these accounts:

Sima Lersia, hمارa Zingthloh,
Khawma laiah Luopui
Luopuiin lenbuang a phun, 81
Thianga pualrangin tian e.

79 To some local Mizo "Historians" there was no mention of the place as Kabow Valley but as Auptuauang or Awksatlang. According to them Awksatlang was an area where the Mizos had been settled down.

80 To locate Awksatlang, see (vide Carey and Tuck, The Chin Hills, Vol. I), the accompanying map attached to the book under the name Auktawng.

81 Hranglien Songate; Ibid., p. 22.
meaning - Lersia in the south, Zingthloh in the north,  
And in the midst Loupui ruled;  
Loupui planted a banyan tree  
whereon hornbills from the west feed.

It is known that the northern part of the Kabow valley  
was occupied by the Shans\textsuperscript{82} who came to that place, according  
to one author, as early as the 6th century A.D.\textsuperscript{83} These  
Shans or Tai were called Maitay Kabo (Kubo) by the people  
of Cussay (Manipur).\textsuperscript{84} A constant fighting between the  
Mizos and the Shans was a common occurrence. The folksongs  
sung by the former also suggests fighting between them and  
the Shans. The verse below relates to such feuds.

Ka pa lam thlak a tha'n dang,  
Sinlung lam thlak a tha'n dang,  
Shan khuoah tha phoin vang,  
Touichongin hranlu a tlunna;  
Thlomu sieka ke min hril,  
Zainghawngah hranlu bah kan sale\textsuperscript{85}

meaning - My father's steps were, indeed, remarkably good,  
Few are the good men in the Shan State,  
Where Touichawng brought the enemy's head,  
You talked of tips with eagle's paws,  
And we held the heads high with ropes.

They composed songs praising their victories over  
the enemies.

\textsuperscript{82}There was a Shan Colony at the Kabow Valley and it is  
believed that at least certain tribes of the Mizos had  
settled down there.

\textsuperscript{83}Padmeswar Gogoi; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{85}Hranglien Songate; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.
Shan khua thlang-fa pu tling tleng e,
i do thlunglu bakin salh;
Ka sawmfa thlaw, ka lami thla,
Thal khat in lan eih de ning°°

meaning - Sons of western Shan State looked honest,
But you sounded out only war,
With an abundant harvest and men killed in war
We will make of you a springtime festivals.

By coming into contacts with the Shans they (Mizos) had learnt many things, including economic self-sufficiency and new festivals in the spring time. Chieftainship had its origin from the Kabow Valley settlement, perhaps acquired from the Shans. They learned how to drink tea also.

They had been in the Kabow Valley for a good number of years, but had to leave the settlement due, perhaps, to the outbreak of a severe famine which is known to the Mizos as thingpui tam (tea famine) when they suffered immensely.°°°

Their sad plight is chanted in the following verse:

Shan khuoah lenpur a tlakin,
Mi raza tlan thiera e;
Chung Pathienin Shan zuk siem e,
Shan khuo lung ang ngir na e.88

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

It is believed that in this famine the Shans who were also inhabitants of the same area too suffered from it.

86Ibid., p. 21.
87Ibid.
88Ibid.
Before the Mizos dispersed from the Kabow Valley, they planted at Khampat a bjinyan tree known to them as Khampat Bung to commemorate the dispersal with a promise that they would go back to that place for resettlements when the tree grew and its branches pointing towards three directions touched the ground. This was fulfilled during the first part of the decade in the 20th century. From Kabow Valley they came to the Chin Hills where they found suitable land for their settlements.

Chin Hills Settlement

Down from the Kabow Valley, the Mizos came in groups, but tribe after tribe and from different directions and at different time, to the present Chin Hills of Burma seeking food and warmth in tiny homesteads along the fertile hill areas. The infiltration from China down to the Chin Hills of Burma lasted, it seems, several centuries. The approximate date of their arrival at the Chin Hills may be put as the early 14th century A.D. because they had been found in the Tripura kingdom, south of the Chin Hills, during the reign of the Tipperah Raja Chachag who ruled at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. It was only in 1819 that the Burmese king gained control over the present Chin Hills.

90 Thawnglinga; Chin Mizo Chanchin Bu (Chin Hills Tlangmite History), Hualngo Literature & Cultural Committee, Chin Hills, Falam, 1975, p. 9.
In the Chin Hills they established villages and settled down clan-wise and gave clan's name to the villages. Accordingly, Lusei settled at Seipui, Khawkawk and Khawrua; Ralte clans at Suapui and Saihmun; Chawngthu at Bochung; Khiangte at Pelpawl, Belmual, and at Lungchhuan. Hauhnar settled down at what is now known as Hauhnar-tiang; Chuaungo and Chuauhang also lived with Hauhnar and so on.\(^7\)

It is mainly due to the nature of the hill ranges in the Chin Hills that the Mizos lived at scattered villages and this made it inconvenient to build a big town like that of Khampat. It appears, however, that while in the Chin Hills the population of the Mizos greatly increased owing to increasing prosperity and comparative peaceful life despite inter-clan feuds. However, the settlement at scattered villages developed the idea of clanism or separatism leading to disunity among the Mizos.

The Present Settlement

The coming of the Mizos under the term "Old Kuki" to the present Mizoram could not be later than the 15th century A.D. or in the beginning of the 16th century A.D. for they are mentioned in connection with the reign of

Tipperah Rajah as already mentioned. Soppitt brings the date to the middle of the 16th century.\textsuperscript{92}

Some writers\textsuperscript{93} think that the Mizos entered Mizoram at three different times and accordingly they were known by three different names. Those who came first were called "Old Kuki", those who came next were "New Kuki" and the last one were known as "Lushai" (Mizo). The tribes who constitute the "Old Kuki" are the Hrangkhawl, Biate, Langrawng, Pangkhua and Mawk, and the "New Kuki" are those of Changsen, Thado and some others. Vanchhunga, however, views that the six different batches or groups had passed through the present Mizoram and the last or the seventh batch known as Sailo clans occupied it.\textsuperscript{94}

The "Old Kukis" were the first to migrate from Chin Hills to Mizoram and then to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and from there to the North Cachar Hills. They are said to have been employed by Gobind Chandra, the Raja of Cachar, in his attempt to hunt down Tularam Senapattee in the years 1828 and 1829.\textsuperscript{95} Finding no safety in the plain areas of

\textsuperscript{92}C. A. Soppitt; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.


\textsuperscript{94}Vanchhunga; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{95}John Butler; \textit{Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam}, Vikas Publishing Co., Delhi, 1978, Reprint, p. 79.
Cachar they settled in the hills now known as North Cachar Hills of Assam. At that time, though small in number and being armed and united, they succeeded in maintaining their separate identity. They migrated from Tipperah during the reign of Kishna Chunder of Cachar in about the year 1795.

The "New Kukis", in course of time, when driven out by the Lushais, went direct to the present Tripura towards the close of the first half of the twentieth century. But after some time most of them had been pushed back by Colonel Lister for creating troubles in the British frontiers. Those who submitted themselves to him were enlisted as soldiers and they formed a good outpost on the frontiers. On their return they followed the Tuirung (Barak) river and joined their brothers in North Cachar.

The third group, known as "Lushai", came to the present habitat in the beginning of the 18th century by driving out the new Kukis. Like the first two batches, the Lushais were composed of various clans, and the most prominent of them was the Sailo clan whose origin may be

96B. C. Allen et. al; Gazetteers of Bengal & North-East India, loc. cit.


traced back to Thangura, one of the six sons of the pedigree of Sailo clan, called Zahmuaka. The other sons were Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Rivunga and Rokhuma whose descendants formed separate clans after their names.

Their migration from Chin Hills to the present habitation may be due to two reasons. In the first place, the constant pressures of the Pawi tribes was, perhaps, the main cause. The increasing fears of the Pawi brought the whole group to a place called Selesih which was located at the present Zawlsei village in Aizawl District. There were at least seven chiefs who ruled jointly over the village. One of them Pukawlha, grandson of Sailova from whom the Sailos claim descent, was recognised by the others as a sole ruler over 7000 houses. It appears that from this place each clan with their own chief dispersed to different places. Secondly, the decreasing extent of jhuming land under their control could no longer sustain them. They moved westwards to find better place to settle down.

The Zadeng clan was the first to enter Mizoram, followed by Palian clan and so on. Among them, the Sailo clan was the last. On coming to the present habitat the Sailos fought and defeated the earlier clans and the

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Sailo chiefs became virtual rulers over the people. It was this great clan that came into contact with the British Government. In their attempts to extend their sway over the tribes the British Government sent repeated expeditions against them since 1850. Finally they were subdued in 1890.

The British occupation of the hills thus brought many new factors to the indigenous inhabitants thereby affecting social transformation in the society as a whole. In their efforts to consolidate their rule over the people the British Government had fought minor skirmishes with the Mizo chiefs. In spite of all these oppositions, the administration soon cohered their positions soon after they occupied it.