CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
A. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING:

Manipur is a small hilly state in the extreme corner of the north eastern region of India. The state has a total area of 22,356 sq.kms which forms about 0.7 percent of the total land surface of the Indian Union.\(^1\) The state is situated between 93°53' E and 94°45' E longitudes.\(^2\) It is bounded on the north by the state of Nagaland, on the east by Myanmar (Burma), and on the south partly by the state of Mizoram and the Chin Hills of Myanmar. On the west it is surrounded by Cachar district of Assam. The state has a borderline of about 854 kms of which 532 kms forms the international boundary line with Myanmar on the east and the south-east and the remaining 502 kms of border line separate it from its neighbouring states in India. The National Highway No.39 links the state with other parts of India. This highway links the state capital Imphal with the nearest railhead at Dimapur in Nagaland. Another National Highway(No.53) links it with Silchar in Assam. The state has direct air link with some parts of India too.

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The state of Manipur can broadly be divided into two natural regions, viz. the hills and the valley. The state is almost rectangular in shape with a small valley in the centre, which is surrounded by rows of high hills on all sides. The hills cover 20,513 sq.kms which constitutes about 91 per cent of the total area of the state, and the valley is spread over an area of 1,843 sq.kms which is about 9 per cent of the total area of the state. The topography of the state is such that it slopes from the north towards the south. 3

The average elevation of the hills which stretch from the north to the south rises over 3,000 metres above the Mean Sea Level particularly in the northern hill areas of the state though the average elevation of the hills is between 1,500 metres and 1,800 metres only. The average elevation of the valley is about 790 metres above the Mean Sea Level. 4

B. ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION:

Manipur came under the political control of the Government of British India

in 1892. It merged with the Union of India in 1949, that is, two years after India got independence. Under the Indian Constitution which was promulgated in 1950, Manipur became a Part 'C' State and in 1957, it became a Union Territory. It was granted Statehood on January 21, 1972. Till May 1983, the state had six districts, namely, (1) Manipur Central District, (2) Manipur North District, (3) Manipur South District, (4) Manipur West District, (5) Manipur East District, and (6) Tengnoupal District. But with the re-organisation of the Central District into three districts, viz. Imphal District, Bishnupur District and Thoubal District, the State has now eight revenue districts namely (1) Imphal District, (2) Bishnupur District and (3) Thoubal District and the five hill districts renamed (4) Ukhrul District, (5) Tamenglong District, (6) Senapati District, (7) Churachandpur District and (8) Chandel District. Thus the first three districts are in the valley of the State and the remaining five districts in the hill areas.

C. ECONOMY:

The economy of the people of Manipur State is basically agrarian. About 70 per cent of the people are


engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. This is evident from the 1971 and 1981 Economic Census reports which shows that 70.65 and 68.59 per cent respectively of the people were engaged in agriculture for their livelihood.

The following table shows the districtwise percentage of workers in Manipur according to 1971 and 1981 census.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>9.68</td>
<td>20.01</td>
<td>21.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal</td>
<td>51.97</td>
<td>48.59</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>26.33</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur------</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>89.28</td>
<td>87.53</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>85.29</td>
<td>78.31</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>11.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>89.79</td>
<td>32.01</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>14.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>82.87</td>
<td>80.91</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>15.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus it is seen that approximately 70 per cent of the people were engaged in agricultural sector only. In 1971, in the valley 57.77 per cent of the people were engaged in the agricultural sector but in the hill region 87 per cent of the people were engaged in the agricultural sector. According to the 1961 Economic census the percentage of people engaged in the agricultural sector was 68.59 per cent of the total population.

The following table shows the districtwise percentage of workers in Manipur according to 1991 census.

Table 1.2
District-wise number of workers in Manipur in 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Non-workers</th>
<th>Marginal workers</th>
<th>Other Servitors</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>1,00,286</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>7,688,92,652</td>
<td>2,103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>46,574</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>3,489,34,212</td>
<td>302</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>98,533</td>
<td>2,752</td>
<td>11,030,57,986</td>
<td>1,988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>33,691</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>4,420,25,449</td>
<td>1,739</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>1,61,717</td>
<td>24,547</td>
<td>11,297,67,916</td>
<td>14,753</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>1,00,581</td>
<td>11,078</td>
<td>7,170,38,627</td>
<td>7,403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Imphal</td>
<td>4,61,909</td>
<td>19,901</td>
<td>53,706,83,947</td>
<td>18,403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>58,954</td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>9,590,36,710</td>
<td>659</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Manipur 10,62,245 66,621 1,08,398 4,37,499 47,350

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From 1971 till today agriculture continues to be the single largest sector of the state's economy. The state domestic product (SDP) which is commonly known as 'State Income' is the most convenient indicator for giving an idea about the structure of the state's economy. A study of the sectoral contributions of the State Domestic Product of Manipur shows that agriculture has been playing the predominant role for contributing the economic growth of the state. Its contribution to the state's Domestic Product in 1985-86 was 54 per cent as against 51 per cent in 1983-84. Again, \( \% \) of SDP the sectoral contribution was 52 per cent in 1986-87 and 53 per cent in 1987-88. Agricultural economy of the state plays an important role but the estimates of the state domestic production fluctuates from year to year according to the success or failure of crops. The success or failure of the crops depends almost entirely on the capricious rainfall. Thus from the income and employment point of view agriculture plays an important role in the State's economy. Though agriculture continues to be the main economy of the state, yet till today the state is mostly a monocropping area. Double cropping system is practicable only in the valley where a settled form of agriculture is prevalent. Shifting cultivation is commonly practised in the hill areas.

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According to 1971 and 1981 census reports only 9.34 and 9.67 per cent respectively of the people of Manipur were engaged in industrial sector. Manipur continues to be one of the most industrially backward states of India. The state has vast mineral and forest resources. But because of the non-availability of infrastructural facilities like power, skilled labour, transport and communication, financial institutions, etc. the mineral and forest resources have not so far been explored and therefore the state is one of the most industrially backward states in the country. Apart from a few cottage and small-scale industries there is practically no big industry worth naming in Manipur.  

D. POPULATION:

The people of Manipur can broadly be divided into two sections, the plain people including the scheduled castes and the hill people or the scheduled tribes. The plain people are the Meiteis, the Muslims, the Nepalis and those who came from other parts of India and settled in Manipur such as the Assamese, the Bengalis, the Punjabis, and the Biharis, etc. The Meiteis constitute the majority in the

plain as well as in the state as a whole. The following table shows the distribution of population in Manipur on the basis of their mother tongue in the last two General censuses.

Table 1.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bengalis</td>
<td>15,025</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Nepalis</td>
<td>26,381</td>
<td>37,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Assamese</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>11,631</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kabui</td>
<td>49,339</td>
<td>50,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td>57,586</td>
<td>78,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mao</td>
<td>34,760</td>
<td>53,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Kuki</td>
<td>14,488</td>
<td>37,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Paite</td>
<td>23,857</td>
<td>30,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>22,805</td>
<td>29,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Vaiphei</td>
<td>11,758</td>
<td>15,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Thadou</td>
<td>49,217</td>
<td>57,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Lushai</td>
<td>6,001</td>
<td>6,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Meitei</td>
<td>6,78,402</td>
<td>8,78,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>68,192</td>
<td>1,45,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,72,753</td>
<td>14,20,953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hill tribes can broadly be divided into two major groups, the Nagas and the Zomis or the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group. There are as many as 29 scheduled tribes in Manipur according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Modification) Order, 1956 of the Constitution of India. The recognised tribes are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Khoirao, Koireng, Kom, Mao, Lamgang, any Mizo (Lushai) Tribes, Maram, Maring, Monsang, Moyon, Faite, Pyrurum, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Sukte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou.\(^{14}\)

The population of the state according to the 1971 census was 10,72,753. The corresponding figures in 1981 and 1991 censuses indicated 14,20,953 and 18,26,714 respectively. Accordingly, the density of population increased from 48 persons per sq.\(\text{km}\). in 1971 to 64 persons and 81 persons per sq.\(\text{km}\) in 1981 to 1991 respectively. Out of the total population in the state in 1971 the population of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes was 3,34,466 and 16,376 respectively.\(^{15}\)

The rest of the population is composed of mostly Meiteis and other plain people. The total population of the state


according to 1981 census was 14,20,953 out of which the population of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes was 3,87,977 and 17,753 respectively.\textsuperscript{16} Again in the 1991 census the population of the state has reached 18,37,149 and the population of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes has increased upto 6,32,173 and 37,106 respectively. The following table shows the districtwise population of tribals in Manipur.

**Table 1.4**

District-wise Distribution of Tribal population in Manipur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manipur North</td>
<td>82,706</td>
<td>79.39</td>
<td>1,05,657</td>
<td>67.98</td>
<td>1,75,206</td>
<td>84.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manipur West</td>
<td>43,996</td>
<td>97.82</td>
<td>29,259</td>
<td>49.97</td>
<td>83,332</td>
<td>93.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Manipur South</td>
<td>91,984</td>
<td>93.75</td>
<td>1,16,254</td>
<td>86.27</td>
<td>1,64,709</td>
<td>93.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tengnoupal</td>
<td>34,490</td>
<td>89.07</td>
<td>38,430</td>
<td>68.09</td>
<td>60,729</td>
<td>85.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Central Dist.</td>
<td>21,364</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>24,141</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>46,319</td>
<td>11.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manipur East</td>
<td>59,926</td>
<td>96.30</td>
<td>74,236</td>
<td>89.50</td>
<td>1,01,873</td>
<td>93.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3,34,466</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3,87,977</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6,32,168</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10,72,753 % to state</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,20,953 % to state</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,37,149 % to state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{20} Central District included Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur Districts.

The Zomis or Chin-Kuki-Mizo are mostly found in the state of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam, the Chin state of Myanmar and Bangladesh. These tribes resemble each other closely in appearance which is invariably of the Mongolian type. They are known as Chin or Zomi in Myanmar, Kuki in Manipur and Lushai in Lushai Hills.


22 Jyotimoy Roy, *op. cit.*, n. 21, p. 190.

present Mizoram state. But soon after Indian Independence, the Kukis of Manipur were further divided into different sub-tribes such as Paite, Hmar, Gangte, Vaiphei, Zou, Simte, etc. In Mizoram the tribes and sub-tribes preferred to identify themselves as Mizo and this was formalised when the Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act, 1954 was passed by the Indian Parliament. Under the Act, the name of the erstwhile Lushai Hills District was changed into Mizo District with effect from the 29th April, 1954. Since then the people have accepted Mizo as their undisputed nomenclature in Mizoram.

Conceptual meaning and various Interpretation of the terms - Chin, Kuki and Mizo:

(a) Chin:

The term Chin is the name given to this Zomi (formerly known as Chin-Kuki-Mizo) group of people in Myanmar (Burma). They are mostly found in the Chin state of Myanmar. Different writers have given different opinions about the origin of the term Chin. According to one version, the word 'Chin' was derived from the Burmese word 'Khyang' (Chin) which means 'basket'. The Burmese named them 'Chin' since their


early contact with these people. When the Burmese moved down to the Irrawady river (in Burma) and came to the Chindwin river valley there they found the inhabitants who used to carry baskets at their back. Thus they named the river 'Chinwind' which means 'The valley of the baskets' as Chin means basket in Burmese.  

Another version is that the term Chin was derived from a Burmese word 'Khyang' meaning ally or friend. It is a word signifying friendship between the Chin people and the Burmese. Although in 1950, Burmese encyclopaedia defines Chin as 'ally' but a Burmese M.F. named Tanaung from Mindat (a parliamentary constituency in Burma) objected to this interpretation in the Burmese Parliament and accused the Burmese for politicising the name 'Chin'. Thus Chin meaning ally or friend is the modern Burmese perception and Chin meaning basket is the traditional perception. According to another version the word Chin is said to be derived from the Chinese word 'Jen' meaning man. It is said that the Šhans and Mons (two different tribes in Burma) asked the ancestors of the Chins about their identity when they first

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26 Neihsial Tualchin, op.cit., n.21, p.22.


met them. They answered that they were 'Jen' (men) which the Shans and Mons pronounced as Chin. Moreover, it is said that the term 'Jen' is used by the Burmese to denote all the hill tribes in Burma.

In short it may be stated that, whatever may be the origin of the term Chin it is not an aboriginal but a foreign word. It is unknown to the people and they never call themselves Chin. It is clear that the term was coined by the Burmese and the British administrators who came afterwards used this term to denote this group of people in Burma.

(b) Kuki:

The term Kuki is the name supposed to be given by the Bengalis to the Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people who were residing in the hill areas of the erstwhile Assam. Perhaps the Bengalis found them culturally unsophisticated because Kuki literally means wild hill people in Bengali. For the first time the name "Kuki" appeared in the history of Tripura as early as 1512 A.D.

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31 S. Thangkhangin, "Why should we be called Zomi", in In Search of Identity, Kuki-Chin Baptist Union (Imphal 1982), p.60.
Another version as to the origin of the term Kuki is that in some accounts of Burmese literature mention was made of those people who were ruled by the Lua Kings were named 'Luahai' i.e. Lua people. In due course of time the word Luahai become 'Luakai' then Kukai and ultimately 'Kuki'.

Broadly speaking the Kukis can be divided into two groups—the Old Kukis and the New Kukis on the basis of their supposed arrival. The Old Kukis included such groups as Aimol, Chothe, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Purum, Anal, Langang, Mayon, Gangte, and Vaiphei etc. The New Kukis included Thado, Simte, Paite, Zou, Hmar etc. who came to Manipur in the eighteenth century A.D. The earlier group of Kukis who migrated from the Chin state of Burma and Mizoram to Manipur and Assam were known as Old Kukis. It is presumed that the Old Kukis came to Manipur from Burma in the sixteenth century A.D. It is also recorded that some of this group of people migrated to Lushai Hills, the present Mizoram state. But from Lushai Hills they were pushed out by the Thado and Changseng tribes and they entered the Cachar district of Assam where they were known as Kuki. In due course of time the

34 B.W. Dun, Gazetteer of Manipur, (Vivek publishing House Delhi, reprint, 1975), p.32.
35 Jyotimoy Roy, op.cit., n.21, p.190.
36 J. Shakespear, The Lushai-Kuki Clan (Giant Offset Printers, Delhi, reprint, 1983), p.179.
Thados', who had thrown out the Old Kuki's earlier were also pushed out of Lushai Hills by the Lushais under the great Sailo Chief Lallula, who established political supremacy in the northern Mizoram in 1810. 

38 About the same time the Sukte chief named Khantuam and the Guite Chiefs of the Chin Hills drove most of the Thados except those from six Thado villages out of the Chinland (Burma) to Manipur.

39

In India, the British administrators and writers divided the Chin-Kuki-Mizo or Zomis under two names - the Kukis and the Lushais. 40 One such writer C.A. Soppitt clapped the two terms and called them the Kuki-Lushai tribes (J. Shakespear called them 'The Lushai Kuki clan'). But they were also fully aware of the fact that the term Kuki is unknown to the people to whom it was applied. 41 C.A. Soppitt further wrote that this group of people had never classified themselves as Kuki, though many of them answer to it when addressed, from knowing it to be the Bengalis or plains term for their people.

42 Ibid.
In short, it may be stated that the term Kuki is a foreign word to whom it was applied. In fact there is no such word or term as Kuki in the vocabulary of this group of people.

(c) Mizo:

The term Mizo is a compound of two words 'Mi' and 'Zo' which is generally translated into 'Hill Man'. So far as the meaning of the first part 'Mi' which means man is concerned there is no difference of opinion among the scholars. But they have different opinions about the meaning and connotation of the second part 'Zo'.

According to one view, 'Zo' means hill or highland. So, Mizo means highlanders or people living on high hills. The word Zo may also mean 'cold region'. But it may be stated that all people living in the high hills or cold regions are not called Mizo. The word is used with reference to a specific tribe living in the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and the Chin Hills of Burma, who have close affinities to one another in language, customs and ways of living.

Another explanation of the word Mizo is that the people were so named after the name of the habitation they built around 1765 A.D. This group of people occupied Zopui area in Burma which is about twenty kilometers from the Tiau river (Boundary river between Mizoram and Burma). It is said that during their stay in Zopui, they conducted successful raids on their enemies and therefore, they felt proud to refer to themselves as people of Zopui or men of Zopui. Hence the compound term Mi-zo.  

According to Lalsuaka (a Mizo writer), the term Mizo was used by the Mizos and their co-subtribes with whom they made their westward migration from Burma. Before they crossed the Tiau river, they used to call themselves as 'Zomi' Zo people and ZOFA, the last meaning sons of the Zo. On the 23rd July, 1892 R.B. McCabe, the then British Political Agent North Lushai Hills in India while sketching a brief note on their relations with the eastern Lushais prior to their rising on 1st March 1892, mentioned that 'the Lushais call themselves Mizo or Mizau'. From

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44 Ibid.
46 The eastern Lushais of the Lushai Hills rose against the British Administrators in March 1892.
this statement it may be observed that the Mizos have had the name before the beginning of the Anglo-Lushai relation-
ship in 1844.48

Although there are different opinions about the origin and meaning of the term Mizo yet it may be said that the Mizo writers are more inclined to accept the former in-
terpretation of the word Mizo means hillmen or highlanders.49

Theories Regarding the Origin of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo:

There are different opinions about the origin of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo or Zomi group of people because there is no written record about their origin. Whatever material is available regarding their origin is also contradictory. Some writers regarded China as their original homeland. While others traced their origin in Tibet, Burma etc. The following are some of the theories put forward by different writers about the origin of the Zomis.

1. The Khul(Cave) Theory:

A traditional belief among the Zomis is that their original home was Khul(Cave) and they all agreed that they

belonged to the same ethnic group. However, the only problem which they feel is that there is no commonly acceptable term for their nomenclature. A folk song which is very common among the Zomis run this:

Eiteng khawlkhawm a tuam omlo,
Vannuai chiteng khul a piang;
Tuun sung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
Suahpih sanggam,
Laizom khat hi ngeingei hange.51

(We the people who are in aggregation are of one stock,
Every one of us under the sun is born of a cave;
And born of the same mother.
Being born of the same mother,
We are all born together as siblings;
We are really descendants of the same siblings.)

This mythological cave is known by different tribes by various names such as Khul, Khurpui, Khurbijur, Sinlung, Chhinlung.52 There is a small tribe known as 'Kom' in Manipur the term Kom in Meitei language also means Cave.53

Hence from the above discussion we can state that the Zomi group of people have come out of the cave or khul.

51: Ibid.
52: Kamkhenthang, "Cropping for Identity" in In Search of Identity (Chin-Kuki Baptist Church, Imphal, 1982), p.5.
But the fundamental question is where is the cave or Khul exactly located? There are different opinions about the location of the cave. Some people believed that it is in central China, some people said it is in Tibet and others believed that it is located in between Kale valley and Chindwin river of Burma.  

According to Kinghen, a retired Additional Deputy Commissioner, Government of Nagaland, the original home of the Nagas and other tribes of the North-East India was Manchuria (China). Because of heavy punishments inflicted by the Chinese King on the people, some of them left the land and travelled along the foothills of the Himalayas as far as Burma.  

The traditional belief among the Zomis is that their original home was a cave or Khul. But according to some writers the cave might not be a particular cave but the different caves where the people used to hide out of fear from some assumed hostile forces or possibly a particular cave.

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which was the primitive home of their ancestors. Perhaps the fear might have been due to such forces as the head hunting Nagas or due to the heavy punishments of the Manchurian Kings.

2. The Chhinlung Theory:

The Chhinlung theorists believed that the Zomi group of people are named after the Chinese King Chienlung. The descendants of this group of people left China during the reign of King Chienlung and they were conveniently known as the people of Chienlung (Chhinlung) origin. A Chinese history written by C.P. Fitz Gerald clearly stated that the Chienlung's period covered the second half of the seventeenth and eighteenth Century A.D.

3. The Sinlung Theory:

According to this theory Sinlung was a city in China where from the Zomi group of people originated. The word Sinlung was derived from the name of the Chinese King.

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57 ibid.


Sunglung, who established the Sunglung city which is now called Silung in China. China at that time was ruled by Sih Huangti of the Chin Dynasty (221-107 B.C.). He was known for his arrogance and wickedness to his subjects.\textsuperscript{60}

It is recorded that the King Sih Huangti conscripted labourers, including women and young children, for building the great wall of China. The building of the wall, although intended to give security against raids by the nomads, was very unpopular owing to the enormous casualties inflicted upon the labourers. Many of the labourers were the prisoners of war from defeated states.\textsuperscript{61} Although King Sih Huangti died in 212 B.C. yet before completing the great wall many of his people left China during this period and have perhaps moved to Tibet. After staying there for some generations they might have moved again towards the south east and entered the Shan state of Burma.\textsuperscript{62}

4. Zhou or Zo Theory:

There are different theories about the origin of the term Zo. One theory suggests that by about 1027-256 B.C.

\textsuperscript{60} L.Hranglien Songate, Hmar Chanchin, Chenna Bul Le Thlang Thlak Den Sinlung (Churachandpur 1977), p.11.


there was a Zhou King under the Zhou or Jo dynasty in China. He was a strong King and commanded sovereignty over a large population. It was believed that due to over population there was scarcity of land to support the population. As a result the ancestors of the Zomi left China during the Zhou dynasty. Those who left China during this period called themselves Zhou or Zo after the name of the King. In this regard they argued that in ancient times the name of the ruling dynasty or King usually became the identity for the subjects. Thus according to this theory Zhou or Zo in the Chinese history was none other than Zo, the ancestor of the Zomi tribe.

The second theory suggests that the term 'Zo' might have originated from a person who was named 'Zo' supposed to be the ancestor of all this group of people. Well known writers like Captain Khupzathang, Dr. Vumson, and Dr. Vum Kho Hau a Zomi scholar and diplomat supported this view. V. Lunghema in his book (Hmar Genealogy) tried to identify that

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the Hmar tribe one of the branches of the Zomi family originated from Zo their ancestor. Thus they assume that all the descendants of the Zo are known as Zomi, Zotate (son of Zo) etc.

5. Israel Theory:

There are some scholars who believe that the Zomi group of people are the descendants of the Israelites. This may probably be due to the influence of Christianity. In the recent past some people of this group with a new Church denomination called 'The Seventh Day Adventist' who called themselves Jews put forward this theory. According to this theory, the Zomi group are the descendants of the Biblical Manasseh, the King of Judah from 687 to 642 B.C. Manasseh was first exiled to Persia along with his followers by the rampaging Assyrian raiders. Around 331 B.C. his descendants were driven eastwards into Afghanistan by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. They established a colony in Kaifeng in 231 B.C. Then about 800 years ago, the Jews fled Kaifeng during the Mongol invasion. One group among them tracked an arduous mountainous trail to reach the north-eastern areas

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70 V. Lunghnema, Hmar Genealogy (Imphal 1977), pp. 1-5.
of India in the eighteenth century. Since the recent past some of the Zomi group of people have accepted Judaism as their religion. It is believed that their scriptures history and folklores link them with the lost tribes of Israel. The Indian National daily 'The Telegraph' also reported that thirty Mizo families (from Mizoram) have migrated to Israel to settle there permanently to put an end to what they perceived their exile in order to strike fresh roots in the homeland of the Jews. The Israeli Ambassador to India, Ephraim Dowek, who came to Imphal on August 3, 1995 stated that out of the twelve tribes of the Jews that has been scattered all over the world after they left Egypt, one tribe is believed to have settled in the north east jungles and the Myanmar valley. He further stated that four people from Manipur had migrated to Israel. The Mizos, Chins and Kukis might have been the offsprings of the lost tribe of Shin but it is not yet scientifically proved.

According to the supporters of this theory, the name Māmāsi which is chanted in their religious chant was Manasseh the eldest son of Joseph. They pointed out certain similarities

72 Interview with Mr. Lianzamang Guite, Churachandpur, on September 18, 1988.
74 "The Freedom" (Local Daily paper Imphal, August 4, 1995).
in their religious practices like the preparation of the altar, the use of animal blood for the ritual propitiation of sin, etc. They contended that the descendants of Manasseh while running away from home arrived in China and then in Burma and India.

On the basis of the above mentioned theories, certain broad generalisations regarding the origin of the Zomi group of people may be made. The first theory, i.e. the Khul (Cave) theory indicates that historians and writers agree that the Zomi group of people emerged out of Khul (Cave) as authenticated by their folk songs and ritualistic incantations. Although the main problem here is the unidentified location of the Khul (Cave) yet most of the Zomi writers hold the view that it was somewhere in China. Thus according to these theorists it may be stated that China was considered as the original home of this group of people.

The second and third theory i.e. the Chhinlung and Sinlung theory may be said to have some correlations. According to these two theories, the Zomi group of people left China during the reign of Chienlung or from the Chinese city Sinlung. These two theories also supported the first theory that China was the original home of the Zomi group of people.
But, the Chhinlung theory appears to have become untenable as it lacks consistency. In China during Ching Dynasty the Kings introduced hair cutting all over the country. Nonetheless, the ancestors of the Zomi group, whom the above theory referred to as contemporary never cut their hair.\textsuperscript{75} Secondly, it is believed that some sections of this group of people had already entered the Chin Hills of Burma by about 125 A.D.\textsuperscript{76}

The fourth theory, i.e. the Zo theory, also presupposes that China was the original home of the Zomis. They left China during the reign of Jou or Zo dynasty and were named as Zo probably after the name of the Zo dynasty. It may also be originated from Zo who is regarded as the originator of all the people of this group. It is considered as one of the most acceptable theories obviously due to certain historical notations, references and records which are supported by the same type of cultural and religious beliefs.

The Israel theorists are of the opinion that the descendants of Manasseh while running away from home had come over to Burma through Tibet and China. They further

\textsuperscript{75} Interview with Mangzachin Guite (Chief of Phaitong Village), Churachandpur on June 10, 1988.
\textsuperscript{76} K. Zawla, Op.cit., n.58, p.15.
pointed to certain similarities in the religious beliefs and practices regarding the preparation of altar, the use of animal's blood for the propitiation of sin, etc. of the Zomi group of people and the Israelites of Palestine.

To sum up it may be stated that the Zomi group belongs to the Mongolian race whereas the Israelites belong to the Aryan race. If the Zomis are the descendants of Manasseh, all the Mongolian races of South-East Asia like the Chinese, the Japanese, the Thais, the Vietnamese etc. might also be the descendants of Manasseh. In that case Palestine would logically be the original homeland of the Zomi group of people. Yet the equation of Manasseh with that of Manasi is still doubtful. Mere similarity in two personal names can scarcely establish the sameness of the two persons. For the Israelites the practice of circumcision has been one of the most important practices since the time of their progenitor Abraham. But the Zomi group of people had never resorted to such a practice.

Moreover, the physical appearance of the Zomi group of people does not support this theory. The Jews have hairy faces and are generally slim built. On the other hand the Zomi group of people have round and short noses, clean faces
and are generally short statured. Lastly, there are no historical records or writings which might be cited to establish their kinship.

Migration of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo:

There are different opinions regarding the migration of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo or Zomi group of people. One group is of the opinion that they came out of China and entered Burma through Tibet by about 700 A.D. As they moved into Burma they led a settled life at a place called Chinzua which is a place between Pangoon and Zinengchaw. Another opinion is that they entered Burma along with the Burmese themselves, and Payagi in central Burma was their first habitation. It is also stated that they had occupied the Chindwin plains about 80 A.D. This view is also supported by Pong Chronicle. According to this Chronicle they were said to have occupied powerful positions like governorship in the administration of the country before the advent of the Ava Kingdom (1596 A.D.) in Burma. At that time their

social life was known to be characterised by harmony and unity. Later they were believed to have left Kale-Kabaw valley for Khampat in Burma.  

According to K. Zawla (a Mizo writer) the life of the Mizos at Khampat was easy and prosperous. The town was encircled by a river called Gun/Run. Though this river provided them with security it also caused them many difficulties. A very common folk song among the Zomi group runs thus:

Ka kuan lam in pal sial sial ing,
Ka chiah lam in Guntui a lian e;
Guntui tung a sawnban ke kaih,
Ka thaitong aw, na pam lua hi e. 81

(On my going I wade the Gun river,  
On my coming the Gun river was over flooded;  
My wife whom I led by the hand across the river,  
Who is no more is a great loss to me.)

The Zomi group are also believed to have entered the Chin Hills of Burma by about 1250 A.D. 82 Some local writers  

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81 T. Jamkhothang & H. Kamkhenthang, "A Brief Introduction to the Languages and Culture of the Paites", in An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur, (Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal 1976), p.129.  
put the period as 1300 to 1500 A.D. 83 It is also held that about the beginning of the fifteenth century they moved forward up to the present Chin Hills and started settling down in the hill regions which was then a no-man's land and Kham-pat was one of their most important settlements. 84

One historical account of the Siyin Zo is that once all the Zo (Yaw Chins) inhabited the Kalemyo valley. The Governor of Kale, who was a son of the King of Ava was, however, most oppressive and forced the people to construct a palatial four walled fort with a moat running all around it. The fingers of the labourers were accidentally cut during the course of this forced labour. Thus the people got tired of the Governor's oppressions and decided to migrate. 85

The Zomi group of people were believed to have entered the Chin Hills of Burma through four different routes. Some of them who descended along the Chindwin river settled in the Pokkoku, Yaw Nay and Gangaw regions of Burma and some of them advanced further and settled at Mimbu, Thatyemo, Prome.

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and Henzado regions. The second group ascended the hill region and consolidated themselves in the areas such as Mindat, Kanpalit and Paletwa. The third group followed the Cun Lui (a river in Burma) and occupied Locom area and then went on to Falam and Khalkha areas of Burma. The fourth group settled at Chimnuai and the whole of Tedim area in Burma. Some sections of this group scaled the Kennedy Peak locally known as Thuam Vum (a mountain peak in Burma) and advanced towards Zangpitam, and therefore did not know anything about the Chimnuai settlement in Burma. In the later part of the fifteenth century they moved to Len range near the Tiau river. By about 1700 A.D. they crossed the Tiau river and arrived at a place now called Mizoram. The British administration over them towards the end of the nineteenth century.

According to J. Shakespear (a British administrator and writer) the old Kukis and the Lushais were related and lived very closely together somewhere in the centre of the Hills on the banks of the Tiau and Manipur rivers. Most probably the old Kuki clans seem to have the first to move,

as records of their appearances are found in the Manipur chronicle as early as the sixteenth century. Probably these quarrels with their neighbours and also a desire for occupation of better land might have been two main reasons for their migration. The population explosion in the sixteenth century in the northern Chin State might have also played an important part in the migration of the Old Kukis to Manipur and Assam. The first mention of the Old Kukis was made in Manipur chronicle as early as 1554 A.D. These two dates of the population explosion of the northern Chin Hills and the mention of the Old Kukis in the Manipur chronicles are close enough to suggest the probability of their coming into Manipur around that time.

The expansion of tribal realms in the Kaka area of the Chin State of Burma was subsequently strengthened by renewed connections with the Burmese who fought against the Manipuris and pushed the Lushais further into Lushai Hills in the sixteenth century. The Old Kukis came to Manipur from Lushai Hills in the sixteenth century and some of them even moved forward under pressure from the Thados and Changsans.

89 T. E. Dalton, Tribal History of Eastern India, (Cosmo Publications, Delhi, 1973), p. 44.
from the Lushai Hills into the Cachar district of Assam.\textsuperscript{90}

Likewise the Thados, Singsons and Changsangs were also pushed out of the Lushai Hills by the Lushais under the great Sailo Chief Lallula who established his political supremacy in the northern Lushai Hills in 1810.\textsuperscript{91} About the same time Khanthuam, the first Sukte Chief and the Guite Chiefs of the Chin Hills of Burma drove the Thados out of the Chinland into Manipur leaving only six Thado villages undisturbed.\textsuperscript{92}

According to J. Shakespear, it was the Kamhaus, Suktes and Siyins (different tribes of Chin Hills, Burma) who first disturbed the Thados. Thus many of the Thados entered the Manipur territory and others probably moved westward and settled in the hills to the south of Cachar district of Assam in 1884-50.\textsuperscript{93} According to Inder Singh the first incidence of immigration (in Manipur) took place in the last half of the 18th century and these were known as the Old Kukis. The second incidence occurred in the middle of the 19th century and this group of Kuki immigrants were believed to be the New Kukis.\textsuperscript{94}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} H. Kamkhenthang, Op.cit., n.50, p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{91} A.W. Davis, Gazetteer of North Lushai Hills (Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1894), p.25.
\item \textsuperscript{92} G.A. Grierson, Op.cit., n.30, p.59.
\item \textsuperscript{93} J. Shakespear, Op.cit., n.36, p.190.
\end{itemize}
Language of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo:

The different sub-tribes under the Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo speak different dialects. According to the Linguistic Survey of India the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (Zomi) group belong to the Tibeto-Burman family.  

The different dialects of the Zomi tribes bear many similarities to one another. Though each tribe has a different dialect yet they can converse with one another in their own respective dialects. However, there are some who are more remote in linguistic line, but one can make some idea out of the speech in the course of conversation. None of their dialects has its own script. Books are written in the Roman script which was initiated by the Christian missionaries.

There was a myth about the origin of the language of the Thado (New Kukis), the Naga and the Manipuri. According to that myth, long time ago god gave the Thado, the Naga and the Manipuri each a separate language written on animal skin. Because of his habitual laziness and casualness the Thado lost his script. It was probably eaten up by rats, dogs

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or pigs. The Naga, because of his hunger ate his own script. The Manipuri who is not a flesh-eater carefully kept and studied his script. While the Thado and the Naga do not have a script of their own the Manipuris do possess one. 97

There is no common language among the Zomi group of people in Manipur. Each of these tribes speaks its own dialect which undergoes changes in tone and pronunciation as the place varies. At present the Government of Manipur is imparting primary education in the hill areas on the five tribal dialects such as Tangkhul, Mao, Thado, Paite and Hmar. 98

Although in Mizoram the Lushais are the dominant tribe, formerly there was no common dialect or language among the different sub-tribes in Mizoram. It created problems for the administrators. Therefore, in order to get over such problems the British administrators introduced a common language known as the Lusei or Duhljan language. They made it the medium of instruction in the schools in Mizoram except for the Pawis and Lakhers of the southern districts. 99 After

98 Order No.17/172/SE, March 2, 1977, Secretariat, Education Department, Government of Manipur.
accepting Lusei language as the lingua franca, some of the other tribes such as Hmar and Paite who live in the northern parts of Lushai Hills seem to have almost forgotten their own dialects, while the same Hmar or Paite dialect continue to be practised by the same ethnic group in the neighbouring areas of Manipur, Tripura and Assam. 100 Thus the Lusei language which is now known as Mizo language is commonly known by the people of Mizoram. It has been recognised as a subject of study up to Degree level by Universities in India. 101

In Burma most of the Zomi group are found in the Chin State. Formerly, they were known as Chin by the British administrators. But after Burma became independent in 1948, they accepted Zomi as their common identity and Tedim pau or Tedim语言 as their common language. 102

The Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people speak different dialects and sometimes claimed that they were different tribes. But according to Carey and Tuck (British administrators and writers), there can be no doubt that the Chins and the Kukis are one and the same face for their

100 ibid.
101 Interview with S.L. Thanga (Head of Mizo Department, Lamka College) Churachandpur on May 10, 1990.
102 Interview with Khupzago (Director, Chin Baptist Association) Churachandpur, on May 10, 1992.
appearance, manners, customs and languages all point to this conclusion. William Shaw another administrator and writer also stated that the Koms, Aimols, Khothangs(Umars), Thadous, Lusheis, Chins, Pawis, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes, etc. are undoubtedly connected. Their dialects has many similarities, and they have common cultural heritages.104

Problem of Common Language Among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo:

Some scholars feel that although the Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people are of the same family it is believed that along separation due to migration created differences in dialects spoken by them. Thus the Government of India recognised them as different tribes. The problem became more complex when the Government of Manipur undertook to impart primary education in the hill areas of Manipur in the five tribal dialects. Such decisions of the Central Government as well as the State Government have probably sharpened the division among them.105

105 Interview with Dr. L.C. Ngaihte (Head of Economics Department, Lamka College) Churachandpur on August 20, 1992.
Among the Zomi or the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group in Manipur the Kukis constitute the majority. In fact the Government of India broadly classified the non-Naga tribes of Manipur as Kukis. But among the Kukis there are two main groups the Kuki group and the Thadou group. As such, even in earlier days the Kuki dialect could not emerge as the common dialect among the Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people in Manipur. Perhaps one important reason for this failure may have been because of the fact that they do not have a common political entity that they have in the state of Mizoram and the Chin State of Burma.\textsuperscript{106}

In short, in Mizoram the different sub-tribes have accepted Lushai (Mizo) as the common language. This common language among the Mizos might have brought about common identity and a feeling of oneness among them.\textsuperscript{107} Similarly in Burma all the Zomi or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group accepted Tedim language as their common language, but in Manipur till date, there is no accepted common language among them.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{108} Interview with Dr. L.C. Ngaihte, Op.cit., no. 104.
The Problem of Common Identity Among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo:

The Zomis formerly known as the Chin-Kuki-Mizo are a sub-family of the Tibeto-Burman or Indo-Chinese family. They do not have any common nomenclature by which they can call themselves. They are mostly inhabiting the north eastern states of India. A great number of them are also found in the Chin State of Burma and in Bangladesh.109

Prior to 1937 the Zomi group of people lived together in the Indian sub-continent. But when Burma got separated from India in 1937 the Chin Hills and upper Chindwin went to Burma. Again when India got independence in 1947 Pakistan was separated from the Indian sub-continent. The Chittagong hill tracts went to Pakistan which was renamed as Bangladesh in 1971 and thus these people were scattered into three independent countries which have created a lot of difficulties in proper communication and personal contact among themselves. Though they are of the same ethnic group and origin they have not so far been able to establish their common identity in Manipur.110

110 Interview with T.C.Tiankham I.A.S(Rtd.)(Member, the Hill Local Self-Government Regulation Drafting Committee, Manipur, 1947), Imphal on April 6, 1989.
According to G.A. Grierson, the term Chin is more or less retained by this group in Burma. But this is a foreign word unheard of by the people themselves. Even if this has some bearing in some way, the people themselves popularly do not use the word Chin to name themselves. Thus they call themselves Yo or Zo in the north, Lai in the centre and Sho in the south.\(^{111}\)

But there is no such problem of common identity for the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people in the Lushai Hills. The Lushais and related clans who were absorbed under the Sailo Chiefs have accepted Mizo as their undisputed common nomenclature. As such the name of the former Lushai Hills district was changed into Mizoram at the creation of the Union Territory in 1972. But the main problem is in Manipur where this group of people are recognised as different sub-tribes.\(^{112}\)

Dominant Sub-Groups Among the Zomis:

Before Indian Independence the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people were known as Kuki or Khongjai in Manipur. But many changes took place after independence. From the late 1940's


\(^{112}\) Interview with T. Goukhenpau, (Ex. General President, Paite National Council), Churachandpur on July 15, 1990.
the different sub-tribes under the Kuki leadership have started feeling neglected as their leaders were always from the dominant Thado speaking group. The other sub-tribes felt that they were being controlled and neglected by the Thados. They also felt that all the privileges given to them by the government were enjoyed by the majority Thados only.\textsuperscript{113}

The dissatisfaction of the different sub-tribes under the Kuki leadership could be more clearly seen from the words of S. Prim Vaiphei (a local writer) who stated that:

During 1950's while I was still a young boy, I heard that many social and political leaders tried to bring unity among these Kuki-Chin tribes and many new nomenclatures such as 'Khul', 'Tribal league', 'Tukbem Sawm', 'Chin-Kuki' etc. were proposed, but they failed to unite the people. Frankly speaking all these names were proposed to oppose the name Kuki as their own. Some of the leaders even used the word 'Kuki Siki', 'Kuki Makhai (Quarter Kuki, Half Kuki) to mean other tribes than the Thados.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113} Interview with D. Khaizalian (One of the Founder members of Paite National Council), Churachandpur on October 10, 1986.

\textsuperscript{114} S. Prim Vaiphei, 'Who are We/Who we are' in \textit{In Search of Identity}, Kuki-Chin Baptist Church, Imphal, 1982, p.22.
Being dissatisfied with the Kuki leadership the different sub-tribes attempted to form separate organisations of their own. Under the leadership of the Paite speaking group, a new organisation was formed at Tangnuam Village, Churachandpur on June 27, 1949. The new organisation is known as Paite National Council (P.N.C.). Not only the Paite speaking group but also the other sub-tribes such as Hmar, Gangte, Vaiphei, Kom, Simte, Thado, Zou etc. formed their own organisations. As a result all these tribes demanded recognition of their own tribes by the Government of India. In 1956, the Government of India granted the demand and recognised 29 tribes of Manipur but the term Kuki is not seen in the list of the recognised tribes of Manipur.

Attempts to Form Zomi as Common Identity:

After India's independence in 1947, the Government of India made various attempts to uplift the neglected minorities especially the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Government of India attempted to bring them up at par with the advanced sections of the society. But inspite of all the attempts made by the Government the Zomis or Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people feel that the division among them

115 Interview with K.Hanghal, Churachandpur on September 12, 1988.
into small sub-tribes is proving a stumbling block to their
development.\textsuperscript{116}

Thus various scholars, student organisations, social
groups, religious bodies etc. have been grouping for common
identity. In 1947, a meeting of the leaders of the different
sub-tribes under the Chin-Kuki was held at Imphal to find
out an acceptable nomenclature. The meeting decided to form
'Khul Union'. But this also did not last long.\textsuperscript{117}

In Burma formerly the Chin-Kuki group of people
were known as Chin. But the people preferred to call them-
selves as Zomi. The term Zo is not a new word. Franch'ô, a
diplomat in China during the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.),
in his book 'The Manshu Book of Southern Barbarians' which
was written in 862 A.D. wrote that the people of Chindwin
called their Princes and Chiefs 'Shou'(Zo).\textsuperscript{118}

Sir Henry Yule's Historical geography 'A Narrative
of Missions to the Court of Ava 1855' showed the Chindwin

\textsuperscript{116} Interview with Mangzachin Guite(Chief of Phaitong village)

\textsuperscript{117} Interview with D.Khaizalian (who had attended the meeting)
Churachandpur on October 10, 1988.

\textsuperscript{118} Franch'ô.Manshu, The Book of Southern Barbarians, 862;
Translated by Gordon H.Luce, Data paper No.44, South East
Asia Programs, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1961.
Cited in Prof.G.H.Luce, Phases of Pre-Facon Burma, 1985,
pp.78 & 86.
plains and the west of the Chindwin river as Zo District.\(^{119}\)

According to F.K. Lehman, a renowned social anthropologist, the so-called Chin-Kuki linguistic group had a special term for themselves. The word by which they call themselves was almost always a variant form of a single rootword which appeared as Zo, Jo, Yo, Sho and the like.\(^ {120}\) Moreover in 1891, Captain F.M. Rundall in his book wrote:

"The Chins are ugly (Zote a mel a sia pet pet hi; Zote=Chins) He further commented that, "I do not know the origin of the name Chin; it is Burmese, I fancy, anyhow the Chins do not know the word and call themselves 'Zo' 'Zote' being the plural".\(^ {121}\)

Vum Kho Hau and Captain Khupzathang, two scholars of Burma, are of the opinion that the word Zomi comes from the name Zo the ancestor of all the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group and thus all clans and races of this group descended directly from Zo their ancestor.\(^ {122}\)

Vum Kho Hau further stated that:

"We have called ourselves Zomi from time immemorial ... Had the words Kuki and Chin been changed to 'Zo' at

\(^{120}\) ibid.
\(^{121}\) Captain F.M. Rundall, Manual of the Syin Dialect spoken in the Northern Chin Hills, 1891, p.20.
that time right word for calling the various tribes and clans of Zo race inhabiting the areas adjoining Burma, East Pakistan and Assam would have been answered long time ago.\textsuperscript{123}

Thus in Burma the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of people accepted Zomi as their nomenclature soon after Burmese independence. The first Christian Missionaries entered the Chin Hills of Burma in March 1899.\textsuperscript{124} Since then the Christians in Chin Hills functioned as a single organisation which is known as the Chin Hills Baptist Association. In 1952-53 a Church organisation called the Zomi Baptist Convention was formed. Today after more than forty years of its formation the Zomi Baptist Convention has become the largest Christian organisation in Burma.\textsuperscript{125}

In the year 1988 the Burmese Government officially recognised Zomi as an ethnic group of the state. Moreover the state also formally recognised Zomi National Congress as one of the political parties in the country.\textsuperscript{126} The Zomi National

\textsuperscript{124} R.G. Johnson, Church in the Chin Hills (Burma Baptist Chronicle, Rangoon 1963), p.383.
\textsuperscript{125} Khup Za Co, Christianity in Chinland (Christian Literature Centre, Gauhati, Assam 1985), p.24.
\textsuperscript{126} Neihsial Tualchin, Op.cit., n.21,p.2.
Congress in its proclamation declared that:

"We declare that all other words including Chin but Zou(Zo) are all denominational in relation to Zou in origin and reference. We proclaim that the racial name Chin should be done away with and Zou(Zo) must be re-instated to its proper place and status of racial identity." 127

Moreover different weekly papers like "Zomi Tangko" (Zomi Herald), "Zomi Christian" etc. appear for the dissemination of the spread of religious ideas and knowledge. The 20th February, 1948 was declared as Zomi Namni(Zomi National Day) by the Zomi leaders and the Government of Burma declared it a National Holiday. Since then the Zomis in Burma have been observing the 20th February of every year as Zomi Namni (Zomi National Day). 128

In India, the term Zomi is getting a favourable reception from these tribes. On January 21, 1972 a political organisation named 'Zomi National Congress(Z.N.C.) was formed under the leadership of T.Cougin and S.K.Samte as the President and Secretary respectively. The aim of the ZNC has been


the unification of all the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group under the nomenclature of Zomi. Thus different political organisations like the Zomi Democratic Front (ZDF), Zomi Revolutionary Organisation (ZRO) etc. were formed. The Zomi Day i.e. February 20, 1994 was jointly observed by the different sub-tribe under the Zomis at Lamka College ground, Churachandpur, Manipur. More than 50,000 persons attended the celebration.129

Moreover, in cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Shillong etc. College and University students of the Chin-Kuki-group formed Zomi Students Association to look after the interests of the Zomi students as a whole. They also established an association called the Zomi Worship Service to chalk out the programmes and conduct worship services of the students of this group of people. Thus, Zomi nomenclature for the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group is gradually receiving wider recognition and gaining momentum in India especially in Manipur.