CHAPTER III
LOOKING FOR A NEW HOMELAND: MIZO IN THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION

The Mizo lived in Lentlang and other surrounding hills in present Chin Hills of Myanmar for quite some time. When B.C. Allen and his co-workers studied the Mizo for their Gazetteer, they found that Mizo migration occurred mainly in three stages at different times. Those who first migrated were known as ‘Old Kuki’ and they were the Hrangkhawl, Biate, Pangkhua, Mawk and Langrawng. The second batch was known as ‘New Kuki’ and they were Changsen, Thado and some other tribes. The last batch was the ‘Lushai’. Though the process of migration was not exactly known, the different tribes of Mizo such as the different clans of the Hmars tribe, Hrangkhawl, Pang, Mualthuam, Chhunthang, Chawnhmang and later the Hrangchal, Ngurte, Darngawn, Lungtau, Leiri and Changsen who are now in other states have passed through present Mizoram. It should be noted that when the Mizo migrated from Lentlang, they did not come straight to present Mizoram but settled on the foothills of Lentlang and also around the Tiau river (river bordering present Mizoram and Myanmar) for some years. (See Map No.4) So the migration of the Mizo was said to be the step migration type which e place for some years.

Most of the Mizo historians could not specifically point out the reason for the various Mizo tribes to migrate for such a long time before finally settling down. It could be assumed that they did not find a suitable place to settle as they wanted a free and vast land so that their agricultural pattern would not be disturbed. Writers

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1 B.C. Allen et al, Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India, (Delhi, reprint 1979), p.458
2 L. Hranglien Songate, Hmar Chanchin (Churachandpur, 1977) p.145
writing about the Mizo in English and vernacular all agreed that since they practiced jhum cultivation which requires felling and burning of forests, the land used to exhaust after some years. Hence the people had to go on migrating so that they could have enough land to cultivate. The other important causes of their migration can be attributed to the feeling of insecurity which they felt during their habitation. It was during their settlement in the present Chin Hills that linear strata was more defined and clanism was also emphasised as each tribe and clan moved and settled in groups.\(^3\) As the different tribes and clans spread out in the hills, they became more isolated from each other and became more loyal to their group. As a result inter tribal feuds became more frequent and they fought to gain supremacy over the other. As the dominant groups very often usurp the other weaker groups, the latter had to move and search for a new place to settle in. This led to migration. So, after leaving Lentlang ranges, the various Mizo tribes began to migrate for a long time before settling down. In fact, the Mizo in present Mizoram did not stop their migratory habits till the British administered the land.

Though there are other Mizo tribes who were said to have migrated from Myanmar and settled in present Mizoram and in neighbouring states, yet only the major tribes in Mizoram – the Lai, Mara and Lusei are being studied here as they form different tribes in present Mizoram. There were other Lusei clans who had a different dialect from the Duhlian dialect such as Ralte and Hmars. Duhlian dialect is one of the dialect used by the Lusei especially by the Sailo tribe which is now the lingua franca of the Mizo. These tribes especially the Ralte are now absorbed into

\(^3\) L.Keivom, “Zo Re-Unification Process” in www.zogam.com
Mizo and do not even use their own dialect any more as we shall see in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of tribe</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lushai (Lusei)</td>
<td>36,382</td>
<td>39,646</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paite</td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralte</td>
<td>13,827</td>
<td>16,047</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poi (Lai)</td>
<td>15,039</td>
<td>39,646</td>
<td>13,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakher (Mara)</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>6,186</td>
<td>8,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizo</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>213,061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of India* 1901, 1931, 1961 (Mara's population is not known in 1901 as the area was still an un-administered area. All the villages of Mara in present Mizoram were administered only in 1924)

In 1901 census it was found that the Ralte and the Paite were distinguished from the other tribes. But in 1961 census, it appears that they did not give their name as Ralte or Paite but have merged as Mizo. The same thing happened with the Lusei. The reason for the sudden usage of the term Mizo can be attributed to the formation of Mizo Union and its popular use of Mizo. The party even asked that the name Lushai Hills District be changed to Mizo District Council and hence the Indian Parliament
changed the name accordingly on April 29th 1954. The population of Lai had also
decreased considerably between 1931 and 1961 and one of the reasons may be
attributed to the probability of many Lai tribes using the tribe name Mizo. The
researcher is also of the Lai tribe, but in official records such as census reports, under
the heading of tribe, she and her family always give their tribe as Mizo. However,
many of the Lai and Mara who are now in present Southern Mizoram still use their
dialect and the government had also created Autonomous District Council for them.
Moreover in the present age, even though Lai and Mara have many similarities with
the Lusei, yet, in some points they still follow their own tradition. These is reflected
in the various books published by the people themselves on their own culture. These
differences would be studied as we study the society of the Mizo.

The Lai or the Pawi tribes entered Mizoram in four stages. The first batch
started from Falam, the place where they settled in Chin Hills. They were under the
Sunthla chief Vanhnualtira Hlawncheu. They crossed Chhimpuitui (Boinu river)
and moved towards south-west. They were accompanied by some other tribes –
Tlanglau, Bawm and Miria. They first settled at Rengtlang. When they reached a
favourable place, some sections of them settled there while some even reached
Chittagong hill tracts. The second batch started from Chawngthi under the guidance
of Phunhnawma Tlangchhan, Bawilawma Tinthe and Zabiaka Famchun. They
crossed Chhimtuipui and settled at places called Sangau and Vanlaiphai South which
is in present Mizoram. They also went near the Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) and

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4 R.Vanlawma, Ka ram leh kei (Aizawl,1972) p.238
5 Some of the books are, C.Laitanga, Pawi Chanchin (Aizawl, 1988); Z.Hengmanga, Lai Hnam Tobul
(Lawngtlai, 1992); Chawngkhuma Chawngthu, Mara Khawtlang Nun (Aizawl, 2005)
6 C.Laitanga, ibid, p.18
settled at its foot called Vawmbuk. The third batch of clans were Chinzhah and Khenglawt from Lungzarh in Myanmar; Hniarlum, Famehun, Mualchin and Zinhlawng clans from Khuafo in Myanmar. They crossed the Tiau river near Champhai which is in present Mizoram and went southwards. They settled at Bungzung, Vanlaiphai North, Perilung, Lungrang, Khuanghlum and Cherhlun. From Cherhlun they again dispersed to Thingsai, Vanlaiphai South, Sangau and Lungtian. They also dispersed again from these villages. The fourth batch started from Thlantlang in Myanmar under Hlawnchhing chief Thawngliana. They were the descendents of Nithanga. They also moved southwards and settled at Serkawr which is near the present Saiha in South Mizoram. They were followed by others who settled at and near Saiha. The duration of their migration was said to be between 1750 – 1850. It should however be noted that all the Lai from the Chin Hills did not migrate to Mizoram. A considerable portion of them remained at and around Halka, Falam and other hill areas. Though earlier Mizo historians did not give direct evidence of the Lai migrating constantly to different places, it would be assumed from the way of the people that they wanted to shift to a place where they could have enough land to cultivate. As the people practiced jhum cultivation, they needed new lands as accessible land became limited. Moreover, inter-village and inter-clan feuds were prevalent, the chiefs found the area congested with little scope for extending their chieftainship.

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7 For details on these migrations see *Pawi Hnam To Bul*, compiled by Pawi District Council Lawngtlae, (Lunglei, 1982), See Map No.5
The Mara or Lakher are presently concentrated in the south-eastern corner of Mizoram, south of the Haka sub-division of the Chin Hills and north of the Arakan hill tracts. They are the people whom Lewin called Shendoos. They are a branch of the Lai tribe of Chins. The principal clans under Mara are Tlongsai, Hawthai, Zeuhnang, Sabeu, Lialai and Helma. The Tlosai are Saiko and Siaha people who once settled at Leisai in the Chin state began to make their move and first settled at Saro and then at Chakhang in Haka area of Chin Hills. After crossing Kolodyne they entered present Mizoram and settled at different places but not for a long time. They finally occupied Beukhi. It was in Beukhi that the Saiko and Siaha Tlongsai people separated. The latter group occupied the neighbouring areas and finally settled permanently at Siaha. The other group also moved to different sites and finally settled at Saiko. From Saiko they formed the other villages of the Tlongsai group.

The Hawthai clan originated from Chhira in Haka and settled at Chhuarlung, Ngiawtlang and Lungbun in present Mizoram. The Zeuhnang also originated at Hnarang in Haka and are now settled at Savang. N.E. Parry assumed that when he wrote the book in 1932, the Zeuhnang could have been in their present settlement for about 130 years. The Sabeu originated from Thlantlang in Haka and settled at Tichho in present Mizoram.

When the Lusei were about to migrate to Mizoram, there were other tribes residing in some parts of Mizoram. However it appears that these tribes who were residing in present Mizoram prior to the advent of the Lusei were small communities.
having no power of cohesion and having conflicts with each other.\textsuperscript{15} According to the study made by Liangkhaia, the Lusei tribe migrated in five stages according to their clans at different times and he wrote that the first group was the \textit{Palian} under three chiefs.\textsuperscript{16} They were followed by \textit{Chenkual clan}. After moving about they settled at Dungtlang. They were joined by some Paites. One of the chiefs Pu Buara afterwards moved southwards and stayed at Saithah. The other chiefs also later moved to other places. The second batch was the \textit{Zadeng}. They were followed by the Rokhum. They moved westwards and were dispersed at different places and some of them reached as far as Tripura. The third batch was the \textit{Thangluah} chiefs and their followers. They settled at Chawngtui but fearing the Pawi they were later scattered. The fourth batch was the \textit{Rivung}. They moved southwards and settled around Lunglei. The fifth batch was the \textit{Sailo}. They were the most numerous and they were the ones who later subjugated other clans and became the masters of the Lusei tribe. The small tribes whom the Lusei came into contact as mentioned were small communities and so many of them were absorbed into Lusei tribe. But there were other tribes who fled to Manipur, Silchar, Sylhet and Tripura where they were known as Kuki.\textsuperscript{17} J. Shakespeare wrote that Stewart mentioned in his notes on Northern Cachar that the Old Kukis made their appearance in Cachar about the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{18}

The Lusei before their migration seem to have had constant warfare with the Pawi. The Pawi who were more numerous and better organized were more dominant

\textsuperscript{15} J. Shakespeare, \textit{The Lushei Kuki Clans} (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.5  
\textsuperscript{16} Liangkhaia, \textit{Mizo Chanchin} (Aizawl, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1976) p.48-49  
\textsuperscript{17} These details have been taken from J. Shakespeare, \textit{op. cit.}, p.6 and since there have not been any contradictory findings these are more or less acceptable till date.  
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid} p.6. He did not give the reference to Stewart’s notes.
even though they also were sometimes defeated. It is often said that it was the fear of the Pawi and the need for better jhum land which forced them to migrate to the west crossing the Tiau river to Mizoram. The fear of Lai was also narrated by the writers of Zo history in Myanmar. They wrote that the Tlaisun rose to prominence and used to raid the Lusei villages and sometimes even instigated other tribes to raid the Lusei. Since the Lusei did not have the power to face the Tlaisun it resulted in the shifting or migration of the Lusei from Lentlang. This is seen in one of the songs called *Chawino zai*:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kan \ lo \ tlan \ dawn \ kan \ sah \ tur \ doral \ mi \ lo \ hrilh \ ru \\
Hlampui \ tiam \ loh \ khawi \ nge \ Tianhrang \ ral \ lenna \\
Tianhrang \ ral \ khi \ ral \ lova \ kan \ siam \\
Lawmna \ kan \ sawm \ Hawi-hluan \ Hniarvung \ pa.
\end{align*}
\]

The English translation is as follows:

- We are coming over and tell us who would be our foes
- We want a place where our old enemies will not face us
- We have fled from our enemies and
- Our enemies now do not have anyone to fight.

Carey and Tuck had written that the Haka (Lai) chief Lianduna with the support of a Burmese chief Myat San of Tilin attacked Lusei villages. The Burmese had guns and cannons while the Lusei did not have these firearms as yet. As a result the Lusei deserted their villages and fled away. The Hakas then ravaged the countryside for several months. This finally resulted in the Lusei migration.

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\[9^{20}\] H.L.C.A Zofate Chanchin (Tahan Kalemyo, 1995) p.59
\[9^{21}\] *ibid.* p.60
across the Tiau river (a river which acts as a boundary between Myanmar and Mizoram) to enter present Mizoram. Even after the Lusei have crossed Tiau river the Pawi (Lai) tried to dominate over the Lusei so much so that Lallula one of the Lusei chief had to pay an annual tribute to the Thlantlang (Lai) chief Thanchhuma. Thanchhuma used to send one of his trustees Phunthanga to exact tributes from the Lusei villages. This incident is also corroborated by the oral traditions among Lusei as seen in the songs:

*I lal lua e Phunthanga*
*Khaw tinah chhiah i lawr e*
*Sat mai zel e aw e*

The English translation would be:

Phunthang, you are an arrogant ruler
You taxed heavily on many villages
And if refused, you just hurt them.

Such other folk songs also indicate that their mithuns were taken away from them:

*Hrum sawm lo lian ka dang zo lo ve*
*Kan chang sialin Tiaupui dung a zui*

The English translation would be:

I cannot stop the people who knot their hair at the forehead (Lai)
Our mithuns are now crossing the Tiau river.

Legends tells us that Lallula one of the Sailo chiefs who ruled over Zopui village wanted to free himself from the yoke of Thanchhuma and to carry out his plan he

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23 Liangkhua, *op. cit.*, p.53
influenced the Fanai tribe to his side. He then invited Thanchhuma and all his warriors to the village and promised to feast them and give tributes. When Thanchhuma and his men came to Lallula’s village to collect the tributes, they were welcomed warmly by Lallula’s village but after the guests were drunk and went to sleep, many of the Lai men were slain while Thanchhuma was kept as a captive. This incident is recorded in a folk song:

\[Phunthanga'n saingho ngen e,\]
\[Thanchhuma'n kawlpui bun e\]
\[Miau muau tak a aw e^{25}\]

The English translation would be:

Phunthanga demanded ivory

Thanchhuma is now handcuffed

They would be now tamed and silent. (\textit{miau muau}-cry of a cat)

However Lallula was still afraid that Thanchhuma would raid his village later on and so he shifted his village far away from Thanchhuma.\(^{26}\) Another song which was thought to be composed after fleeing away from the Lai runs as follows

\[Bangchawm ram leh leng kan hel\]
\[Chinzahpui leh Thlantlang ral\]
\[Leido leh vanrang chu kiang leh ngai e.^{27}\]

The English translation would be:

We have avoided our enemies region

Our enemies are Chinzah and people of Thlantlang

\(^{25}\) Liangkhaia, \textit{op. cit.}, p.53
\(^{26}\) \textit{Ibid}, p.52-54; This incident is mentioned by all the Mizo historians.
\(^{27}\) H.L.C.A, \textit{op. cit.}, p.311
But earthly foes and clouds in the sky will pass away.

(Chinzah are the chiefs of Lai and Thlanthlang is a name of one of the villages of the Lai in Chin Hills).

Even after crossing to the other side, the Lusei as mentioned were still troubled by the Lai and so they planned to stay together. Hence Thangura’s descendents and the group of people led by Chungnunga and Lianlula, sons of Sailova all stayed together at Selesih. In this village there were 7000 houses\(^{28}\) and was ruled by seven chiefs. However the number of houses given as 7000 seems to be an exaggeration because if we assume that in an average there were six members in a family, the total population would be around 42,000. But in 1901 the total population of the Lusei were only 36,382. However though the population mentioned in the oral traditions may be exaggerated yet since almost all the Sailo clans were assembled, it can be regarded that a village would have quite large population and the number 7000 may be indicative of that big population rather than the exact number. The chiefs of Selesih were Lalhluma, Rohnaa, Lalachera and Thangphunga, the descendents of Chungnunga; Pukawlha, Darpuiliana and Darliankuala the descendents of Lianlula.\(^{29}\) When they were in this village they did not face any trouble from the Pawi. In fact, the other tribes which had already settled in Mizoram, when they knew about this village, migrated to other places as they feared an attack from them.\(^{30}\) This made it possible for the Sailo and Lusei to expand their settlement. There were also some other smaller tribes who shifted to this village so that they

\(^{28}\) *ibid.* p.52; B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* p.212
\(^{29}\) B.Lalthangliana, *ibid.*
\(^{30}\) K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.16
would be free from raids from other tribes. The grouping of people in this village seemed to have great significance for the Sailo. B.Lalthangliana mentioned some of the significances of this village, the most important being, and which appeared to be true, was that the Sailo realised the importance of unity.\textsuperscript{31} When they were assembled in this village, there was no mention of them being raided by Lai or other tribes in oral tradition. So the lesson they learnt that ‘unity is strength’ was later used by them to extend their territory and thus unity was one of the reasons that they could subjugate other Lusei tribes.

However all of them could not remain in this village for a long period. This was to happen as there could be shortage of land as they practiced jhumming cultivation. In jhumming cultivation after some years of using the fields, the land had to be left fallow for some years to be useable. Moreover since the population was quite high, fuel also would not be sufficient for all of them. Thus they had to move westwards again. They dispersed in batches at different times. The period for the Lusei migration to Mizoram is said to be around 1650-1700AD.\textsuperscript{32} However, the Hualngo, a tribe of Lusei did not migrate at this time and remained in Burma but some of them later migrated again.\textsuperscript{33}

When different Mizo tribes lived separately in the hills (present Chin Hills) of Myanmar, as stated earlier, they settled according to their tribes and did not mix much. They lived quite near to each other and when sometimes they met each other, they used to quarrel and a fight would ensue between them. In the initial stage, all the men did not take part in the fight. The fight which they followed was that they

\textsuperscript{31} B.Lalthangliana, \textit{op.cit.}, p.213  
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{ibid}, p. 214  
\textsuperscript{33} H.L.C.A, \textit{op. cit.}
would put a plank across a ditch and two men from the two tribes were selected. These two men with sword had to have a duel. The one who fell from the plank was the loser and the one who stood on the plank was declared to be the winner. This type of fighting was first seen between the Kawlni and Siakeng tribes. Though the reason for the Mizo to indulge in this type of warfare was not exactly known but it could be inferred that the population at that time was quite small and so they could not afford to lose more people in the battle. Moreover, it could also be regarded that the people did not have proper weapons to fight so they could have resorted to this type of duel between two persons only. As a consequence of these fights, clanism and separatism prevailed among them.

The other method of fighting which was carried out was that a tribe would go to another tribes’ village and would try to take down the head of a pig which was used for sacrifices. This would be hung at the centre of the village. The villagers would defend it and would do their best to prevent other tribes from taking it down. If the other tribe could take it down, it meant that they were stronger and the villagers would concede defeat. They might have fought without everyone taking part in it so as to avoid many people being killed and to save their women and children. However, afterwards the methods of fighting which were mentioned were done away with and all the able men would take part in it. Later on they even used to go out to other villages and raid, leaving their women, children and elders in the village. It so often happened that while they were away, their village itself used to be

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34 *ibid*, p.172. This was also narrated by many old people including my grandmother who used to tell us this type of fighting as a story.
35 Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p.28. This was also narrated by my grandmother. It seems it was told to her as a story by her parents.
raided by other people so much so that all those left behind were killed or taken away as captives to be slaves. Since the Mizo had to indulge in many wars, it led the people to live in constant fear of their enemies and so men had to concentrate on the safety of the village. They had to save not only their village but in order to counter attack their enemies they also frequently raided other villages. So, men could not help women in any of the domestic chores and the major part of the field work was also entrusted to women. The people being migratory had to shift constantly and hence were insecure and so when frequent raids and wars took place amongst themselves a well defined division of labour began to be established. The society as mentioned in the earlier chapter was already a patriarchal society and so when the question of war surfaced it was the men who took up the responsibility of defending the women and children and also went to other villages to raid. The private domain included all the women's chores and the public domain was segregated for the men. Although this may have been necessary at that point of time, yet the societal attitudes which this created was to have a long lasting effect on gender relations as will be shown in the later discussions. Migration therefore had a deep impact on gender relations as it created a very gendered division of labour. So it can be argued that the process of migration in fact re-enforced patriarchy. The issue of killing their enemies also became stronger and those men who brought the slain heads of their enemies were regarded as heroes. These warriors were welcomed on their return by the women by garlanding them and giving them liquor to drink.\textsuperscript{36} This was seen in the folk tales of Duhmanga leh Dardini.\textsuperscript{37} In this folk tale Duhmanga with his

\textsuperscript{36} K.Zawla, \textit{op. cit.}, p.83
\textsuperscript{37} P.S.Dahrawka, \textit{Mizo Thawnthu}, (Aizawl, 1994)p.189
friends went out for raiding and when they returned Duhmanga was welcomed by his sisters and wife with zu. During times of feasts and other ceremonies, these warriors had the privilege of drinking the zu which the chief first offered to them.\textsuperscript{38} This was regarded as a very high honour and after this public show of honour they were highly respected in the society. Thus one of the honours which were bestowed upon a citizen was to kill enemies and bring home the head or the skin to show that they have really killed it. As women never went for raids, they therefore did not have the chance to receive the recognition or honour from their fellow villagers. Thus men began to gain more respect and their words came to have more influence in the village and even in the family. So the men's greatest desire was to kill enemies and receive the cup of zu to signify that they were honoured. Moreover the people at this stage believed that the slain would be the servant of the slayer in life after death. However to be the master of the slain, the slayer had to stand over the dead body and proclaim his name aloud three times so that the slain would know who his killer was.\textsuperscript{39} The slayer also had to perform a ceremony called aih after he returned to his village. On the day of that ceremony, some particular branch of a tree would be planted in his compound and villagers would sing all day long accompanied by all their musical instruments. The people who were invited had to be fed with beer and feasted. This was done so that the spirit of the slain would be subdued.\textsuperscript{40} So it could be assumed that when they had to fight other clans, the idea that killing an enemy would be beneficial for them even after they die was given social legitimacy to encourage the men to fight and kill their enemies. So killing of an enemy made the

\textsuperscript{38} K.Zawla, op. cit., p.88
\textsuperscript{39} ibid., p.82
\textsuperscript{40} ibid p.86
killer receive a merit and also helped him in getting a servant in the life after death which meant he had control over manpower. So the men who raided and killed were regarded to be truly brave and rich while women had to look to the men for support and safety. Thus the attitude of the society was such that the strength of the men was feted. Raiding and killing was the domain of the men and women were never allowed to take part in it. As only men took part in raiding, they were honoured and respected while on the other hand, there was no honour conferred on the domain of women. Thus raiding and the significance imparted on it gradually increased the level of patriarchy.

As mentioned earlier Mizo migrated from one place to another in search of a safe place and fertile land whereby they had to change their villages frequently. When their villages were about to be shifted, they did not just go out and settle at any place they liked. Whenever they thought that it was time for them to make a move, some of the men went out to search for a suitable site. For this purpose five or three of the village elders and a priest were selected and they set out taking with them a cock and some liquor. When they reached what they thought was good enough, they spent the night at that place. Early in the morning, if the cock crowed at its usual time, then it was thought to be good. But if the cock did not crow or if it crowed late, then that place was thought to be a place where some evil spirits reside. So they abandoned that site and looked for another place. The sites which the elders looked for were generally places where water would be available and which would be in a good defensive position. When the British entered present Mizoram

41 L.K.Liana, Zofate Thuhla, Aizawl, 1994, p.175
42 ibid.
43 Dr.Lalthanliana, Mizo Chanchin (Aizawl, 2000) p.199
they found that all the villages were located at the top of a hill and which were difficult to approach.\textsuperscript{44} In the village administration the chief had a Council of Elders to assist him. These council members were selected from the elderly men and their main occupation was to assist their chief.\textsuperscript{45} It appears that women were not the members of the village council as their names were not recorded by the administrators and was also not seen in the any of the folk songs or folk tales. It can thus be inferred that in migrating or changing villages, men who assisted the chief were the decision makers. Thus it transpired that since women were not in the council of elders, women would not take any part in deciding when and where to migrate as these decisions were all made by the male elders. Thus, women had to merely follow the elders’ choice and they could not have a voice in deciding the process of migration. When men decided that it was time for them to leave, women were bound to pack their belongings and leave along with their menfolk. Hence it can also be deduced that the village administration was in the sole hands of the male.

During the Mizo settlement in the hills of Myanmar their religious beliefs and practices began to be more developed. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the people believed that there were some supernatural powers or spirits who controlled their destiny and who blessed them. They also believed in the existence of some bad spirits who caused them to have bad luck and sickness. So when the people wanted to receive blessings, they performed rituals mainly to their deity \textit{khuavang}.\textsuperscript{46} But when they fell sick, they offered sacrifices to propitiate the bad spirits which caused

\textsuperscript{44} J. Shakespear, \textit{op. cit.}, p.19
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{ibid.}, p.43
\textsuperscript{46} Saiaithanga, \textit{Mizo Sakhua} (Aizawl, 1994) p.15
them sickness. Various tribes also began to have some different rituals. Lusei and Ralte tribes' rituals were known as *hnuaipui* in which a pig was offered. The ritual of Paite was called *sumchawng* and to receive the blessings they offer a piglet and a chicken. Pawi ritual was known as *nutar* in which a full grown pig was offered. Women continued to play an important role as *zawlnei* (having relation with *khuavang*) which in English would mean prophets or soothsayers. They would predict things due to their relationship with *khuavang*. In many folk tales there were instances of women and men *zawlnei* but most of them were women. They were often consulted by the sick as they were regarded to know which animals and which kind of sacrifices were to be offered to cure the sick. However these women did not perform the sacrifices themselves as these were done by the male priest. Prophetess who were famous for their prediction were ‘one old lady’, Khuahngaii and Tialberhi. Another woman who was famous during the days before the people settled in present Mizoram was Thluaisingi who was said to have started one of the sacrifices offered by the Mizo. The legend goes that in one of the Renthlei tribe village, everyday a child would disappear around dusk. So the adult guarded the entire village and at last they saw a huge snake snatching a child. They then trapped the snake and killed it and the meat was distributed among the whole villagers. One old widow named Thluaisingi was given the head and as she cooked it and pierced it

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47 K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.78
48 *ibid.*, p.78
49 Saiaithanga, *op. cit.*, p.14
50 *ibid.*
51 K.Zawla, *op.cit.*, p.102
52 *ibid.*, p.104. The author mentioned her only as *pitar te* which means an old lady.
53 H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.259. The authors based their reference on oral sources. Their life stories were not written by the authors.
54 *ibid.*, pp.260-261
with a thong, the dead snake’s head spoke to her. With fear, the old widow threw it outside. That night, she had some guests and when the cock crowed it crowed as if it told them to run away. So they ran away and soon the whole village was swept away in a landslide. Out of fear, she then decided to hold a sacrifice to propitiate the spirits to bless the village and called the sacrifice as *ngawnchawn*. From then on, other people too decided to do as she did and when a family faced some difficulties or hardships, they performed this sacrifice. So this particular sacrifice was significant for this study because it was started by a woman. Though this particular sacrifice was started by a woman, yet it is important to note that in the later period this sacrifice was performed only by men and woman were not allowed to perform any of the sacrifices. However, women holding the important post of prophetess and soothsayers would support the contention that in this period there was some space for authority for some women which can be interpreted to mean that patriarchal values were not yet so deeply embedded. In the oral tradition there were no instances of a woman priest during their pre-migration period so it could be assumed that men were priests. Though women were marginalised in the religious ceremonies, yet, the contribution they had for the success of these sacrifices could not be ignored. This was because women were the ones to rear chickens, goats and pigs which were sacrificed to different spirits.\(^5\)

During their stay in the hills of Burma, the festivals which they celebrate were more elaborate and also developed into a systematic ritual. They had three distinct types of festivals, namely, *Pawl kut, Chapchar kut* and *Mim kut*. According

to one of the folk tales which was narrated by K.Zawla, and which was confirmed
by stories told by grandmothers was that Pawl kut was believed to have originated
when they were in the hills of Burma. It so happened that a severe famine struck the
place where they lived. This famine continued for three years in which many died
and many of the people had to shift to other places. But at the fourth year they had a
very rich harvest and all the villagers harvested much more than they required. As
they had huge amount of production, they also had many domesticated animals. At a
place called Suai tlang, one of the Kawlni's chief urged his people to celebrate the
year of blessing and to invite their neighbouring villages. So, everyone joined in the
feast. Since they had much more than they could eat, they began to feed their friends
and had much fun. They enjoyed so much that they even practiced it the next year.
When other tribes knew about this, they also started to celebrate at the same time and
thus this became a tradition for the Mizo. This festival was celebrated after every
harvest that it can also be said to be a harvest festival. Later this festival assumed the
festival for the children but the reason for this change could not be found in the oral
tradition.

Another festival which was regarded to be the most enjoyed by the people
was Chapchar kut. This festival was also regarded to have been begun by the Kawlni
when they were in Suai tlang in the hills of Burma. According to oral tradition, a
raiding party of a Kawlni village went to raid some other villages but they returned
home empty-handed. When the chief saw his warriors returning dejectedly, he felt
sorry for them. He then gathered all the young men and women and gave a feast for

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56 K.Zawla, op. cit., pp.51-53
57 ibid., p.54
them. This was later practiced as a festival at the beginning of jhum cultivation and other villages also began to do the same. This festival was later celebrated after the clearing of forest to celebrate that they had finished the toughest part of the jhum work and as a thanksgiving that they did not harm themselves while felling the trees.

*Mim kut* was regarded to have originated from the story of *Tlingi leh Ngama* which was already mentioned in the earlier chapter. In the story mentioned we find that Tlingi had died earlier than Ngama which made him very lonely. One day in a trance, he saw Tlingi who was very thin and frail. When he asked the reason for it, she said that in *mithi khua* (the place for the dead), they did not have enough to eat. Later he placed vegetables and fruits on her grave and asked her to eat it. Afterwards he was again in a trance and saw Tlingi quite healthy and robust. She then told him that she had eaten the eatables kept for her and regained her own self. This made him very happy and he told this incident to his neighbours and friends. They then believed that this could happen as they believed in life after death. Hence they also began to keep some eatables for their dead relatives. So this started as a ritual and later it became an occasion to remember the dead which was practiced every year.\(^{58}\) This memorial ceremony was meant for the ones who had expired that year. They made drinks and kept rice and meat for the dead ones. After three days, they had a feast and sang songs in memory of the departed souls.

From the various folk tales which were mentioned in the earlier chapter, it was seen that women played an important role in economy. In almost all the folk tales we find that women worked in doing the field works and all the household

\(^{58}\) *ibid, pp.55-56*
chores. Women participated in all the jhum cultivation although the clearing of forests was mainly the responsibility of men. They then have to grow other vegetables besides rice. The rearing of domesticated animals was also in the hands of the women. While coming back from the field, women had to carry a lot of things such as the vegetables for the family and food for the pigs. In the story of *Mauruangi*, Mauruangi’s mother carried such a heavy load that she could not cross a fragile bridge and her husband knocked her down to the river as he had said earlier that anyone who dare not cross the bridge would be pushed into the river. This story also signified the fact that women were expected only to work and those who were not fit enough to work were regarded as not worth to live. Women were also responsible for fetching firewood from the forest. In the story of *Thangsira leh Thangzaia* their mother was blind, but she still had to fetch firewood from the nearby forest. However the implements or tools used for agriculture, weaving and other things were all made by men. As mentioned earlier, men concentrated themselves on defence of the village, raids, construction of houses and clearing the forest for their jhum. B.Lalthangliana had particularly emphasised that the division of labour between men and women was clearly balanced and in fact it was the men who did all the hard labour while women did the things which were easier. Moreover he also said that as all the dangerous tasks were done by men, this showed how the Mizo men had protected their women. However the writings of B.Lalthangliana need to be examined from a more gender-friendly perspective. It

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59 Some of the folk tales are *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi, Chalthanga.*
61 P.S.Dahrawka, op. cit., p.174
62 B.Lalthangliana, op. cit. pp.384-387
was true that the various men's responsibilities seemed to be harder and involved
greater risks but it should also be noted that women's works required sustained effort
and endurance. From the various oral traditions which were gathered it can be also
seen that women did not have any leisure time. They had to work right from dawn
till it was time to sleep. Unmarried girls especially could not just sleep whenever
they wanted. They had to wait for the boys who court them to go back. Even while
boys courted them, they still had to involve themselves in spinning or some other
things. Girls also cooked the pigs' food while boys were courting them. During the
lean season men spent their leisure time as they found it suitable. But women had to
store firewood for the rainy season and weaving were also done during this season.
So, women's works were not easier than the work of the men and also they
continued with their work during day and night and all throughout the season.
Moreover it could also be deduced that since men went out for hunting or to raid
other villages, they had to leave their womenfolk behind. This would always be a big
responsibility for the women. Sometimes only women and children were left in the
villages. Taking advantage of this, their enemies often tried to raid the village. So
women's lives were in danger and they would be very insecure. It could also be
assumed that though the folk tales did not mention about women defending their
village, it would be obvious that if only the women were left in the village, they
would definitely defend themselves and their children from their enemies and would
even fight against them. They might be defeated and taken as captives or killed but it
can be fairly said that any mother would try to defend her children from being killed.
So, women being left alone in the village very often had to fight and defend
themselves. This was seen in the case of *khuangleng run* (run – raid, khawnglung -
name of a village). This incident occurred in the early stage of migration in which
the Sukte raided khuangleng village of a Sailo chief Thanhranga while the chief and
his men were out raiding other villages. According to the Sukte, they took about 200
captives from this village.\textsuperscript{63} Moreover when their men were out of station, it was the
women's responsibility to manage the household and also do the men's work as
necessary. So this would bring more burdens to them. Moreover it can be clearly
seen that since they always migrated from one place to another, women would have
a hard time. The time and energy used for cultivating, rearing cattle and setting up a
household would always have to be started all over again. This constant migration
was seen by the British administrators as to the reason why the Mizo did not own
lots of property and the reason for their houses to be built so as not to last very long.
So, since they did not have the time to concentrate or to develop themselves on new
things, they had to rely on the natural resources which were available to them and
make the best use of them and this was usually left to the women. Thus we have seen
that women worked a lot for the family and for the society but they never received
any recognition for their work and did not receive any special respect and honour
which were bestowed upon the men. We have also seen that women worked in the
jhum and participated in the back breaking work of weeding and other things but for
the various festivals which were related to agriculture like the \textit{pawl kut} and \textit{chapchar kut}, they were never the decision makers in deciding the time to hold the festivals.
They participated in the dance and in collecting firewood and brewing the drinks.

The natural resources which were available to the Mizo were used
constructively by the women for making pots since pottery was left to them.

\textsuperscript{63} Carey & Tuck, \textit{op. cit.}, p.12
Nuchhungi, who was one of the first students in the school opened by the missionaries, narrated how they used to make pots, the art of which was handed down the generations. She was told by her mother that pottery was done by women from a very long time. She further explained that women dug a special kind of clay called *tlaklei*, mixed with water and pounded it in a mortar till the clay became soft and malleable. They then molded it with hand. To make it smooth and even, they hit the pot lightly with a small stone or pallet. The finished pot was kept till it became almost dry and then heated it over a slow fire. Nuchhungi told how this art needed patience and time. Thus women were skilled potters and provided the family with pots which were used for cooking and for brewing rice beer and other liquors. Thus the labour they did in pottery was remarkable.

In the various folk tales we also find that women were responsible for growing cotton, spinning and weaving. According to stories handed down the generations, the dress of the women in the days during their stay at Lentlang was called *dawlrem kawr* which was striped with black colour. This would indicate that they also knew the art of dyeing clothes. However the process of dyeing could not be found in the various folk tales of the studied period yet it is clear that women knew the art of dyeing as the colour of their cloth was striped with black. In the later period, J. Shakespear said that women obtained dye by boiling the leaves of the Assam indigo and during this period the same plant might also have been used. The reason for the absence of the process of dyeing in the folk tales could be because the people were migratory, they could not have the time to carry out the actual process

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64 B. Lalrinchhani, *op. cit.*
65 Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.22
66 J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.30
of dyeing. But as they settled down the older generations could have passed on their knowledge to the younger generations and so a revival of old knowledge took place. As the people settled, the dyeing procedure was again started. And as time passed, women developed the designs and by the time they settled in Mizoram they had a large number of different kinds of puam (traditional cloth which was wrapped around the waist like a sarong).

Trade was also carried out by the people that existed even before their migration. As mentioned earlier all business transactions were done by barter system. In the folktale of Darthiangi leh Chertuala, Darthiangi and Chertuala were married couple but as they could not have children, they were separated by mutual consent. In course of time, Darthiangi married a man from another village. Chertuala also re-married and he was later found to travel to Darthiangi’s village to sell pots. In other folk tales also there were many instances of men who went to other villages selling their wares. But there were no instances of women selling things. So it can be deduced that women hardly went out for trading purposes. This might be because they were busy managing the household affairs and did not have the time to go. It could also be that men did not approve of women going to other places without their husbands which would mean that men controlled the mobility of women. This story also reflects that women had a choice as they were separated by mutual consent and soon after she got remarried again. So, prior to the Mizo migration to the present habitat, women perhaps had more freedom in marriage and separation when compared to the later period.

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67 P.S.Dahrawka, op. cit., p.143-147
Women still played an important role in the social life of the people. The role which they played was as consultants when other people wanted an advice for something. This role which was found in the earlier life in the plains was still followed. One of the wise women who was remembered in Mizo history was Manga Nu (Manga’s mother). She was the mother of Manga, one of the chiefs of Ngente tribe. The chief in those days could use the labour of the villagers and as was the practice when the chief needed the villagers to work in his field, his mother would call them on the longest day of the year. In the legend about her, we find that Manga nu used to put her hairpin on the varandah and observing the shadow of the sun on it, she knew which day was the longest day of the year. Other people did not know that this was the longest day of the year but as Manga Nu knew it, she used the labour of the villagers on this particular day. Till today 21st June is known among the Mizo as Manga Nu lawm rawih ni which means Day of Manga mother’s labour. So we find that women were the reservoir of traditional knowledge and that they were capable of using their knowledge to their advantage.

Before the Mizo’s migration to present Mizoram, another woman who was famous was Pi Hmuaki. She was famous due to her talent to compose songs. In the stories it was said that Pi Hmuaki was one of the earliest known composer among the Mizo. There were songs composed during their stay in Kale Kabaw valley and in Lentlang also, but there were no mention of the person who composed it. Thus it was not exactly known whether those old folk songs were composed by women or men. However the first composer who was famous and who is remembered till today was

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68 L.K.Liana, *op. cit.*, p.31
69 Lalthanliana, *op. cit.*, p.161
70 K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.251
Pi Hmuaki. She was from Ngente clan and this could be known from one of her songs:

*Kan Ngente khua, khua mun nuama kha*

*Thla ki fam hman ki nghilh rua lo ve*\(^1\)

The English translation would be:

*How nice and pleasant is our Ngente village*

*I would always remember it even if I die.*

As she composed songs, she won the favour of the chiefs and she used to entertain them while the chiefs and his elders were drinking zu. As she went on composing songs, the people thought that later generations would have nothing to compose if she continued with her talent. So, they dug a grave for her and buried her alive.\(^2\) As she was kept in the grave she was still said to compose songs for the men who covered her with earth:

*Nauvate u, nau haiate u*

*Tha te te khan mi haichhilh rawh u.*\(^3\)

The English translation would be:

*Young men, you ignorant young men*

*Cover me up as nicely as you could.*

However recent historians refuted this story and said that she was not buried alive due to her ability to compose songs. According to them, as the people in those days were migratory people, they were about to migrate to present Mizoram but as Pi Hmuaki was too old, she could not go on the journey and so other people just buried

\(^1\) *ibid.* p.252
\(^2\) *ibid.*
\(^3\) *ibid.*
her. Even though the real reason for her being buried may not be known, burying a person alive is dehumanizing and a question could be raised whether men were buried alive when they were too old to migrate. Nevertheless it can be said that Pi Hmuaki was a woman who during her prime time earned the respect and favour of the villagers.

In this chapter we have studied that Mizo were migratory people and the reasons for them to migrate were attributed mostly to the search for better agricultural land and the fear of their enemies. During the process of their migration, gender relations also began to change gradually. Women still had a space in the society as soothsayers, prophetess and as consultants. Women also began to be seen as composer of songs. Hence there were some women who by their traditional knowledge and talent earned the respect of the people.

As mentioned earlier, the Sailo assembled together in Selesih village but could not stay for a long time due to unavailability of cultivable land for all of them. So, the people dispersed to different groups according to their family. The break-up of Selesih was a set back to the ascendancy of the Sailo chiefs but very soon they consolidated their power. The Sailo soon spread over many hills of present Mizoram. During this time, there were still other Lusei tribes and other tribes such as Thado. So they wanted to subjugate these tribes so that the whole of the land could be in their hands. The Sailo appeared to be the only clan among the Lusei who tried to subdue other clans and tribes so that they could be the sole power. Since they fled away from the Zo, they now wanted to consolidate themselves so that they could be the most powerful clan in the land and would be able to control and have as much

\[24\] B.Lalthangliana, _op. cit._, p.191; Lalthanliana, _op. cit._, p.162
They knew that they have to fight many of the other tribes and clans who had settled first in present Mizoram. They first defeated the Ralte tribe. They had already learnt that one of the most important things for them to defeat other tribes was to be united. So they developed the idea of crushing all other ruling families by concluding an agreement between themselves. They then devised a well developed action programme in which Lallula's descendents were to subdue the Zadeng; Rolura's descendents would fight against the Palian and the Thangluah's would be subjugated by Lianlula's descendents. The plan which they carried out was met with success at the end even though at the initial stage they were also sometimes defeated. The defeated Lusei chiefs had to accept the suzerainty of the Sailo. Hence at around 1805 they defeated all the other Lusei clans and their next aim was to defeat the other tribes. They then started a campaign back to the east and in the north. They soon defeated the Hualngo. They again concentrated on the Thado as this tribe had killed some of the Sailo. The Thado were a tribe which had settled in Mizoram before the Lusei migrated. It was this tribe who had expelled the Halams, Hrangkhawl, Darlong etc forcing them to migrate to Tripura, Sylhet and Cachar districts. The Thados were in turn defeated by the Sailo and were forced to migrate to Cachar and South Manipur and were called New Kukis. However some of them accepted the Sailo chiefs and stayed behind. Thus the Sailo were the masters of the new land but it should be noted that there still existed some Lai and Mara

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76 Liangkhaia, op. cit., p.59
77 ibid, pp.59-61
78 ibid
79 J. Shakespeare, op.cit. p.6
chiefs in southern Mizoram who had never fallen under the influence of the Sailo chiefs. However Sailo excelled themselves among the Lusei chiefs and established their suzerainty in the present Mizoram. The reasons for the Sailo to establish their paramountcy in present Mizoram could be due to their unity as mentioned earlier. Their unity was further strengthened by the marriage alliances which they made with the other ruling houses. The sons of the Sailo chiefs normally married the daughters of the other Sailo chiefs and vice versa. Lalpuiliana, the heir son of the Sailo chief, Lallula also married the daughter of the Pawi chief. Hence the Sailo chiefs through matrimonial alliances strengthened their position. They also had certain privileges which gave them wealth and power. They received paddy dues which gave them power over land; privileges of salts, meat and bees wax – control of resources; mithun sales tax which provided them power over properties and control of labour and control of man power which was ‘real wealth’ in the pre-modern period. Since they were also large in number they were no match for the small tribes who had ruled earlier. Moreover many villagers from other tribes such as Zadeng and Rokhum left their chiefs due to ‘the cruel and arbitrary rulers’, and embraced the Sailo chiefs which improved their position and population. The Sailo ruled the villages efficiently. The Sailo therefore due to their well developed action programme and astute administration ruled between the Tiau river in the east and the Jampui hills in the west except for the southern portion where the Pawi, Lakher and

80 ibid. p.41
82 B.Lalthangliana (ed), Mizo Lai Ropuite Vol I (Aizawl, 1989) p.81
83 Vanlalringa Bawitlung, op.cit. p.59
84 J.Shakespeare, op. cit., p.9
Fanai chiefs maintained their villages. However as time passed, the Sailo chiefs could not remain united forever. As they ruled over different villages there started some ill-feelings between them. The conflict erupted when Vuta of the north and Lalpuithanga of the south wanted to acquire more land. This culminated in a war between them and this was believed to have occurred between 1849-1856.\(^5\) Not long after this war, there broke out another war among the Sailo chiefs of the east and west, namely the descendents of Lalsavunga and Manga. They were also aided by other chiefs. This war however ceased due to the breakout of a famine. These two wars greatly weakened the might of the Sailo chiefs. The other tribes knowing their condition had the courage to fight against them. Hence they now had to fight against the Pawi, Fanai and Hmar in which they were sometimes defeated. However the Sailo chiefs remained the largest ruling clan among the Mizo. Even when the British administered the land they found that there were more than three hundred Sailo chiefs ruling in different villages in present Mizoram.\(^6\)

The Sailo therefore ruled over the major part of Mizoram. As mentioned earlier many smaller tribes surrendered to the Sailo and as a result, most parts of the present Mizoram was ruled by the Sailo. It was after the Sailo’s dominance over the land that there started a sort of common language called *duhlian* dialect. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, in the stage when all the tribes of Mizo stayed together, they used a common language which could be understood by all of them. However as they dispersed and settled in different groups, they patronised their own language and so different tribes spoke their own language. And as time passed, the

\(^{5}\) Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p.66  
\(^{6}\) Vanlalringa Bawitlung, *op. cit.*, p.61
different groups could not understand the other tribes’ language. However, when the Sailo dominated the other smaller tribes, they popularised their own dialect which was known as *duhlian* or *lusei* language. So by their administrative ability and foresight the Sailo unified the various Mizo tribes under their rule, “introduced a uniform code of administration and social and moral codes of conduct and mobilized the disparate tribes into one linguistic and cultural community conscious of themselves as a force with historical destiny”. Thus it could also be said that all the Mizo tribes more or less followed the Sailo tradition and culture and even religion. It would be thus interesting to see whether the transition of the Sailo from a clan which had power only within its village to being the masters of many clans and tribes would affect the gender relations in the society.

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87 Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a Vela Hnam Dangte Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1994) p.34
88 L.Keivom, *op. cit.*