CHAPTER-II

MIZO CULTURAL SPACE
IN
PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

“History is Present in all communities. Even powerless and unknown groups have their histories”.¹

-Jasmine Saikia

The present chapter analyses the history of pre-colonial Mizo cultural space in a larger South Asian and Southeast Asian historical context. Due to its relative isolation from the surrounding empire and the capacity to maintain their traditional communal lifestyle while adapting to hilly environment, the Mizo cultural space was unparallel to the larger empire of South Asian and Southeast Asian region. The hilly region of ‘Mizo cultural space’ in a larger context is geographically situated between South Asia and Southeast Asia as a physical and cultural bridge between the Indic civilization and Southeast Asia.² More specifically, the Mizo cultural space was located in the hilly region between the pre-colonial state of Burma, the Cachari kingdom (Dimasha), Manipur, Tripura and the Bengal.³ Moreover, the cultural space in this hilly region larger empire was largely “people without history” or in Jan Vasina term “oral civilization” until the coming of European power in 19th century.⁴

Classifying the groups according to their cultural traits, social anthropologists have mapped culture clusters known as “culture areas” which means geographical region in which a number of societies have a

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² Recently, some scholars challenged whether “Southeast Asia” was, and is a real region, culturally or historically. Emerson Considers that the definition of Southeast Asia as “a residual category that fills a space on a map”...externally defined region. Another scholar Wilhelm G. Solheim (an American anthropologist and practitioner of archaeology in Southeast Asia) argues that Southeast Asia “has been defined, perhaps artificially, by political scientists from the United States, military authorities from the Americas and Europe, but discovered by historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and various other external humanists”. For details please see; Donald K. Emmerson, ‘Southeast Asia’: What’s in a Name?’ in Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, March, 1984. pp. 1-21., and Wilhelm G. Solheim II, ‘Southeast Asia’: “What's in a Name”, Another Point of View’ in Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 16, No. 1, March, 1985. pp. 141-147.

³ In the present context, the Mizo cultural areas are divided into three modern Nations states of India, Bangladesh and Burma, comprising the present state of Mizoram, and her surrounding hills areas of Manipur, Tripura, Chin hills of Myanmar and Chittagong Hills Tract of Bangladesh.

similar way of life. In recent decade, the concept of culture area has declined as a research tool among anthropologists, while geographers have continued to develop the usefulness of the concept. What criteria can be used to define cultural space? The problem constitutes a real challenge, especially considering whether ‘culture space’ actually exists. The difficulty increases when we try to determine not only the geographical boundaries but also the boundaries of the community, because the boundaries can be indefinite, unstable, and changeable. Narratives about the history of a place can also give a strong justification of territorial claims, as it does for Mizos. As long as such a ‘justification’ is believed to be true, a particular group’s claim on a territory remains strong. Moreover, constructing culture area based on religion or ethnicity for the purpose of fascist political agenda could be equally dangerous.

Culture exists both spatially as well as non-spatially. Thus, ‘cultural space’ has at least two implications; the geographical or spatial category

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7 Samuel P. Huntington’s theory on Clash of civilization was recently challenged by Amartya Sen on the ground that the theory was based weak empirical research. For instance, India since ancient time was multi or bi-cultural religion which cannot empirically called “Hindu Civilization”. Please see, Amartya Sen, Identity and Violence: The illusion of Destiny, Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Book, 2006. pp. 46-50. For further details, please see Samuel P. Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, Free Press, London, 1996.

8 Basing on oral tradition, Stuart Blackburn has recently proposed a “culture area” which consists of three regions: Central Arunachal Pradesh, the Myanmar (Burma)/India/Bangladesh border, and upland Southeast Asia/Southwest China. For further details, please see Stuart Blackburn, ‘Oral Stories and
(hill or plain) and civilization category (both the mentality of people and their technology). Cultural space makes little sense if studies outside their geographical (i.e., location) context which exists in both the mental and physical world. Fernand Braudel argued the need to refer each society to the space, place or region in which it exists, to its broad geographical context. Taking this argument, let us first look at the development of the Mizos in larger context of Southeast Asia.

For many centuries, the Southeast Asian region has been characterised by two distinct ecosystems - the hills and the plains (including the maritime). The hill and plain division is not only a geographical category but it indicates a larger cultural space. Milton Osborne writes in this context,

“The "hill-valley" division of traditional Southeast Asian society was of a different order to the division between ruler and rules in the ethnically unified mainland states or regions. The low land cultivator was part of the dominant society, even if a very insignificant. The people who lived in the upland regions were a group for whom the administrative apparatus of the lowland state did not apply and who did not share the values of lowland society.... However, the hill and valley separation was not

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9 In India, a tribe is definitely a territorial group with kinship operates as a strong associative regulation and integrating principle. Please see Nadeem Hasnain, Tribal India, Palaka Prakashan, Delhi, 1996. p.37.
obsoleto. Upland societies were linked with the dominant society without becoming part of it". 11

Further he wrote;

"...countries of Southeast Asia were neither "little Indias' nor 'little Chinas'. The impact of those two great countries on the region cannot be dismissed, the degree and character of their influence is still debated, but the essential right of Southeast Asian countries to be considered culturally independent units was generally established." 12

James C. Scott analyzed the development of hilly non-state cultural space which was the outcome of their interactions and resistance strategies against the process of the organized state in pre-colonial Southeast Asia. 13 The process of organized states in pre-colonial Southeast Asia involves slavery, conscription, taxes, corvée labour, epidemics, and warfare.

Thus, it can be argued that many tribal societies including the Mizos fled away from such projects and take refuge in the hills. James C. Scott demonstrated that the Southeast Asian region has a different setup of history where “little” and “great tradition” co-existed. Major cities were usually located in the lowland valley. The center of political power was concentrated in the valley, and the various kingdoms of the dynasties ruled from the valley. The valley kingdom was surrounded by hills, which

12 Ibid. p. 6.
were inhabited by numerous hill tribes. Hill people do not plant wet rice, like farmers in the valley, but they wander through the mountains employing the Jhum method of agriculture, as well as hunting and gathering. They were mobile, and their societal structure was fluid, by and large egalitarian. They spoke in different languages and had not adopted any of the major religions of valley people such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Hinduism.

From the perspective of the valley people, hill tribes were “barbaric” and backward as opposed to the culture of a kingdom. Scott challenged this notion, suggesting that hill people were not necessarily people who had been untouched by civilization, but rather people who had rejected civilization. Most hill people were the descendents of those who migrated from the valley, and they had their own perspective of valley society as caged, restricted, controlled, while they themselves were free and wandering. Scott speculates that people may have escaped to the hills to reject the ideology of civilization and society's more concrete problems of heavy taxation, warfare, and disease.

2.1 Mizo Origin and Migration Theory.

The relationship between “little” and “great tradition” whether it was based on symbiotic relationship or binary opposition needs further enquiry as there have been constant debates on the early home and migration route of the early Mizos. The ancient and medieval records indicate little evidence for the exploration of the early history of Mizo. Some of the available historical accounts in neighbouring empires were confined and limited, at the best provided a stay reference of confusing terms and terminology which further perplexed recent historians. Even,
the interpretations vary from time to time which is far from reaching any proper conclusion.

Finding local oral traditions are pre-requisite when conventional archive indicates little evidence. Apparently, Osborne and Scott drew their source of information from the oral traditions of highland societies recorded by colonial ethnographers and latter American anthropologist.\(^\text{14}\) On the other hand, historians, folklorists and local writers (those who write the early history of Mizo in local language) have extensively utilized the oral tradition on early migrations of Mizos.\(^\text{15}\) The origin as well as the Mizo migration and their interaction with the surrounding empires are encoded in a number of oral traditions.

Generally, Mizo oral tradition gives information of several unconnected events (i.e Bamboo Famine or \textit{Mautam}) and names of particular places (i.e hills, rivers or plain). Historians are unsure as to how far such references can be considered as accurate historical facts. Moreover, dating and fixing historical period are often more problematic as western linear worldview played little role in the pre-modern society. Mizo oral tradition is particularly rich in genealogy and migration theory though a narrative of several unconnected events. The Mizo oral traditions


\(^{15}\) For instance, please see K.Zawla, Vanchhunga, V.L Siama and Liangkhaia extensively explored the early history of Mizos.
of origin were described by two different narrative scales. These two theories sustained, guided and shaped the interpretation of early Mizo history written by both colonial ethnographers and regional historians in recent period.

First, the ‘myth origin’ which discussed the origin of Mizo in the form of legends and tales.\(^\text{16}\) One of these stories narrates how the Mizo ancestors who emerged from the subterranean of the earth or a cave called \textit{Chhinlung} interpreted in different dialects as ‘sinlung’ in \textit{hmar}, \textit{khul} in \textit{paite} and others. In fact, every community in the world has a representation of the origin of the world, the creation of mankind, and the appearance of its own particular society and community. A colonial ethnographer J. Shakespear and T. C. Hudson also noted “This idea that mankind emerged from the earth is very widely spread.”\(^\text{17}\) “\textit{Chhinlung} in popular imagination thus implies to a hole in the ground, covered with capstone”.\(^\text{18}\) However, no historian can determine whether such an assumption is metaphorical or indicating a physical place.

Mizo historians thus proposed several hypotheses to the \textit{Chhinlung} myth. Some suggested that \textit{Chhinlung} was a place located somewhere in south-west China whereas others are in favour of a metaphorical emphasis on Mizo in their Stone Age period. Some regional scholars further related mythical \textit{Chhinlung} to the construction of Great Wall of China (Wan-Li Qang-Qeng) which begins in (221 B.C- 206 B.C.). The Chinese empire has recruited a large number of slave workers from the surrounding tribes and


ethnic groups. Thus, similar to James C. Scot’s suggestion, many tribal groups of China were dispersed in order to escape the oppression of the Chinese state project.

Secondly, the migration theory, which proposed the course of Mizo migration from China via Tibetan plateaus to the hilly region between the Burmese and Indian subcontinent. This theory mostly relies on linguistic point of view. Linguistic studies has shown that the Mizo were part of Tibeto-Burman which is uncontested in discourse. However, the origin of Tibeto-Burman in a larger Southeast Asian or South Asian is a highly contested theory. Historical literatures and archaeological findings suggest (Di-Qiang origin) ancient Di-Qiang groups who originated in northwest China were the ancestor of Tibeto-Burman. Basing on archaeological evidence, scholar like George Van Driem has suggested that;

“Assuming that the Tibeto-Burman proto-homeland lay approximately in the language family’s present geographical centre of gravity, i.e In Sichuan and Yunnan, the first migration of Tibeto-Burmans out of this area would, on historical linguistic grounds, have been the Western Tibeto Burman migration to the fluvial plains of the lower Brahmaputra and the surrounding hill tracts.”


Anthropologists and biologists also suggested that the ancestors of Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups could be descended from the so-called “Di-Qiang” groups who originally lived in the upper and middle valleys of Yellow River in the northwest China about 7,000 years ago.\(^{21}\) Scholars have divided the Tibeto-Burman into three major groups such as Tet, Pyu and Kanyan. The ancestors of Mizo belong to the Tet group of people.

A recent genetic study on tribes in the present North East India shows that “a striking genetic homogeneity both in terms of Y-chromosome and mtDNA variation, which was probably maintained over time by genetic isolation.”\(^ {22}\) In addition, the study also shows that North East Indian tribes virtually have no genetic admixture with other Indian ethnic groups.

Gordon Luce also suggests Mizo ancestor were part of the ancient minority group in western China and eastern Tibet who migrated southward to ‘Hukong Valley’.\(^ {23}\) The journey probably took hundreds of years and eventually moved towards the border of Burmese empire. This was probably around 6 century.\(^ {24}\) Little is known about the Mizo (Chin) until the 16\(^{th}\) century. B.Lalthangliana has suggested that the Mizo had a good understanding with the Burmese empire in fighting against other


\(^{24}\) B.Lalthangliana, History of Mizo in India, Burma and Bangladesh, Aizawl, 2000. pp. 48-49.
tribal groups. During the eighth century the Mizo ancestors further moved to Chindwin Valley.

This above argument was widely supported by historical account as well as archaeological evidences. The Pagan Inscription mentioned “Chins and Chindwin” (holes of the Chins) from 13th century. Until the fall of the Pagan dynasties in 1295, pagan inscription continuously mentioned that the Chins were in between the eastern bank of the upper Chindwin and west of the Irrawaddy River. 25 Apparently, the Mizo ancestors lived peacefully in Upper Chindwin of the Kal-Kabaw Valley for at least a hundred years, from the fall of Pagan in 1295 to the founding of Shan’s fortress city of Kale-myō in 1395.26 In course of time, probably by the end of 13th century or the beginning of 14 century, the Mizo ancestors moved to the Upper Chindwind of Kale-Kabaw Valley. The cause of migration is unknown, possibly political events or floods as suggested by a historian Lian H. Sakhong.27

The Mizo ancestors got separated into several groups when the Shan (powerful warriors from Yunnan) entered Burma in the 13th century.28 The Shan conquered Pagan kingdom in 1295. War broke out amongst themselves and with the Burmese kingdom of Ava founded in 1364 by pagan king Thadominphya. The Shan finally conquered the Burma kingdom of Ava in 1529. Although, the Burmese recaptured Ava in 1555, the Kale Valley was under the influence of Shan. Some of the Shan warrior group later called as the Tai-Ahoms entered Assam and defeated the Kamarupa in

25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Shan are member of a people of the mountainous borderlands separating Thailand, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and China. They are related to the Laos and Thais, and their language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family.
Due to the infiltration of Shan to Assam, B.Lalthangliana suggests Mizo were pushed out from the Kabaw Valley to the present areas of Chin hills in Burma. From the Chin Hills, Mizo ancestors separated and migrated towards several places as far as the Arakan Hills, the Chittangong hill tract of Bengal, the Kingdom of Tripura and Manipur, and the Cachar hills. The Mizo in this paper is thus a group of those separated tribes from Chin Hills.

The cause of their dispersal is mainly because of their struggle against each other for political supremacy. Another possible cause of migration according to oral tradition is bamboo famine (thingtam). A Hmar (Mizo clan) folksong says; San khuaah lenpui a tla e, Miraza tlan thiera e which can be roughly translated as “we ran out of shan, because of great famine”. More evidence can be related back to the event of Bamboo famine of both 1881-1882 and 1909-1911 in the Lushai Hills. Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country (1881) has estimated that about 15,000 people died of starvation. Thousands of people moved away from their native villages to settle as far as the neighbouring states of Tripura, Manipur and Western Burma. The Manipur Chronicles mentioned the name Kuki in 1554.

Oral tradition also states that famine was usually accompanied by the outbreak of plague. Bamboo famine has devastated so much that, according to oral tradition, people survived by eating wild roots, jungle

29 The origin as well the political system of Ahoms in Assam is covered by Amalendu Guha, ‘The Ahom Political System: An Enquiry into the State Formation Process in Medieval Assam (1228-1714)’, in Social Scientist, Vol. 11, No. 12, 1983. pp. 3-34.
31 Lian H. Sakhong, op.cit., ibid.
fruits and anything else that they could find which was edible. This resulted in widespread malnutrition, epidemics and extensive loss of life. However, this has not been properly covered by biologists and physical anthropologists. Future research on paleopathology will shed an interesting point of evidence.

In addition, the intersection between the primitive economies (shifting cultivation) and the nomadic nature of wandering from place to place has influenced the course of Mizo history. In history, we came across several evidence to prove human migration continued until they could find suitable land for cultivation. Ever since, the publication of Lewis H. Morgan’s “Ancient Society” in 1877 and Frederick Engels’s “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” in 1884, scholars focused their attention on the transition from small scale society to complicated social organization in human history. 33 Marx argues that economics is the key to understanding the function of human societies and how change was a dominant methodology of scholarly investigation on medieval state formation in North East India. 34 B.B Goswami in his study on “The Mizos in The Context of State Formation (1987)” provided a case study where polities could not develop beyond the level of petty chiefdoms by depending only on shifting cultivation in the rugged and steeply inclined terrains. 35 T.Gougin elaborated the same argument that “civilization could

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33 For further details, please see Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, (First Published in 1884), Reprint, Resistance book, Australia, 2004.

34 Sofia A Martia, J.B Ganguly, B. Pakem, B.K Roy Burman, Amelendu Guha, J.B Bhattacharjee are some of the eminent scholars who keenly devoted to the study on tribal polity and pre-colonial state formation in India. However, pre-state tribal societies of North East India have been entirely ignored. It is obvious that without serious consideration to the pre-state tribal polity, most notably study on formation of pre-colonial state have been poorly analyzed. The study of state formation cannot have a valid interpretation without referring to the process behind in the nature of pre-state tribal society.

have been possible only when they found dependable food supply from tilling the soil and they no longer had to hunt in nomadic lineages (tribes) over wide tracts of land”.

Another Zo historian, Vumson also stresses the evidence of socio-economic conflict in the early stage of history in Marxian perspective. He argues that unity amongst Mizos and their cognate groups were not possible due to clan feuds over the Jhum land, which resulted into each group (tribe) and clan being forced to set up their own territorial boundary. He wrote;

“Lack of communication, tribal wars, and lack or arable land in the country they adopted as their home caused Zo people to lose their racial harmony. As they grew in size quarrels erupted between groups, and even relatives were separated and driven to different regions. As a result of these kinds of forces the Zo gradually develop differences in their political, cultural and religious systems”.

This nomadic nature of society initiated the migration of the Mizos from Chin land to the hilly region adjacent to the kingdom of Tripura, Chittagong Hill tract adjacent to Nawab of Bengal, Manipur and Cachar.

2.2 Historical Records Relating to the Mizos.

Now, let us see some of the historical records that mentioned the term Mizo or Zo. These historical records are fragmented, brief and limited. Moreover, there is a huge gap between the periods of these

38 Ibid. pp. 7-8.
records. In South-east Asia, there had been dynasties (with no king), places and people that bear the label, Zo, Jho, Cho, Jo, Zhau, Jhau with spelling variations. In the year 863 AD, a Chinese historian, Fan Ch’o Hao in his book “Book of the Southern Barbarians” already used the word “Zo” to call a peculiar ethnic group of people. However, no definite connection can be established between such terms. Another scholar, a Catholic Father Vincent, in his book published in 1783 mentioned a group of people known as Zo. Sir Henry Yule’s narrative of the Mission to the court of Ava in 1885 showed the Chindwin plains and the area west of Chindwin River as Zo territory. At the beginning of the nineteenth century A.D, Italian travellers Father Sangermano recorded as;

“To the east of the Chien Mountain, between 20/30 and 21/30 North latitude, is a petty nation called Jo (Yaw). They are supposed to have been Chien....these Jo generally pass for necromancers and sorcerers, and for this reason feared by the Burmese, who dare not ill-treat them for fear of their revenging themselves by some enchantment”.39

From time to time, the surrounding empires such as the Raja of Tripura, the Raja of Manipur and Raja of Cachar claimed their authority over the Mizos, but there are no clear available records that supported such claims. However, the fact was that the Mizos had always been independent of any rule by outsiders. It is reported that there is a copper plate inscription in 1195, which bears the name of Kukisthanan (i.e. the land of Kukies).40 It is also known that King Rudra Singha (A.D. 1696-1714)

deputed two Assamese envoys to Tripura and reported that they met some Kukis on the way. The two ambassadors reported:

“Having halted there for two days, we proceeded for five days and reached the mouth of the Rupini River which is boundary between Cachar and Tripura. There is no human habitation in that place. There are hills on both sides. After three days we arrived at Ragrung within the jurisdiction of Tripura. The hills on both sides of the Barak River are inhabited by tribe called the Kukis”.  

The earlier migrants of Mizo cognate groups had already made their settlement in up to Arakan and Chittangong hill tracts, Manipur, Cachar, and Tripura. The Tripura Chronicles talks about Raja of Tripura’s relation with the Kukis in 1431. The Manipur Chronicles mentioned ‘old Kukies’ in 1554. The neighbouring Bengalis called the Mizo and their allied tribes as ‘Kuki’ and found them culturally rather backward, because the word ‘Kuki’ literally means “wild hill people”.

During Emperor Jehangir’s time in 1587, the Nawab of Moorsheedabad under the Mughal Empire directly administered Tripura and Chittangong. The revenue was fixed for the first year at one lakh and one sicca rupees was collected. However, the chief aim of the Mughal ruler in Chittangong and Tripura was to raise horses and elephants. In 1587,

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41 Ibid.
46 Ibid. p. 272.
Emperor Jehangir appointed *Futteh Jung Nawab* to supply elephants for the Mughal court.\(^{47}\) However, no record mentions whether the Mughal Empire included the Tripura highland inhabited areas of the Mizos. Mackenzie thus wrote;

“The Mughal Government, through whom our paramount titles come, would have recognized no such vital distinction between highland and lowlands of Tripura. It may be true that they never carried their armies in victorious march through the bamboo thickets of the hills, or harried with fire and sword the wattled wigwams of the Kuki tribes”.\(^{48}\)

The hilly areas adjacent to the Chittangong Hill tract, Cachar, and Tripura were inhabited elephant population. The Mughal rulers were always in need of elephants for warfare. Therefore, a number of elephants were imported from Assam and Chittagong hill tracts. According to the Mughal-Ahom treaty of 1638, Mir Jumla, as a representative of the Mughal Emperor claimed twenty elephants as an annual tribute.\(^{49}\) Elephants are usually found on the foothill hills of the plain areas. Even in the latter period, T.H Lewin says that elephants roam in large herds of 100 to 150 all over the district of the Chittangong hill tracts.\(^{50}\) Hence, it can be observed that several encounters between the Mizos and allied tribes and the Mughal Zamindar would have taken place.

\(^{47}\) Ibid. p. 270.

\(^{48}\) Ibid. p. 272.


However, the official chronicles of Cachar and Tripura are silent regarding our hypothetical point. The area of Chittangong hill tracts was also rich in forest products. Every year timber was felled in the areas subjected by the hill tribes. The Zamindar thus paid tribute to the hill tribes for bringing down forest products and there was a payment of some kind as the price of their safety. Failure to acknowledge the hill Tribe’s claims invariably led to bloodshed. The stories continued during the early colonial expansion in their surrounding foot hills, when the Mizo chiefs killed a number of Zamindar on the foothill of the plains areas.

2.3 In Search of Nomenclature.

The writing of Mizo history in its outset has always confronted with the problem of precise nomenclature. The identity of “Chin-Kuki-Mizo” is a sensitive and a complicated topic constantly discussed among the native historians. Many recent historians have attempted to suggest names, but the results ended up in mere confusion. Vumson already proposed that ‘Zo’ could be the common identity for all people who belong to Mizo, Kuki, and Zomi.

Recently, there has been a debate on the term “Mizo” or “Zo” from semantic point of view. Etymologically the word “Mizo” comes from the Duhlian-Lusei dialect ‘Mi’ and ‘Zo’. Taken separately, the word ‘Mi’, when used as a common noun (Gender) means ‘people’ or ‘person’. The word ‘Zo’ can be interpreted variously. Used as an adjective, it means a ‘cold place’ or ‘high altitude’. And, used as a verb it means ‘to accomplish’, ‘to conquer’ or ‘to finish’. As such there are scholars (Mizo cognate group in

51 The evidence of Zamindar and Mizo chief’s conflict were recorded in the early year of colonial rule in the North East India.

52 See Irfan Habib, *Atlas Of The Mughal Empire*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982. p.11A. The areas of timbers extracted from the surrounding pre-colonial Mizoram are shown in this map No. 11A.
present Manipur) who prefer to use the term ‘Zomi’ instead of ‘Mizo’, which they claim is the correct sequence of syllables. Interestingly enough, both the proponents of the terms ‘Zomi’ and ‘Mizo’ arrives at the same conclusion when it comes to interpretation i.e., “highlander” or “hill man”.

However, the interpretations of the terms ‘Mizo’ or ‘Zomi’ as ‘highlanders’ is contested on two counts- geographically and historically. Those who translate ‘Mizo’ or ‘Zomi’ as ‘highlanders’ concluded that the people call themselves ‘Mizo’ or ‘Zomi’ because they live in the highlands. It is, therefore, evident that the proponents of this interpretation based their conclusions on geographical-climatic considerations. While the geographical interpretation of ‘Mizo’ as ‘Highlanders’ is misleading, the term ‘Zomi’ itself is grammatically incorrect/erroneous taking into consideration the Duhlian-Lusei dialect use of grammar. The sequence of syllables in the Duhlian-Lusei dialect is such that, to form a proper noun (in a proper noun), an adjective do not normally precede a noun (subject). As such, terms like ‘Tlangmi’ (Hillmen), ‘phaimi’ (Plainsmen) are all compound words formed/ used as abstract common nouns with geographical connotations/ reference or base. The term ‘Mizo’ is considered the correct sequence of syllables since it is derived from the compound words ‘Mi’ and ‘Zo’ to form a proper noun which is based on ethnicity/ ethnic identity.53

Historically too, the interpretation of ‘Mizo’ or ‘Zomi’ as ‘highlanders’ is being dismissed as absurd because the various tribes had called/ identified themselves, and had used the term ‘Zo’, ‘Yo’, ‘Jo’, ‘Sho’ etc., even when they were settled in the Chindwin Valley. From this

premise L. Keivom, in his award winning book Zoram Khawvel-II, postulates that the ‘Zo’ in ‘Mizo’ does not necessarily connote the geographical-habitation preference of the Mizo tribes down through the ages; instead, it would be much more credible to hypothesize/assume, from the Primordialist’s paradigm, that the term ‘Zo’ has been commonly used by the different tribes generations on and on to identify themselves which we have retained/maintained to this day.

Thus, the Mizo and their allied groups (such as Kuki and Chin, Thado) belong to the same origin, researching on their history has been limited by absence of a common name to identify the whole group.\(^{54}\) In Burma they were known as Chin, Kuki in India and Chittagong hill tract.\(^{55}\) G.A.Grierson in Linguistic Survey Of India, Vol. III, Part-III wrote “The word Kuki and Chin are synonymous and are both used for many of the hill tribes in question. Kuki is an Assamese or Bengali term, applied to various hill tribes such as the Lushai (Lusei), the Rangkhol and the Thados etc”.\(^{56}\)

However, such name given to them by their neighbours seems alien among the Mizo groups. C.A Soppitt also noted this context- “The designation "Kuki" is never used by the tribes themselves, though many of them answer to it when addressed, from knowing it to be the Bengali or plains terms for their people.” \(^{57}\) Each group and clan calls themselves by

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\(^{54}\) Rev. S. Prim Vaiphei, ‘who we are/ who are we?’ in In Search of Identity, Published by Kuki-Chin Baptist Union, Manipur, March 1986. p. 17.


\(^{56}\) Ibid. p.1.

different names. G.A Grierson says, “There being no proper name comprising all these tribes”. T.H Lewin, a colonial ethnographer in 1885 wrote that the generic name of the whole nation is “DZO”. In a larger context, various orals folklores, Myths and legends supported titles based on the diversity of dialects such as Zo, Yo, Sho, Zhou, Yu, Scho and Jo, etc, which were synonyms used by them. Under this common name, each sub-lineage group and clan name also signifies each dominant group of people in their own habitant areas from place to place.

The term ‘Zo’ thus covered all Mizos and their allied groups in a larger context. In modern times, they call themselves by different names in their respective dialects from place to place. For instance, Mizo in Mizoram, Kuki and Zomi in Manipur, Zomi in Myanmar, Kuki in Cachar of Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Chittangong hill tract. A number of them also identify themselves by their own groups or sub-tribes and clan names.

Thus, for convenience, the Mizos in the present study is one group from the Zo group. The term ‘Mizo’ refers to a sub-lineage of the ‘Zo’ which is further divided into a smaller group or clan such as Lusei, Mara, Hmar, Paite and Lai. Other clans of the Mizos like Fanai, Ralte, Rangte, Lusei, Mara (Lushai by British), Shendu (Lakher by British), Lai (Shendu by British or Pawi by Lusei) and Hmar are dominant lineage groups. In Manipur, Hmar, Thado, Zou (Kuki by British to till official record) are lineages group. In Chittagong (in present Bangladesh), Pawi, Bawm, Khumi, Miria (Mru), Lusei are dominant. In Tripura, it is the Lusei, Halam, Zhou (Kuki by British to till official record). In Cachar (Assam), Thlado, Hmar, Rangkhol and Biate are dominant.

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58 G.A Grierson, op.cit.,
60 For instances, Halkha, Zahau, Matu (Chin by Burmese) are the dominant lineage group in Burma, in Mizoram, Lusei (Lushai by British), Mara (Shendu or Lakher by Lusei, Ralte, Shendu or Lakher by British), Lai (Shendu by British or Pawi by Lusei) and Hmar are dominant lineage groups. In Manipur, Hmar, Thado, Zou (Kuki by British to till official record) are lineages group. In Chittagong (in present Bangladesh), Pawi, Bawm, Khumi, Miria (Mru), Lusei are dominant. In Tripura, it is the Lusei, Halam, Zhou (Kuki by British to till official record). In Cachar (Assam), Thlado, Hmar, Rangkhol and Biate are dominant.
Hualngo, Biate also formed an important part of pre-colonial Mizo social formations. Clan when further divided into a smaller group it is known as a sub-clan, for instance Maras were divided into several smaller groups like Tlosai, Zawngling, Hawthai, Zyhno, Sabeu, Vytu, Heima and Lialai etc in the pre-colonial era.\(^{62}\) Lusei are divided into smaller groups or sub-clans like Hrahsel, Pachaua, Chhangte, Chawngthu, Chhakchhuak, and Hualhang etc.\(^{63}\) These groups or sub-clans are divided again in smaller units down to individual families. Among the Mizos, the Lusei clan was dominant and as a result they subjugated other clans by the end of the 19th century.

### 2.4 Origin of The Mizo Chiefdom.

The origin and development of Mizos chieftainship has its own indigenous growth since, their culture were more or less outside the influence of outside world. Basing on oral tradition, the Lusei can trace the origin of their chiefs and the system of chieftainship where as the same cannot be attributed to the other clans. It is said that in the village of Seipui area, (in the area of present Chin land adjacent to Burmese empire) a man called Zahmuaka who had six sons was persuaded by the Hnamte clan to become their leader or chief. At first he refused, but accepted only after the Hnamte clan offered a basket of paddy as a tribute. That was how the rise of Lusei chieftainship occurred. The six son’s Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangur, Rivunga and Rokhuma soon succeeded to the positions

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During the pre-colonial and postcolonial period, the Maras were popularly known as the Lakher. Lakher is a Lusei term derived from two words ‘la’ means cotton and ‘kher’ mean spinning. In pre-colonial period the term Lakher was therefore given after they specialized in cotton works.

of chiefs in their own villages. Among them, the descendent of Thangur, Sailo become most powerful ruling chief in ‘Mizo cultural area’. In the same period, a number of Mizo chiefs like Fanai, Hualngo, Ralte, Ngente, Chuauhang, and the present southern inhabitant chief of Mara, Lai or Pawi chiefs rose to chieftainship in their respective areas from place to place.

In the middle of 17th century, a group of Mizos started penetrating into the ‘Mizo culture area’ adjacent to Tripura, Chittagong hills tract and Cachar. Migration usually occurred in groups or clans from different places at different periods. There is uncertainty among the scholars regarding the migrations of Mizos. The Mizo’s migration was a continuous process starting from early in the 17th century to the first half of the 19th century. Some historians suggest that the period of migration took place between 1700-1780 AD. More accurately, B. Lalthangliana put the Lusei clans migration date between 1650-1700. Among the Mizos, the Hmar clans firstly migrated. Palian, a group of Lusei chiefs also crossed the Chin Hills of Burma border soon followed by Rivung chiefs, Thangluah chiefs, Zadeng chiefs, Rokhum chiefs and Rokual chiefs. Chiefs of Raltes, Hualngos, Paites and Fanais also made their move toward. Lai and Mara chiefs also soon migrated in to southern Mizoram soon after. These ruling clans established territory at different places in the hills.

64 Ibid. pp. 58, 63.
65 Ibid.
68 Dr. Lalthanliana, op. cit., p. 323.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
In the earlier period of the Zadeng ruling chiefs who were powerful and dominant in pre-colonial Mizoram, the enormous village of Dungtlang, houses numbering to around 3000 had been established. Palian chief Sibuta is also said to have ruled over different villages numbering to 25,000 houses in the hills bordering Tripura kingdom.\textsuperscript{71} This period also initiated the rise of Mara ruling Chiefs under the banner of the nine territorial groups of Tlosai, Hawthai, Chapi-Ngiaphia, Vytu, Zyhno, Lochei, Heima, Lialai and Lytu. The Lai cultural area under the chiefs of Chinzah, Zathang, Khenglawt, Thangchhawn, Hnialum, Hlawncheu and Hlawnchung (commonly known as Pawi) emerged in the southern border of Mara territory.\textsuperscript{72}

Inter tribal warfare continued for securing more and more Jhum lands. The weaker chiefs usually migrated further towards the western part of present Cachar, Chittangong hill tract and Tripura. In the early period, a number of chiefs such as Hmar, Paite and Thlado were further pushed toward the present Cachar and Manipur areas. A number of ruling chiefs like Palian, Rivung, Thangluah further advanced to the bordering hills of Tripura and Chittagong hill tract of Bengal.

\textbf{2.5 Formation of Sailo Chiefdom.}

The last part of the 17th century witnessed the rise of the most powerful ruling clans in 'Mizo cultural area'. These were the Sailo chiefs who migrated from Chin land. Initially, in order to strengthen their power, seven Sailo chiefs by combining their work force initiated the establishment of the largest village with the houses numbering to around 7000.\textsuperscript{73} However, the people in the village soon dispersed due to shortage

\textsuperscript{71} Mackenzie. Ibid. op. cit., p. 290. Also see Liangkhaia, op. cit., p. 68. Shakespear (1983), op. cit., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{72} Lalthanliana, op. cit., p. 390.
\textsuperscript{73} Liangkhaia, op. cit., p. 89.
of Jhum lands. However, the Sailos soon successfully established seven powerful territories on both the western and the northern parts of Mizo culture area.°⁴ Steadily, their power increased due to political influences over others.

Most of the common chiefs including many powerful Fanai chiefs soon became their subjects. During the first half of the 19th century, the confederacy of two ruling Sailo families (known as western and southern Sailo chiefs in colonial texts) was formed to subjugate other powerful ruling clans like, Palians, Thangluahs, and Zadengs.°⁵ None of them could defy the Sailo infiltration and one by one they met their fate. In the word of colonial ethnographer Shakepeare, “Their descendent in spite of much assistance failed to regain their position in the world.”°⁶ When the British government came into contact with the Mizo chiefs in the second half of the 19th century, Sailos had become the most powerful among the Mizo chiefs in Mizo ‘culture space’.°⁷ They controlled most part of the ‘Mizo cultural space’ except the Mara and Lai territory.

Thus, the Sailo Chiefs were the powerful and occupied most part of the hills approximately one fourth of the total land of Mizo culture area. While the Mara chiefs, Fanai chiefs and Pawi chief occupied the far southern parts during that period. Hmar clans and Paite clans also occupied the far North Eastern adjacent to hills of Manipur and Cachar. Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah and Rivung chief occupied the hills of Chittagong Hill Tract and Tripura. Hnamchawm or other miscellaneous ruling clans such as Ralte, Hualngo and others who occupied a position of lesser significance rule a small area of territory. These groups were more or less

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°⁴ Lalthanliana, op. cit., p. 400.
°⁷ Ibid. 401.
under the subjugation of the major ruling clans such as the Sailos, the Lais, the Maras and the Fanais.

The success of the Sailos was mainly due to better organization of internal and external administrations. Nevertheless, local wars remained at large in pre-colonial Mizoram. The next task of the Sailos however, was defending territories in the border areas. To increase their privileges and to protect their territory from encroachment of the neighbouring colonial Zamindars, a number of invasions were conducted in the areas of Cachar, Manipur, Tripura and Chittangong Hill tract of Bengal.

2.6 Transition from Kin-based Polity to Territorial chiefdom.

Chiefdom formed the most important form of political organisation in pre-state society. Chiefdoms concentrate power in the office of the chiefs. Chiefdoms have been called the first step in integrating the village as units with a multi community political organization. Chiefdoms were associated with greater population density and display sign of social ranking. The rise of centralize governing centre (i.e. a chief with political authority) is closely related to redistributive exchange patterns. Goods move into the centre (the chief) and redistributed through the chief’s generosity in giving feast and sponsoring rituals. Some scholars divided chiefdoms into two stages; the first stage that takes on simpler, and those that were more complex where there was a more developed regional hierarchy with paramount chief and lesser chiefdoms. The simpler form (i.e. petty chiefdom) has centralized decision making for better mobilization of manpower and exploitation of resources than was possible in a tribal form of society. The more complex chiefdom has greater measure of authority but still lacks bureaucracy to administer food surplus
not to distribute and store resources. The society was more divided along two lines—nobility and commoners.\(^{78}\)

The last part of 18th to first half of 19th century thus witnessed a transition from kin-based polity to territorial chiefdom. The rise and infiltration of the powerful Mizo ruling clan of the Sailos marked the formation and subsequent changes in the composition of the Mizo cultural space.\(^{79}\) First, the rise of the Sailos caused dispersal of various Mizo cognate groups such as Thados, Biates, Hmars and Paite all over Cachar, Tripura, and Manipur.\(^{80}\) Secondly, political unification evolved in the Mizo cultural space, although the central administration in the form of medieval state was not fully developed. The lack of an efficient agrarian economy failed to provide surplus production to stabilize one central administration.

A cultural revival took place during the Sailo period. They absorbed a number of other clans. It is said that various Mizo customaries of oral constitution evolved as a result of their influence. Linguistically, the Mizo language (Duhlian dialect) was nurtured as a common language.\(^{81}\) It also evidently helped the growth of the oral traditions. However, Paite, Mara, Hmar and Lai retained their dialect. Increase of their political hegemony also directly introduced the development of social stratification in the pre-colonial society. In addition, the period of the Sailos witnessed the growth of a significant population that led a greater demand of agricultural land. As a result, several tribal wars broke out on the question of ownership of


agricultural land. The occasional repression of their cognate powerful tribes (Chin) also affected their economy. The Mizos at those times were always in need of avoiding external danger. Tribute to other stronger chiefs by weaker chiefs also destabilized the economy during the period of the Sailo ascendancy.

The Mizos at that time were in a stage where an increase in the population was evident as such the expansion towards the north and western side took place, this resulted into shortage of cultivable land. The clan wars among Mizo chiefs also led to difficulties of maintaining Jhum lands, which led to a shortage in food supply. Tribute to superior chiefs by vanquished chiefs weakened the economic positions of many villages. The strongest chiefs, the more permanent ones usually drove out numbers of Mizo clans to the surrounding hill areas adjacent to kingdom of Manipur, Tripura and Bengal. The weaker chiefs mostly rushed southwestward and northward and finally came into contact with colonial powers. It is evident that the Luseis were driven out from hills surrounding Burma Empire by their cognate powerful groups called Chin. Successively, the Luseis also drove out the earlier lineage group of Thado to the plains of Cachar area and surrounding hills of Manipur.

This unending struggle of supremacy chiefly exhausted Mizo economy particularly from the second half of the 19th century. Every chief was in need of income to regain his or her position. The only substitute they could get was from the neighbouring people particularly the Bengalis who were the easiest prey. Faced with scarcity, Mizo warriors used to go to the border villages to seek economic gains or food grains. Therefore,

82 Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 330. It is said that the war broke out between the Eastern chiefs and Western chiefs during 1876-77 due to claming over of jhum land.
83 Vumson, op. cit., p. 110.
84 Shakespear, (1983) op. cit., p. 188.
several invasions were conducted on neighbouring territory mainly due to economic reasons like; procuring guns from neighbouring territory for the protection of their Jhum field from animals and protection from other hostile clans; to get substitute household needs and tools and to get labourers to work on their Jhum field. This is how in the latter period, the colonial government confronted many tribal uprisings in the forms of raids, plundering, captivities and pillage.

2.7 Polity in Mizo Chiefdom.

Pre-colonial Mizo polity was organized around institutions of a segment of petty chiefdom. Hereditary chiefs administered a village or cluster of villages and were usually independent from external control. There was a continuity and change throughout the pre-colonial period. However, after the rise of Sailo ruling chiefs, many of the common ruling chiefs were under their influence in which tributes and assistances were expected in times of needs. Local administration of judiciary and executive were in the hand of each village chiefs. One chief could rule over 1 to 10 village including hamlet depending upon the economy, chief personal ability to administer the village. Whenever the population increased, Mizo chief usually gave out part of his territory to his legitimate son. This is mainly due to the practice of Jhum land that cannot encourage large settlement in one place. Shakespear wrote in this context;

“When the son of a chief reached maturity he was given a certain number of households from his father’s village and was sent forth to a village of his own. Henceforth he ruled as an independent chief, and his success or failure as a ruler depended on his own talents and abilities. He paid no tribute to his father, but was
expected to help him especially in times of quarrels with neighbouring chiefs.  

All administration in the village was in the hand of Chief and his council of elders. T.H Lewin wrote “the village system among the kookies is best described as a serious of petty states, each under the dictator or president”. His power was extensive and invented with mythological construction. For instance, it was forbidden to kill a chief as he was called Lal, safe in the heat of battle.

The chief appointed a number of village officials. The chief (Lai by Lusei, Bawi by Lai, Abei by Mara) was helped by various groups of village elders called Upa by Lusei clans or Macha by Mara, Bawi or Tlang by Lai. Next to the chief they held the highest position in the village state. All officials such as Zalen by Lusei or Kutawl by Pawi, Blacksmith or Thirdeng by Lusei, Seudaipa by Mara, Siksek by Paite and professional priest like Sadawt and Bawlpu by Lusei, Siampu by Paite, Cheusapathaipa by Mara were appointed directly by the chief within his jurisdiction. In case of a Mara village (in the village of Chapi) the chief appointed junior hereditary chiefs to assist him for his administration. The junior hereditary chiefs also got portions of revenue from the villagers. However, by and large the existence of junior chiefs was not heard elsewhere in other parts of the Mizo cultural area.

The main duty of the chief and various village officials was to look after the villagers. The chief and his council of elders discussed all matters

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87 Ibid. p.132
88 Pawi Chanchin, Published by TRI, Directorate of Education, Govt. of Mizoram, 1988. p. 83.
89 Parry, 1976, op. cit., p. 252.
that concern the villages. Their main concern was the safety of villagers, each year’s cultivable land and various issues relating to people’s lives within their village. Various disputes among the villagers were settled at the court of the chief and his council. As remuneration for their efforts in trying cases, the elders of the council received fees called Salam by Lusei and Vopia by Mara.90

The lowest village official was called village crier or Tlangau by Lusei, Tangau by Paite, Tlaawpa by Mara. His main duty was to proclaim the chief’s order, as to what the villagers needed to know or other works was to be done.91 He was also in charge of collecting fine inflicted on the offenders in the chief’s administration. During the colonial rule, another extra village official called Khawchhiar by Lusei, Khireipa by Mara or village writer was appointed to assist the chief, who also extracted portion of peasant production.92

The success of each and every chief was very much dependent on his personality and his ability to control the village. A weak chief usually depends on his council of elders, which enhanced the privileges of village elders. It is interesting to note down that, a type of feudal fiefdom, which was prevalent in medieval Europe existed in a section of southern Mara village but this was a rare instance.93 In case of chiefs being weak, the noble clans seized lands for themselves. However, it is reported that none of them succeeded in establishing villages. The owner of a fief collected portion of the peasant’s produce from the villagers for the recognition of cultivating on the chief’s land. And in turn he had to pay revenue to the

90 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 N.E Parry, 1976, op. cit., p. 251.
chief. If he cultivated any land outside his own fief, he paid double revenue. Fiefs were sometimes sold on occasions and were given as part of a marriage price.

Unlike in European fiefdom, there was absence of political right over peasants by fief holders. The only privilege they enjoyed were the right to collect revenue from the peasants only when half of the revenue went to the chief. Parry says “the fief holder desired to establish political rights over the agriculturists”. This system thus caused perpetual friction between the chief and the owners of fiefs. The systems however continued until colonial rulers abolished it in the first half of 20th century.94 Except among the Mara chiefs, there is no evidence of fiefdom in other parts of Mizo cultural area although a type of vassal or sub-ordinate existed in which bigger chiefs provided protection to the smaller chiefs. The lesser chiefs were under heavy pressure of the bigger chiefs, who extracted tribute from them in kind.95

2.8 Land Revenue.

A colonial ethnographer B.C Allen argues that, “Land Revenue is not assessed, but the people pay a house tax”.96 Among the Lusei, land revenue was never assessed in pre-colonial period but every household in the village was bound to pay a portion of their produce to the chief. Land revenue was paid in kind, since there is no evidence of money economy in pre-colonial Mizo society. Revenue practiced differed from village to village and clan-to-clan. Land revenue was referred as Fathang or Lal Buhchhun by the Lusei, Bai by the Mara, which literally meant paddy

94 Ibid.
revenue or dues for chief.\textsuperscript{97} Assessment based on land was unheard of, although customs permitted Mizo chiefs to collect portion of peasant’s produce in recognition of granting agricultural land. There was no uniformity since all villages were independent.

The villagers were bound to pay revenue or tax to their chief, which were usually based on custom prevalent among each clan. \textit{Fathang} is the only revenue taken from paddy produce by \textit{Lusei} chiefs. Among \textit{Lusei}, two to three baskets of paddy were paid directly to the chief. Among \textit{Maras}, the most valuable revenue extracted by the chief was in terms of paddy known as \textit{Sabai} and \textit{Rapaw}. \textit{Sabai} is the revenue payable to the chief in recognition of his chiefship and was usually one to three baskets of paddy.\textsuperscript{98}

Revenue was demanded according to customs of social hierarchical set up of the society. The \textit{Lusei} chief appointed groups of elders known as \textit{Ramhual} who were expert in land matters. Appointment was made according to the person’s compliance to contribute the required amount of paddy to the chief. They were given the priority of selecting the best Jhum land before the common man chooses. In the event of getting the first choice of selecting Jhums, they paid heavier \textit{Fathang} or revenue to the chief than common villagers. The chief then appointed another group of officials called \textit{Zalen} who also had the right to choose the agricultural land before the common villagers. Zalen were exempted from \textit{Fathang} or revenue to the chief in consideration of their help extended to the chief when chief ran short of paddy or fell into any kind of difficulty.\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Zalen}

\textsuperscript{97} S. Mokia and S. Hrachu, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{98} During my field trip, it was very difficult to find out the amount payable to the chiefs in term of Modern calculations since it differs from place to place. However, based on interviews and Parry’s writings, it could be observed that one to three baskets or 10 to 30 kgs of paddy are collected.

\textsuperscript{99} Parry, 1927, op. cit., p. 6.
were usually appointed from the family as a means of economic security for the chiefs. Therefore the chief appointed those who could produce sufficient paddy as Zalen. In Mara villages, there were no officials like Ramhual and Zalen. Rather they had a council of elders called Macha who usually belonged to the noble clan. They helped the chief in times of trouble. In the southern Lai ruling area too Ramhual was unheard of though elders known as Kut awl or Tipuramta, which was equal in rank with Zalen were appointed by the chief.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the Zelen in Lusei, Kut awls were not given any privileges in selecting Jhum land. In case of Paite, the chief appointed two groups of people called Siam hmanliang and Siamhman neu respectively.¹⁰¹ The other village officials such as professional priest Sadawt and Bawlpu were exempted from paying the revenue due to their services rendered to the villagers. In case of Mara, they had no such village priest except a priest held for life known as tleuliatopa.¹⁰²

As stated earlier, customarily the chief claimed portions of the peasants produce. Amongst the Lusei clan, the amount of paddy realized from Ramhual at the end of harvest ranges from six baskets to ten baskets. The revenue extraction from the rest of villagers came to around to two baskets. According to modern standard it is estimated that one basket or phur is roughly equivalent to 20-25 Kg of paddy.¹⁰³ The size of Lusei basket called Dawrawn was about 30 to 36 inches long with a diameter of about 24 inches. The amount of tax realized was from four to ten baskets of paddy although Fathang differed from village to village and clan to clan.¹⁰⁴ Later in the colonial period, the amount of the chief’s revenue collection was

¹⁰⁰ Pawi Chanchin, op. cit., p. 53.
¹⁰² Parry, 1976, op. cit., p. 252.
¹⁰³ C. Rokhuma, (Personal interview), Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl, Mizoram, on 22nd January 2003.
¹⁰⁴ Parry, 1927, op. cit., p. 6.
fixed at six snowflake kerosene oil tins of paddy.\textsuperscript{105} Here it is estimated that one kerosene tin of paddy is equivalent to 11 kgs.\textsuperscript{106} The Ramhual get their choice of agriculture land and had to pay Fathang to the chief in proportion to the amount in which they had chosen their Jhums. In some villages, four to ten phur or baskets of paddy were taken. The blacksmith got a basket of paddy or one and a half kerosene tin or Tinkhat leh a chanve from each villager as a salary in return for his services to the villagers.\textsuperscript{107} In Lusei, Thingdeng or blacksmith was entitled to share a bit of every animal hunted, especially the spine or three ribs.\textsuperscript{108} The village priest received a basket of paddy from each respective clan in return for their services performed in connection with cultivation. The lowest village official called village crier or Tlangau received a basket of paddy from each household as a reward.\textsuperscript{109}

The rest of the villagers were bound to pay tax to the chief in kind. Amongst the Lusei, two to three baskets of paddy were paid directly to the chief. If two peasants shared the Jhum land, they only paid revenue for one agricultural land. One of them was regarded as the owner of the field and took ten baskets or phur of paddy out of which he paid all taxes and the rest of the crop was divided or equally shared by them.\textsuperscript{110} In case of peasants migrating to other villages without the consent of the chief, the

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid. p. 7. Six snowflake kerosene oil tins equals to Tin ruk or Phur hnih or two baskets. Here, it is very difficult to get the exact amount in terms of modern measurement of weight. C. Rokhuma author and essayist told me that, one Phur or one basket equals to 3 kerosene tins. In case of Mara, 5 kerosine tins equals to Dawh kha, 10 kerosine tin to Kai kha, 50 kerosine to Chhei Kha, 500 tin to Chheih hraw. S. Mokia and S. Hrachu, op.cit. Shakepear in his book ‘The Lusei Kuki clan’ describes, one basket was fixed by the chief for the measurement of tax which was being estimated about 50 lb. J. Shakespear, op. cit., p. 18.

\textsuperscript{106} S. Sailo, ‘A Sign Of Hope For The Jhummias In Tripura’ (Private Manuscript)

\textsuperscript{107} Shakepear, op. cit., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{108} Parry, 1927, op. cit., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{109} Shakepear, op. cit., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{110} Parry, 1927, op. cit., p. 7.
chief had the right to confiscate half of the paddy produced by the peasant. Customarily, Lusei chiefs had the right to seize all the property of a peasant who disobeyed their orders. This system is called Ram, which literally means confiscate.

*Fathang* is the only revenue taken from paddy produce by Lusei chiefs. Parry says;

“Fathang is not payable for vegetables and other miscellaneous crops if grown in the same chief’s land as the main rice crop but if a man has Maize plot in another chief’s land he will have to pay Fathang for it to the chief in whose land he has made the subsidiary cultivation“.

In some cases, Chapi chief in Mara territory collected one basket of cotton as a tax from the peasant. However, such evidence was rarely found. Among Maras, the most valuable revenue extracted by the chief was in terms of paddy known as Sabai and Rapaw. Sabai is the revenue payable to the chief in recognition of his chiefship and was usually one to three baskets of paddy. Rapaw was the price payable to the chief for the privilege of cutting jhum in his land. Sabai was payable to the chief in whose lands the field was situated. It was mostly paid in paddy if the peasant had any Jhum field. If the crops failed, the revenue was usually paid in the form of domestic animals ranging from fowls to pigs.

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111 Ibid.
112 Ibid. p. 2. Ram was abolished during the early period of colonial rule in Mizoram.
113 Ibid. p. 7.
114 Ibid. Mokia and Hrachu, op. cit. Cotton tax is not mentioned in Parry’s study of revenue among the Maras. It could be regarded as a local arrangement as well as less extensive in pre-colonial period.
115 During my field trip, it was very difficult to find out the amount payable to the chiefs in term of Modern calculations since it differs from place to place. However, based on interviews with Mara elders and Parry’s writings, it could be observed that one to three baskets or 10 to 30 kgs of paddy are collected.
Despite the revenue paid directly from the production of land, peasants were bound to pay compulsory tax. Meat tax or (i.e. Sachhiah by Lusei, Sahaw by Mara) was another compulsory tax paid in kind by the peasant. Villagers who killed a wild animal had to give the chief, the left foreleg. Anybody who failed to pay the meat tax was liable to be fined. They had to pay domestic animals such as fowls, pigs and goats up to the value of Mithun.117

In addition to this compulsory tax, villagers paid several taxes or duty to the chief. The bees, which make their nest in the surroundings of the village were regarded as the property of the chief. Any villager who collected wild honey including wax from a jungle, within the village chief’s jurisdiction must give the chief a portion of it. This bee tax was called khuaichhiah by Lusei, kheih-o by Mara. Whenever a salt well was dug up in a village, the chief was entitled a share of a portion of salt. One who collected salt from a salt well or spring within his jurisdiction had to give the chief one-tenth of the quantity collected. 118

117 Mithun, a grass-eating animal is the most important domestic animal. Wealth of a man was judged by the numbers of Mithun he owned. Vumson suggest that Mizo culture was a mithun culture. Hence, many western writers have suggested that Mizo culture was a Mithun culture. Mithun was infact, the Mizo currency. In marriage contract the bride price was counted in terms of Mithuns. Vumson, Zo History, aizawl, Mizoram, 1987. p. 12.

118 Salt was one of the most precious articles in pre-colonial Mizoram due to its uneasy availability in pre-colonial Mizoram. The Mizos very often procured salt from neigbouring plain areas in exchange of elephant tusk, animal skins and other indigenous commodities. In pre-colonial Mizoram, there are few well-known salt well such as Dap salt well (between Phaileng village and Dampui), Hmawngzawl Salt well (Rabung village), Bawng salt well (far south hilly area of Hriangtlang and Siallukawt) and Chite salt well (Rawpui) were among them. The pre-colonial Mizo peasants came from different placed to extract salt from this salt well. C.Rokhuma, ‘Chi-Seh’in Laltluangliana Khiangte, Mizo Thuzuak Thlan Chhualhte, L.T.L Publications, Aizawl, 2001. pp. 47-51.
Occasionally, a community fish catching day was observed. Mizo chiefs took portions of the fish caught by the villagers as tax. The Mara chief usually took the biggest fish caught by the villagers.\textsuperscript{119} In case of the Mara community, the chief took the young pig as dues. The second newborn pigs were taken.\textsuperscript{120} Another custom called \textit{vaohly}, the chief and elder seized the piglet as soon as it was for sacrificial purposes and sometimes as remuneration to a young man who had gone to deliver a message within a village or another village. In the villages of Savang, the chief could claim a pot of beer from each house in the village.\textsuperscript{121} In chapi village, all guns belonged to the chief. For the hiring of a gun the chief took half the neck of the animal shot.\textsuperscript{122}

The Mara chief collected two handfuls of ginger from the peasant.\textsuperscript{123} The Mara and Lai Chiefs could ask their villagers to kill domestic animals at any time, if found necessary.\textsuperscript{124} This custom was called \textit{Sathi}.\textsuperscript{125} Among the Luseis, the chief sometimes asked his villagers to contribute paddy or fowl for villagers in misery caused by accidents or diseases. Another similar custom prevalent in the Mara, paddy was levied on every house except the chief. Among Luseis, Mithun was regarded as a useful domesticated animal in the pre-colonial period. Therefore, if any villager sold it to another village, he had to pay a young pig to the chief as due.

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\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. p. 258.

\textsuperscript{121} Parry, 1976, op. cit., p. 254.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid. p. 256.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. p. 254.

\textsuperscript{124} Pawi Chanchin, op. cit., p. 85.

\textsuperscript{125} Parry, 1976, op. cit., pp. 257-258
\end{flushleft}
This was known as *Sechhiah or Mithun Tax*. The Mizo chief usually levied tax upon foreign traders trading in his territory.

Despite all these taxes, peasants were required to pay their respect to their chiefs and follow his instructions. The chief was entitled to free labour from the villages for the construction and repair of his house. Amongst the *Luseis*, the villagers had to build the chief’s house for free of cost. However, it was not heard of in some places such as the southern part of Rolura’s village. In the northern part, the chief of Lallula’s village extensively practiced the system. This system was also widely prevalent among the southern *Mara* chiefs. While the work was in progress, the chief supplied the workers with beer, and generally gave them a feast when completed. Parry wrote, “These services to the chief are rendered cheerfully, and are never questioned, as they are immemorial custom, and due to the chief as the father and protector of the villagers”. In the southern part especially in the village of *Chapi*, the chief was entitled to call upon his villagers to work in his fields. The villagers give one day’s work each year to clear the chief’s Jhum and another day’s work each to weed it. If villagers migrate to other village without informing the chief and without paying the various taxes, it was regarded offensive. Hence the chief confiscated the entire paddy.

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126 Dr. Vanlalringa Bawitlung, ‘Socio-Economic History of The Mizo With Special Reference to Chiefs’ on *Historical Journal Mizoram*, Vol. II, Issue II, Published by Mizo History Association, July 2001, p.3. This due indicates that the chief was the ultimate owner of all properties in his village.

127 Chaterjee, op. cit., p. 41.

128 Parry, 1927, op. cit., p. 4.

129 Lalthangliana, op.cit., p. 286.

130 Parry, 1976, op. cit., 251.

131 Ibid. p. 252.

132 Ibid.
The features of the above discussion indicate that revenue administration of Mizo was based on customary practices, which were handed down from generation to generation. However, customs did not specify the amount of tax to be collected. Hence, the amount of revenue was arbitrarily based on each administrative unit of the village.

2.9 Population.

No census count was ever taken in the pre-colonial period, as such was not the practice of the Mizos. Our observations are confined to colonial record in the last part of 19th century. In early times, the Mizos usually expressed their numbers according to the number of houses in a village. A.G McCall says that the Mizos usually lived in different groups of settlements from 20 to 100 or 300 houses or at a times more than these and settlement were usually situated among the hills tops and often fifteen miles apart. Most of the villages in the pre-colonial society were usually small. They consisted of few dwellings and were called hamlets or Khawper. This is mainly because of the Geographical factors, which did not favour large settlements in hills. British officers, Shakespear wrote, “when we occupied the country villages of 400 and 500 house were not common, and there were two or three of 800 houses”.134

In the early 19th century, it is said that the village of Selesih under Sailo chiefs had 7000 houses and Dungtlang village under Palian chiefs had 3000 houses.135 In the present areas of present hill Tripura, Palian chief Sibuta (1765-1840) is said to have had a village of 25,000 houses.136

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136 Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 290. Also see Liangkhaia,(2002), op. cit., p. 68. It is said that Sibuta controlled all the hilly areas of Tripura during the time of Rajdhar Manikya (Tripura Maharaja).
the middle of the 19th century, the legendary Tualte Vanglai village under Chief Vanhnuailiana is also said to have had 1000 house. In 1850, it was recorded that the Mizo chief Ngura village (Sentlang) had houses numbering to around 800-1000. British officer Captain Graham in 1861 estimated some of the southern village population as 12,600 persons under the control of chief’s Rolura, 10,800 under chief Lianlula’s village and 2,580 persons under Chief Rothangpuia’s village. These estimates however were confined to some villages and most of the other southern part under the Lai chiefs and Mara chiefs were ruled out in this estimate. Hence, it is very difficult to determine even the approximate population of the entire pre-colonial Mizoram.

2.10 The Hill Ecology.

Hill ecology conditions strongly determined the character of the Mizo cultural space. Man and his surrounding geographical environment deeply affects his social, political and economic conditions. This is true in the context of the Mizo ever since the evolution of history. The cultural space is always closely related to the hill conditions of a particular area. For instance, the word ‘Mizo’ means ‘highlander’ or ‘hill man’ owing to the hilly conditions. Both hill ecology and history have contributed considerably to the nature of the identity of Mizos.

138 Ibid. p.292. Also see Pioneer, the 10th June 1870 on Mackenzie appendix, p. 563.
139 T.H Lewin(1978), op.cit., p. 130.
140 The first half of the colonial period in the year of 1901 the first official census was taken. It recorded a population of 82,434 spreads across 239 villages. However, the census did not include the southern portion of Mara and Lai (pawi) ruling areas. In the year of 1911, the total population was 91,204. In the 1921 census, the total population was found to be 98,406. BC Allen, EA Gait, CGH Allen & HF Howard, Gazetteers of Bengal and North Eastern India, Mittal publication, 1979. p. 460. Mizoram District Gazetteers, op. cit., p. 59.
Traditional folk songs refer to the term “Zoram” which literally means the ‘Land of the hill people’. For the Mizo the loss of land meant loss of cultural identity. Most of the nomenclature was more or less directly related to the hill ecology. Local belief, local stories, legends, folktales, and ceremonies were also related to the geographical conditions of the area. Rivers and Mountains had their own importance in the life of Mizos as it had a deep connection with culture and traditional religious beliefs of the people. Ceremonies and sacrifices were often conducted to dedicate to the spirit of geographical features. Hill conditions helped to evolve their traditions and beliefs.

The inhabitant areas of the Mizos confided predominantly to hilly terrain. A Christian Missionary, Regional Lorrain reported his first experience in the hills as

“There is practically no flat land in Lakher (Mara), even of such small dimension as would be needed to erect a bungalow, nothing but hills and valleys, rivers and rocks, the sides of the mountains being densely covered with jungle from the foot to the brow”.142

The hill ranges generally run from north to south. The area is composed of steep vertical inclined hills and deep narrow valleys except in some few areas where flat lands were found. Chamdur and Champhai covered the largest plains area.143 In this area, it is said that a system of settled cultivation by ploughing the field was practised by Hmar clan probably between the period of 1700-1800 AD.144 However, this method of

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cultivation is less supported by oral information and cultured traits. Traditionally, flat lands were not recognised to be permanent settlement areas as pre-colonial Mizos usually selected the hilltops for safety from intruders and to avoid tropical diseases.\(^\text{145}\)

The general heights of mountain ranges vary from 900 metres to 2,157 metres.\(^\text{146}\) The Blue Mountain or the *Phawngpui* measuring the height of 2,157 metres had a deep connection with the local religious belief.\(^\text{147}\) The *Lai* occasionally offered sacrifices to the spirits who were believed to have inhabited *Phawngpui* Mountain.\(^\text{148}\) *Lengteng*, *Chalfilh*, *Lurh*, *Hmuifang* and *Tan* are other important mountains, which were also connected with traditional legends.\(^\text{149}\) Traditional Mizo believed that these hill ranges and mountains were occupied by spirits hence avoided disturbing these areas. The maintenance of these sacred forests enhanced the spiritual well-being of the communities and also protected critical elements of natural forests.

Sacred sites were extensively observed by the Mizo in pre-colonial period. Rih Lake was regarded as a sacred place amongst some of the Lusei clans. In fact, the belief systems play one of the most important roles in the cultural life of the traditional Mizo. For instance, even a fertile area was left uncultivated if the Mizo agriculturists found that it was not in tune with their traditional beliefs. Rivers, hills and mountains had their own importance in the life of Mizo as they had deep connections with the culture and religious beliefs of the people. The whole earth belonged to a

\(^{145}\) J. Shakepear wrote, “the Lushai (Lusei) likes to perch his village on the top of a ridge or spur, partly because, hillside being steep, it is difficult to fine sites elsewhere, partly for the sake of climate, but chiefly, I think, in order to get a good defensive position”. Shakepear. (1988), op. cit., p. 19.

\(^{146}\) Mizoram District Gazeteers, op. cit., p. 5.


\(^{148}\) Pawi Chanchin, TRI, Directorate of Education, Govt. of Mizoram, 1988. p.120.

\(^{149}\) Mizoram District Gazeteers, op. cit., p. 5.
divine or the *khuavang*. *Khuavang* designed all the rivers and trees, hills ranging from north to south.\(^{150}\)

Many rivers such as *Chhimtuipui* (*Kolodyne*), *Tlawng*, *Mat*, *Tuichang*, *Tiau*, *Karnaphuli* were strongly connoted to the belief system. In the late pre-colonial period, the river route was the main means of communication. They used these rivers as instruments of their trade with neighbouring although limited to a great extent. Despite the advantage of river routes, a settlement on riversides was not common due to its feverish condition. The inhabitant hills falls under the monsoon rainfalls. During rainy seasons, tropical diseases are quite common. The Mizo considered valleys were feverish and unhealthy during rainy seasons. Malaria fever was quite common in the river valley areas. B.C Allen wrote;

“The valleys are malarias and unhealthy; and during rains the climate, even on the lower hills is moist and enervating, and malarial fevers are common everywhere. On the higher ridges is fairly cool and pleasant even at the hottest seasons of the years.”\(^{151}\)

The Mizo inhabited hills were covered by thick and green forest.\(^{152}\) It had a rich diversity of flora and fauna. A.T Gage in his book “*A Botanical Tour in The S. Lushai Hills*” (1899) had recorded 317 species of plants found in the hills.\(^{153}\) Cecil E.C Fischer also recorded more than 1300 species of plants.\(^{154}\) In recent times, the vegetation has been classified as tropical wet evergreen forests, tropical semi-evergreen forests and Montana sub-


\(^{151}\) Allen, op. cit., p. 458.


tropical pine forests. Various timber and bamboo species were found abundantly in pre-colonial Mizoram. Palms were quite common on the lower slopes and Oak, Chestnuts, and Firs grow on the higher ridges. Different species of banana, ferns and orchids are found everywhere. Various species of stinging nettles, some of which are indeed poisonous and the sting of which, although not causing death would cause three to four days severe illness. These poisonous vines served as the village fort. Lemon and tea tree were found in the northern part.

Cotton tree are found abundantly in pre-colonial Mizoram. The cotton tree sheds its leaves every year and when the season arrived for the cotton tree to show sign of life, it first bursts open and the contents fall to the ground. The tree afterwards bursts into leaves. The pods crack open and this can be gathered. The cotton inside the shell makes an excellent cushion and mattress. This cotton was then sold to the market during the last part of the pre-colonial period. Rubber trees grew naturally in some areas of the hills. During late pre-colonial era, the Mizos used to tap rubber. A bag of crude rubber was brought down to neighbouring plains areas and sold in exchanges for daily necessities. However, the local method led to the over tapping of local rubber trees and this resulted in the decline of the rubber trees. The export of crude rubbers completely died out by the time colonial ruler set up administration in the hills.

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156 BC Allen, op. cit., p. 457.
158 Ibid. p. 16.
159 Lalrimawia, op. cit., p. 168. Also see ‘Report on The Administration of the Province of Assam for the year 1876-1877’. p. 75.
It is notable to keep in mind that various species of bamboos grew abundantly in the whole region. Pre-colonial Mizo agriculture areas were mainly confined to the bamboo jungles. Recently, a local ethnobotanist J.H Ramnghinglova has recorded 20 species of bamboo found in Mizoram.\textsuperscript{161} Mizoram is often described as the land of bamboos, for instance J.D Baveja wrote a book entitled as “The land where the Bamboo Flowers” (1970).\textsuperscript{162} Some writers state that the pre-colonial Mizo economy was based on the bamboo plant (Bamboo based economy) due to the extensive uses of this plant by the people. Its usefulness could be observed in the following; at every stage of its growth from shoot to maturity it served a specific purpose. Local people consumed the new shoot as food; young bamboo was used for making a variety of baskets and other household articles; matured bamboo provided material for building houses and village defence posts.

However and despite its usefulness, it is interesting to note down that bamboos periodically led to famine. A bamboo flowers and then produces fruits after an interval of a couple of years. The fruits lead to production of seeds, which was voraciously consumed by rats. Strangely it has been observed that this period of the bamboo plants led to a sudden increase in the rat population. The rats soon finished eating the bamboo seeds and then turned to the paddy fields. This initiated successive famines in the hills.

Pre-colonial Mizoram was home to a forest-inhabited by a variety of wild animals. Wild animal including Elephants, Rhinoceros, Tigers, Leopards, wild hogs, porcupines, Wild Dogs, Civet Cats, Land Tortoises, the Himalayan Black Bears and Malay Bears, Bisons, several species of


\textsuperscript{162} Please see J.D Baveja, The land where the bamboo flowers, Publication Board, Guwahati, 1970.
Deers, Gurals and Serows are found in the hills.\footnote{Mizoram District Gazetteers, op. cit., p. 13. B.C Allen, op. cit., p. 457.} The forest bordering Cachar and Chittangong Hill Tract were full of elephants. Wild goats were found on the ridges of the steepest slopes. Gibbon Apes are found on the southern \textit{Mara} land.\footnote{Lorrain, op. cit., p. 17.} Cobra, King Cobra, Viper etc, though not in plenty represent the poisonous group of snakes while pythons, grass snakes and many other varieties of smaller snakes represent the non-poisonous group. Alligators are also found in rivers. Different species of birds and fishes were also found abundantly. Jungle fowls, hornbill pheasants, doves and pigeons were found across the whole land. Numerous Eagles and Kites also abound throughout the country and make desperate raids on the domestic fowls.\footnote{Ibid, p. 18.}

Folklore and various legendary stories were connected with animals. According to traditional belief, it was the wish of any young able man to kill big animals in order to achieve or to provide himself a good visa to paradise or \textit{Pialral}. Hunting was the favourite pastime of Mizo young men. The meat of Bisons, deer and elephants were the favourite foods of pre-colonial Mizos among the animals. Animals’ skins, animals Bones and Elephant tusks were sold in the neighbouring areas in exchange of salt and other commodities.\footnote{Lalrimawia, op. cit., p. 167.} Animal’s bones and skin become a source of commercial activities. In early period, Elephant tusk was exported to Mughal territory through traders of \textit{Sylhet}.\footnote{Ibid.}

Traditional lore reflects some aspects on the Lusei’s desire for the conservation of animals. In fact, animals including domestic animals played an important role in formulation of knowledge amongst the pre-
colonial Mizos. Folklore of proverbs, songs and legendary stories are connected with animals. Animals were the property of the divine known as *Khuavang*, looked after by a female deity called *Lasi*. Without the permission of Lasi, hunters were not able to shoot animals in pre-colonial period.\textsuperscript{168}

In many cases, animals have better instincts than humans. They depended extensively on animals’ behaviour so as to understand the natural environment. For instance, domestic cock crowing in the morning meant the women folk had to wake up and start preparing food for cooking. The cock crowed at night at around 9 pm which meant that it was time to go to bed. They would also observe the movements of some insects. For instance, during the rainy season, if ants or *fanghmir* come out of their nest to hunt, this implied that there would be no rain on that day. Domestic animals occupied a central importance in various sacrifices and rituals, without which no sacrifices offered or rituals performed will be acceptable to the deities. The interaction of man and nature would have been incomplete without the help of animals in traditional *Lusei* community.

The tiger was referred to *Sapui*, literally means mighty animal. Among the animals, tiger was regarded as super natural animal. It was believed by the Mizos that the tiger could read minds and identify a person guilty of trespassing social norms and punish him to death. It was believed that the tiger hardly attacked or killed an innocent man and if an uninjured tiger killed anybody, people took it as a curse against him.\textsuperscript{169} In the chief’s court, an oath was taken saying that if the truth was not spoken they would be bitten by tigers.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{169} *Paite in Mizoram*, Published by TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1987. p. 45.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
Hunting in pre-colonial period was not only a game but part of the economic activity. Meat was regarded as a rich source of protein. T.H Lewin wrote “the Lhoosai are great eaters of flesh, and domestic animal not being plentiful among them, their supplies depends on good deal upon their success in the chase”.\textsuperscript{171} They hunted, trapped and snared animals and birds. This did not mean that the traditional hunters could kill animals for mere pleasure. Some animals were regarded as sacred and were not to be killed or eaten. Various Mizo lores dealt with how to treat insects, birds and animals. The lore usually told people as “ngai lo” or “we don’t do such things”. For instance, Mizo’s lore prohibited ill-treatment or torture of animals such as slow Lories (sahuai), Mulek (eagle), Toads (Utawk) and Vamur (martin bird). Hunting of birds was prohibited during nesting period.\textsuperscript{172} To harm or to kill hornbill (Vapual/kawlhawk) during her nesting period would cause the death of that person’s wife.

The previous analysis shows that Mizo cultural areas in pre-colonial period was migratory people migrating far from China to the hilly region between Burma, the Kachari kingdom (Dimasa Kingdom), Manipur, Tripura and the Bengal. Such migratory habits were the outcome of the process of organized states in pre-colonial Southeast Asia which involved slavery, conscription, taxes, corvée labor and warfare. Another good reason of migration was strongly determined by diseases environment. Usually, the top hills were selected a refuge zone mainly because of their conceptualization of diseases. Hence, tradition was based on a strong attachment on customary laws, norms, belief systems and ethical values. The traditional worldview helped to regulate use and exploitation of natural resources through mutual relationship between man, nature and

spirits. Chieftainship institution was also designed to execute the management, thereby imparting customary laws. Forest including animals and minerals provided not only foodstuff but more importantly medical materials. Maintenance of surrounding environment was community health which was impacted through worldview under the watchful eyes of the chiefs.