Chapter – 1

Introduction
1.1 Need For the Study

The ‘Mizo’ society is a fiercely patriarchal society where males not only play the most important role in social production but also in protection and perpetuation of the community. Women are completely subdued and subordinated. It was a tribal society which evolved its own polity in the form of Chieftainship. The roles of the Chiefs were not only to provide exemplary leadership in the production process, but also in the defense of their habitat. Needlessly, the Chiefs were invariably males and women if any ever became a chieftain it was either through her connection with male Chiefs. In other words when a female was recognized a Chief it was only because either her husband or her brother or son was the Chief who could not complete their tenures. Very interestingly, whenever the women became a Chief, even though as a female she was considered as weak, vulnerable and in need of protection from their males, she had to provide leadership in warfare and raids. In this sense, the role played by the Chieftainnessess in managing to rule and play their role effectively in an absolute patriarchal society is interesting and within a patriarchal set up, they have emerged as powerful social actors developing their own status and capabilities to face the challenges confronting the society where women were regarded as subordinates.

The Mizo resistance to colonialism though is a saga of the heroic deeds and sacrifices of both men and women yet the contributions of women have not been properly recognized. It will not be incorrect to say that their role has not found suitable place in the annals of freedom history of Mizoram. This is due to the fact that the levels of interest in politics are lower than those of men and the assumption that men had a greater positive attitude towards politics than women which was found to be true in many of the previous works. Moreover, women being considered to be the weaker section of the society, were expected to remain inside the house and were completely under the control of men. For a thousand years,
Women have been defined as weak, passive, emotional, intuitive, mysterious, irresponsible, quarrelsome. The male culture, which is the dominant culture in every nation, has not been able to accept the female point of view as expressed by female writers, artist and philosophers. Although studies on women in recent years have enriched Mizo Historiography, the role of women during the Resistance movement has not been adequately researched.

Even a brief analysis of the existing literature on the political status of women shows that such studies have not had sufficient reference to the actual behaviour of women and the relevance of important social, economic and cultural variables, to the participation and the decision making by women, although there are some valuable contributions by scholars and researchers. Moreover, political participation of women and their attitude towards politics can properly be understood not from an analysis of political activities and attitudes alone, but perhaps much more clearly from a thorough comparative analysis with those of men.

Political participation determines the shape of political life. It has been considered by many political scientists as a means to development and an indicator of development. Usually political participation implies those actions of citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics. The nature and extent of participation in politics could be influenced by socio-economic factors. One important determining factor is obviously gender difference. Gender is now considered to be a category of discrimination. It has been observed that process of development has failed to improve the social position of the underprivileged sections in general, and women in particular.

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The coming of the British in Mizoram ushered a new era of women’s emancipation in Mizoram. Earlier, they did not participate much in the public affairs due to many restrictions bestowed upon them. But when the British came to Mizoram, we see many women coming to the forefront and fighting against them. The female Chiefs, bravely fought the British in order to safeguard their country. However, political participation of women is hardly seen the Mizo society. This may be due to the fact that in a society where certain groups are traditionally behind the other, where they can be categorised as ‘weaker section’ or ‘disadvantage groups’ wider participation and mobilisation at higher and higher levels would be necessary for its uplift for democratic system.

Though there are many studies which have looked into the different aspects of chieftainship in Mizo society, there is hardly any studies which deals with the role played by the chieftainness during the resistance movement and their contributions in the society with the result that the problem remains as it were while there is a commendable advancement of the society in many other ways. The reason could be the difficulties in gathering study materials as facts are so inadequate and the status or position is made up of so many divergent and frequently conflicting elements, and paucity of information, that generalizations are usually very hazardous. It is therefore, of great importance to undertake research in this field.

1.2 Objectives Of The Study

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the role played by the Chieftainesses in the struggle against the British invasion of Mizo country. In doing so it proposed to trace the origin of Chieftainship and the emergence of Chieftainesses in Mizo polity. The role played by the Chieftainesses depicted a very exceptional event in the history of Mizos because they managed to rule and played their role effectively in an absolute patriarchal society.

A study on this topic will help one to understand that in Mizo society, though it is easy to simply say that the status of women is lower to that of their male counterparts, women do played major role in the society and could even become a ruler. The present study is an attempt towards fulfilling the need to have a better understanding of the place, position and contribution of women in Mizo society. Moreover, there are only a few studies on the political participation of women in Mizoram in general. That is why the researcher has attempted to study the participation of women in this area. The study seeks to bridge some of the existing research gap. In the words of Urvashi Butalia, unravelling the ‘hidden voices’ and listen to the ‘other side of silence’.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology used is that of historical Empiricism. Due to the absence of pre-colonial writings among the Mizo people, oral sources have also been used extensively. The present study draws bulk of its evidence mainly on archival sources located in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, State Archives of West Bengal, Kolkata. Assam Secretariat Record Room and Archives, Dispur, Nehru museum and Library, New Delhi,
North Eastern Hills University Library, Shillong, NEC Library, Shillong and Mizoram State Library, Aizawl. The work also relies on published and unpublished records of the colonial administrators. Various secondary source materials had also been used in this work. In addition to these sources, interview method has also been adopted in some of the chapters.

1.4 Review Of Related Literatures

The women's question had attracted serious scholarly attention for quite some time. The survey of related literature plays a vital role in the field of research. The objective of survey of related literature is to locate, read and evaluate the past as well as the current literature connected with the planned investigation in hand in order to get guidance.

The work on the 'origin of the family, private property and the state' (Moscow, Reprint, 1977) may be referred to as the beginning of the serious academic discussion on women issues. Frederick Engels deals with the issue of women’s subordination which he believed began with the development of private property. In the broader context, a number of works exist which reflect this situation. Mary Wollstonecraft in her work 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (London, Reprint, 1922) concentrated how women were denied to enjoy their rights because they were subordinated by men. She believed that Patriarchy is manmade while studying the status of women. Wollstonecraft work in fact is a forerunner in the study on women rights. Gerda Lerner in her works, 'The creation of Patriarchy' and 'the creation of Feminist consciousness' (New York, 1993) focussed on the historical origin of patriarchy and also the emergence of feminist consciousness among the women and their effort to free their mind from patriarchal thoughts. Creation of Patriarchy has presented the interesting
hypothesis that it is the relation of women to history that explains the nature of female subordination.

Mary R Beard in 'Women and Force in History' (New York, 1962) in her book analysed how women have been a force by taking part in all the events of history despite several legal advantages. Sheila Robotham’s ‘Hidden from History’ (New York, 1974) examines situation of women in contemporary capitalism and how class affected women. Judith P. Zinsser ‘History and Feminism’ (New York, 1993) studied the andocentric nature of history and also studied how despite several changes in today’s world, women history is still marginalized. The edited work of Najma Chowdhury and Barbara Nelson ‘Women and Politics Worldwide’ (Delhi, 1997) studied the level of participation of women politics in different countries. Benazir Bhutto, ‘Daughter of the East, an Autobiography’ (Great Britain, 2008) wrote that she feel blessed that she could break the bastion of traditions of tradition by becoming first Islam’s elected women prime minister. Her autobiography proved that a Muslim woman could be elected Prime Minister, could govern a country and accepted as a leader by both men and women.

All these works are educative in examining the obliteration of women in the writings of history and give us insight into the perception of women. It helps us to understand how women are marginalized and also demonstrate that large questions can be asked of history from the women’s perspective and to the extent have helped the study to develop many of its insights.

In India studies on women and women rights have shown considerable development in the last few decades. A few of the works reviewed here to indicate the nature of works done on India. Geraldine Forbes in her work women in ‘Modern India’ (Cambridge, 2007) made a comprehensive study of Indian women from the 19th century to the 20th century and said that the nineteenth century was a
period when the question of the women ‘loomed large’. Champa Limaye (Delhi, 1999) ‘Women: Power and Progress’ dealt with women’s participation in various struggles. Their struggle for equality and various women who took part in the freedom struggle. Kiran Devandra’s work ‘Status and Position of Women in India’ (Delhi, 1985) studied about the status of women in India before and after Independence. Sindhu Phadke’s ‘Women Status in North- Eastern India’ (New Delhi, 2008) unravelled many aspects which was unknown to us. It deals with the position of women in relation to economic, social and religious life. The edited work of Soumen Se, ‘Women in Meghalaya’ (Delhi, 1992) also studies about the role of women in a matrilineal society of Meghalaya Vijay Agnew’s ‘Elite Women in Indian Politics’ (Delhi, 1979) focused on the women who took part in Indian politics.

Lucy Zehol’s edited work ‘Women in Naga society’ (New Delhi, 1998) studies the Naga society from the traditional to modern scenario which provides vital information on the Naga women. In this book the different Naga society are studied and it showed how the level of patriarchy has been different in the different society. Deepti Sharma’s ‘Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle’ (Calcutta, 1993) looks into the role played by the women of Assam in different phases of the freedom movement from 1921 to 1947. G.K Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh in ‘Women of Manipur’ (New Delhi, 1997) and Manju Chaki Sircar in ‘Feminism in a Traditional society: A study of Manipur’ discuss about the Manipur (Meitei) women. Sircar in her book studied about the patriarchy of the Meitei and when assessing it, she saw an expression of feminism in the Meitei culture which ‘encourages women to be individually self-reliant and collectively powerful without necessarily involving a sex war’. All the works mentioned above enable us to have an idea about the status of women in North East India and also of some of the tribal societies. Frederick S. Downs in ‘The Christian Impact on the status of Women in North East India’ (Shillong, 1996) discusses women in Manipur,
Meghalaya, Naga land and Mizoram in the light of the Impact of Christianity on the women of Nagaland and Mizoram. He concluded that Christianity contributed towards the progress of women mainly through education and the work of women mainly through education and the work for women but the church in North East India was a patriarchal church and hence paved the way for the process of patriarchalization. There are works done on women of North East India. Preeti Gill’s recent work on ‘Troubled Zones: Women’s Voices from North-East India’ (New Delhi, 2009), Rita Manchanda’s ‘Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency’ (Sage Publications, 2001) and Avadarshan Shrestha and Rita Thapa’s (Manohar, 2007) edited works on ‘The impact of Armed Confliction Women in South Asia’ are based on interviews and first person’s accounts. They concentrated on women as an active agent in the violence as well as movement of peace. However, the real subaltern voices remained silent as the patriarchal values are reinforced and democratic spaces for women are diminished. Surprisingly, there is no mention of Mizo women in these books. The works mentioned above are helpful to some extent but it does not include the Mizo society and this gap in the existing literature on women in India needs to be taken seriously.

To understand the background of the Mizo, it was necessary to look into works on the history of Burma which would provide information about the people living in that country. F.K Lehman the ‘Structure of Chin Society’ (FKLM, TRI, 1980) studied the people inhabiting the Chin Hills in Burma. Carey and Tuck ‘The Chin Hills’ (FKLM, TRI 1976, Reprint) Vol 1 dealt with the entry of British Govt in the Chin Hills and also information on the people living there. B. Lalthangliana’s ‘History of the Mizos in Burma’ (History Department, Arts and Science University, Mandalay, 1975) in his Master’s degree dissertation from Mandalay University Presents the History of Mizos in Burma highlighting the power and position of the Chiefs in the Society. The work here is a historical
analysis on the Mizos of Burma. In vernacular also, not much emphasis was placed on the lives of women. B. Lalthangliana ‘Mizo Chanchin’ (Aizawl, 2001), L.K Liana, ‘Zofate thu Hla’ (Aizawl, 1994), K.Zawla ‘Mizo Pi pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin’ (Revised and Enlarged Edition, 2011), V.L Siama ‘Mizo History’ (Aizawl, 2009), Lalthanliana ‘Mizo Chanchin’ (Aizawl, 2000). One major problem with most of these works is that they have not indicated the source of their various kinds of information. The information contained in such works therefore needs to be used with caution and after due corroboration. These male writers of Mizo History have not written anything specific on women though some of them have some sections on women. They also have not made comparative study of the Mizo in Mizoram. However, reinterpretation of these works from the perspectives of gender can provide a lot for the present study. To understand the Mizo society and also the changes which could have occurred during the process of migration one needs to study the Mizo history not only from the male perspectives but also from the perspective of women.

Regarding the history of origin of Chieftainship, migration, customs, traditions of each clan, we see Liangkhaia’s ‘Mizo Chanchin’ (L.T.L Publications, 2002 Reprint), which was prepared not only from his knowledge, but consulting many people from different places of Mizoram. It is the first written Mizo history and was first published in 1938 which was based on oral and traditional history. Also N. Chatterjee’s ‘The Mizo chief and his administration’. (Aizawl, 1975). After consulting 17 chiefs presents the power and functions of the Mizo Chiefs under the British administration as well as the privileges of the Chiefs in the society. L.B Thanga’s ‘The Mizo: A Study in Racial personality’ (Guwahati, 1978) also presents the origin and development of Chieftainship in Mizo society which based on tradition and legends R.Vanlawma’s ‘Ka Ram leh Kei’ (My country and I) (Aizawl, 1972) based on tradition and legends presents the origin and development of Chieftainship in Mizoram. For the study of British rule and its impact, resistance
showed by the Mizos, we have J. Zorema’s ‘Indirect Rule in Mizoram, 1890 – 1954’ (Mittal Publication, 2007). It covers a critical study of the British administration in the Lushai Hills carried on through traditional chiefs. Animesh Ray’s, ‘Mizoram Dynamics Of Change’, (Calcutta, 1982). This book exhaustively dealt with all aspect of Mizo life – social, political, economic as well as religion. The problems of Mizoram in the context of national integration and the country’s economic development constitute the subject matter of this book.

We also have some books written by British administrators and missionaries, who recorded their experienced and eyewitness records of the life of the Mizos and through the earlier historical records provided by the Government of Mizoram.

The earliest account on the lives of women in Mizo family was represented by a Deputy Commissioner of a Chittagong Hill Tracts, T. H Lewin in his book *Wild Races of South Eastern India* (W.H Allan and Co, London) in 1870 who observed the Mizo women occupying a privileged position in the family. Ever since the British colonized the hills, few accounts on the degrading lives of women had been illustrated by the colonial officers. In contrast to Lewin’s observation, J. Shakespear demonstrated the timid lives of Mizo women in the traditional society in his book ‘The Lusei-Kuki Clans’ (London, 1912, Reprint). The Lusei – Kuki clans traces the position of the Chief in the society as well as its development on the lines of tradition and legends before and after the advent of the British. Amongst the colonial works, N.E. Parry’s, ‘A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies’ (FKLM, 1976) was one of the detailed accounts which shed light on the lives of Mizo women. This book documented account of the earlier Lusei customs and traditions, which included the issues of divorce, marriage customs, sexual offences and the law of inheritance. After consulting as many as 56 chiefs presented the power and functions of the Chiefs under the British as well as the customs and ceremonies. In this book, he discussed in detail about the customary
law of the Mizo where women assumed a subordinate position since they were not declared as legitimate heir as well as system of divorce, marriage customs and sexual offences. Despite his concern about the position of women his discussions of wars and village administrations neglected women’s role and activities.

A.G. McCall, the Superintendent of the Lushai hills from 1931 to 1943 gave a detailed account of the history of the Lusei clan by tracing their origin in his book, ‘The Lushai Chrysalis’ (TRI, 1977). Though women were not the main focus of this book, A.G. McCall provided some information on women’s lives during the colonial period by saying that “The Lushai (Lusei) has little sense of any great chivalry towards women”. By pointing at the gender division of labour he also gave a good account of daily life of women in which he describes women as industrious and hard labours in jhumming. He also focused on the political history from 18th century till the mid of 20th century in which he gave good account of the history of inter-village wars and the Mizo’s encounters with the British. He also included his personal opinion of the status of women in the Mizo society. He finds Mizo women industrious and hard working while pointing out the gender division of labour.

N.Chatterjee’s ‘Position and status of Mizo women in the earlier Mizo Society’ (TRI, 1975) is the first written book on Mizo women. She mentioned the position of Mizo women in traditional Mizo society. She did an in depth study on the marriage customs, family life and social customs. From her findings, she argues that the position of women in Mizo society was much more stable than caste Hindu women. To quote her ‘the status of women in their society was in no way inferior to that of men and she suffered none of those derogatory and discriminatory treatment as may be found in some of the more advanced societies’. However, comparing their status could not be so relevant to make an accurate conclusion as tribal women and Hindu were in a completely different exposure.
Although many social evil practiced like sati system and excessive dowry system did not prevail in the Mizo society. There were other social discrimination regarding gender and she also practically suffered a lot which the Hindu women did not experience. Hence, the position of Mizo women needs reconsideration and reconstruction in its own context. Another book titled, 'Mizo women today' (TRI, 1991) is published by the Tribal Research Institute. It dealt with the changing position of Mizo women since the traditional period to the modern times. Here we see the contribution and participation of women in the social, religious and economic realms. It also highlights the changes in women’s position after they embraced Christianity. In this book, we find the discrimination faced by the women especially in the church. But the book includes only the Lusei.

J. Meirion Lloyd, a Missionary had written a book called ‘History of the church in Mizoram’, (Harvest in the Hills) (SLPB, 1991) where we find the condition of Mizoram during their stay in Mizoram. In this book, we see the role played by the church in various social fields as well as the condition of women. On the basis of his studies, JM Lloyd described the status of women that were strictly circumscribed and stated that the emancipation of women came surely but slowly through Christian influence. The same perspective is followed by C.L Hminga a native Baptist Church’s theologian. In his book, ‘The life and witnesses of the churches in Mizoram’ (Serkawn, 1987), Hminga concluded the impacts and achievements of Christianity in the Lushai hills with the improving position of women.

As in other parts of India, Missionaries played an important role for the empowerment of women. Regarding the missionaries work with women, we have ‘Set on a hill light on the Lushai Hills’ (BCM, Serkawn, 1993). The book contain Forty years Report of women’s work especially among the Baptist women in Southern part of Mizoram. The activities of women and the various upliftment of
women brought by the Christian missionaries from 1919-1940 and L. Malsawmi’s ‘Mizoram Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin’ (Aizawl, 1973) (Report on the Church Women Fellowship) which presented the report on women’s education and its impact as well as the role played in the church activities.

Besides this, the growing consciousness amongst the feminist theologians in a recent period resulted to the emergent publications on the studies of Mizo women. Zomuani has given a detailed account on the roles of Mizo women for the growth of Presbyterian Church from 1904-2004 in her book ‘Kum Za Chhung a Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin’ (Aizawl, 2004). Another feminist theologian T.Vanlaltlani has focused on a detailed account on the movement of Mizo women from private sphere to public sphere in her book ‘Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh’ (2005). To reveal women’s efforts to access public sphere she has given detailed information of the development of Women’s groups in the church and other Mizo Women’s Non Governmental Organizations. Her study reveals that though women gave lots of contributions in the society, the structure of patriarchy still dominates the society which put women in an inferior position, the various plight women had to bear due to traditional practice and the changes in their status after being Christianised. She also mentioned about the contributions made by women in the church, society, family and various women organisation and their contribution in the Mizo society. ‘Emergent Women; Mizo Women’s Perspective’ (Delhi, 2005) is one of the most recent books, which deals with the Mizo women. In this book, the author Bonita Aleaz has illustrated the perception of Mizo women about their emergent situation in the process of social transformation. Through the traditions, patriarchy, education and religion, she studied how women tried to access ‘public sphere’. In order to reveal their real problems in this emergent situation, she unravels the voices of women’s organizations and feminist theologians which are completely different from the problems faced by the mainland Indian women. To express the slow progress of these organizations she
compares their efforts with the Indian women by saying ‘The women were very conscious of their difference in the nature of their demands from those expressed by the women of the Plains...yet, on the other hand, the slow and tortuous route taken by the women of the plains to establish their independent spheres of action seemed to be making its way in the hills as way’. Her study reveals that though women began to enter public spaces, still their position is very limited in the customary laws and women’s ordination. Pointing at the religion she argues that male hierarchy in the church is the main reason for the slow progress of women as it is the same hierarchy that controls both the religious and socio-political sectors.

Apart from the colonial and missionary works, there are growing numbers of literatures that focused on the British administration. However, there are few works that focus on women. Amongst these are Suhash Chatterjee’s books ‘Mizo Chief and chiefdoms’ and ‘Mizoram Under the British Rule’(1985) have provided few aspects for the study of the role women in pre-colonial political administration and their roles as political agents in the colonial political scenario. Though Mizo Chief and Chiefdoms mainly dealt with the traditional Mizo village life under the Chief, the author gave biographies of Mizo chiefs in the last chapter of his book that also included some female Chieftainessess. However, the main lacunae of these books is that the author mainly depends on the British documents and fully ignores the indigenous oral sources. But this book was prepared basing merely the British documents resulting in a number of mistakes with regards to names of chiefs and chieftainess and also the places which made it redundant in some instances. ‘Changing position of Mizo Women’ (TRI, 2010) by Lalfakzuali, deals with the changing position of Mizo women from the earliest past to the present. It contains a number of tables with figures for comparative study of support her findings. In this monograph, we also see many improvement made by the women in the social, religious and political field.

The first one is a biography of one legendary Mizo female Chieftainess ‘Ropuiliani’ in a patriarchal society of the Mizo. She was the lone women who bravely fought against and refused to surrender to the British. Though this book mainly deals with a biography of one worthy lady, it recovered the ‘hidden voices’, as it exposes the previously unknown excellence of women in the village administrations. The second book ‘Sakhming Chullo’ is a collection of biographies on women poetess and their songs composed since the earliest times to the present days. The songs presented a clear insight of women’s contribution to the society and were not mere subjects without having any talents as their male counterparts. The third book ‘Mizoram Humhalhtu Lal Vandula leh Ropuiliani’ traced the genealogy, discussed how the couple tried to save Mizoram from the hands of the British. It also mentioned the personal exceptionality of Ropuiliani in taking up the administration within her territory. Supplementary to this is an edited volume on the ‘Role of Ropuiliani in the Freedom Struggle’, a collection of nine empirical essays on a woman Chief Ropuiliani has a valuable contribution for the study of the history of Mizo women’s resistance against colonial military powers. Here, the role of Ropuiliani is emphasised from colonial accounts but failed to reconstruct history of resistance from a feminist’s perspective.

Thus, it is learned from the existing works, focus on women continued to be the neglected aspect. The striking fact about the historiography of women is the general neglect of the subject by the historians.\(^3\) Although there were few books on

status of women, and to some extent they are beneficial in understanding the society of the Mizo and women’s life in it. Almost all the works mentioned above do not dwell with the study of women the role played by women in the politics of Mizoram. This is mainly due to lack of theoretical approaches as a result of which no serious consideration was given to the study of women. Hence, it is extremely important to undertake research in this field which hopefully will contribute to the slowly expanding body of literatures on the subject.

1.5 Chapterization

The present study is divided into seven chapters -

The first chapter, Introduction includes the historical background of the Mizos and the structure of the community therein. It also briefly discussed how Mizos came into contact with the British. ‘Mizo’ is a generic term and it stands for several major and sub-tribes in Mizo Hills. The tribes and sub-tribes preferred to identify themselves as ‘Mizo’ than ‘Lushai’. Hence this was formalised when the ‘Lushai Hills District Act, 1954’ was passed by the parliament of India. Under the Act, the name of the erstwhile Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo District with effect from the 29th April, 1954. Therefore, the present study will use the term ‘Mizo’ and ‘Lushai’, interchangeably.

There is a common belief among the Mizo that their ancestors emigrated from a place called ‘Chhilung’. Historians and anthropologist are of the opinion that this place is in Southern China. ‘Chhilung’ is said not to mean a cave but a name of a prince of China who was the son of Huang Ti. The migration of the Mizo tribes from the North – West Burma to the South and then to the West and finally to their present habitat, Mizoram took place due to several reasons. The
tribes moved to a new place for better and adequate land for cultivation. Other cause can be the fear of insecurity which they felt during their stay. The frequent inter-tribal disputes and pressure from the more powerful tribes compelled them to migrate to a safer place. History bears evidence that they moved to Kabaw valley from the North- West Burma in 1814. Further, they faced famine (Mautam, flowering of bamboos) at a regular interval of fifty years. Consequently, the Mizos had to change their places of habitation.

The objectives of the study, methodologies, chapterization, and review of the literature on the subject are also discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter is titled – Tribal Polity and is divided into five sections. The first section of the chapter discussed on the theory of state formation among the tribals. It tried to incorporate theories put forwarded by Peter Skalnik, Marshal Sahlin, Elman R. Service, Charles S Spencer, Thomas Hobbes, Morton H. Fried and how far this is applicable in the Mizo context. It is found that, kingdoms and monarchies, band, tribe or chieftainship system represents ‘States’, which carried various epithets such as primitive, archaic, traditional, tribal or early to distinguish them from the ‘Modern states’, because they represent an evolutionary process through which the early society develops. In the words of Peter Skalnik, ‘the early state was early because the mature state was to follow, the state which we know today’. Therefore, these theories confirmed that the kind of state formation among the Mizos was first seen in the form of chieftainship which inevitably evolved into state.

The second section scrutinized the tribal societies prevailing in Africa, Polynesian countries, Arabian Peninsula and Australia. In most of the tribal societies, Chiefs were considered to be an embodiment of the gods and were responsible for the relationship between their gods and the people. In each tribe the
Chief was highly esteemed as the symbol of tribal entity and as the focus of loyalty in the tribe. Depending on the nature and power of the chief, there were Divine kingship, single or multi chiefdom but in one way or the other, there was a close resemblance in the system of administration. It is also found that, most of the tribal societies are patriarchal and the names and titles are drawn from the father’s line.

The third section discussed about the migration of Mizo. This section is important to understand the origin of chieftainship among the Mizos as it shows the evolution of chieftainship among the Mizos went through a long process before it reached its maturity.

The fourth section traced the origin of Chieftainship to the dominance of Sailo clan over the other tribes of the hills as it is essential to have a better understanding of the position and status of women during the period under study. Genealogy, political administrations, tribal wars, social life from their migration till the British administration is highlighted. Before the annexation of Mizoram by the British in the late 19th century, each village was an independent unit of administration, under a Chief called ‘Lai’ who was like a dictator. He was the hereditary Chief. But it did not mean, however, that all members of the ruling clan were Chiefs, rather it was only for those who were endowed with the capacity of drawing men to them under their command. A Chief’s power was measured by the number of his followers. The Chiefs, in fact, were the head of the villages, the leaders in war, owner of the village land, protector and guardians of the subjects. In the beginning, they enjoyed enormous powers but subsequently, these were curtailed by the British after annexation. The Chiefs were the executive authority and the dispenser of justice. In them, one could fine the quality of good guardians, brave and dependable commanders and impeachable judges. They were endowed with essential attributes to organize and stabilize the punitive, who were unsettled and disorganized. The Chiefs were endowed with vast knowledge of the villagers,
their lives, difficulties and problems. In the hour of crisis, they used to supply essential commodities to the starving villagers. Therefore, Chieftainship appears to have grown out of a collective needs of group life.

The fifth section tries to locate the Mizo woman in the traditional polity, economy, religion and society and concludes by discussing how the dominance of patriarchy had its root in the family itself, and how the Sailo dominance is viewed as the beginning of women’s degradation in the society. A male symbolizes power and authority in the household structure, while a woman by and large is treated as subordinate to the male in her various roles as wife, sister, daughter and even mother. In Mizoram, the institution of chieftainship can be traced back to Zahmuaka, whose descendents are the Sailos. The Sailo Chief established their supremacy throughout the Lushai Hills except in Pawi-Lakher region where the Pawi and Lakher had their own chiefs controlling the South Eastern part of the Lushai Hills. Similarly, Paite, Thado, Ralte, Hmar and Zahau ruled their own tribes till the advent of the British. All the tribes had a strong patriarchal set up where women hardly had any voice in public, social, family matters.

Although there was no class division in the society, gender division was clearly seen in the family, social and economic aspect of the society. The men concentrated themselves on defence and hunting due to the constant inter-village wars and only men were involved in wars whereas women were responsible for all domestic works.

Women bear heavy responsibility of women in their household when men hardly have anything to do. Men did not participate in running the household and domestic work. What is considered as a woman’s work will not be touched even in jest by a man. The main reason for them to act like this was because they were
afraid of being dubbed as hen-pecked which was the most shameful title for a man and thus would never lift their fingers to help their wives in any domestic work.

Discrimination is also seen in their social life. Girls were expected to behave very politely with boys and would not show an unhappy look even if they do not like any one of them. This shows that the girl did not enjoy the freedom to express her feelings. If a man was not happy with the girl, he would go back to the ‘zawlbuk’ (Bachelors dormitory), collect his friends and tear down the verandah of the girls house. Even the chief could not say anything in this matter. The girl’s father then had to give them a pot of beer to appease their anger. A man enjoyed the freedom to show his preference to any girl but a girl could not show any preference to a man. Regarding Mizo women, Chapman wrote, ‘A woman has no right at all. Body, mind and spirit she belonged from her birth to her death, to her father and her husband. Her menfolk could treat her liked and a man who did not beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward’.

The Third Chapter, titled ‘The Advent of the British’ and is divided into two sections. The first section discussed how the expansion of tea garden in the Cachar hills provoked the Lushais to conduct raids within the neighbouring areas as they considered it as an encroachment to their hunting ground. Hunting was an important part of their life as it affected their life after death. It gives an account of the raids made by the Lushais into the plains and how the managers of the tea garden in Alexandrapore Mr. James Winchester was killed by the raiding party and how his little daughter, 6 years old Mary Winchester was captured by the Lushais. Therefore, the first phase of the Anglo – Mizo relations was marked by hostility, and sporadic incidents of raids of varying intensity were quite common. The first raid on the Assam border was recorded in 1826 and it continued till 1870’s. The chief reason was due to their economic backwardness and love of headhunting – the aims of which were to display their victory over the enemy and bravery in the
community, to loot and to get slaves. Besides this, feuds and raids were exalted by the Mizo Chiefs as heroic deeds which was profusely reflected in their songs and folklores. Moreover, Mizos often had clan feud for the best land for cultivation and for dwelling or living. It was also sometimes caused by opposed interest of two or more Chiefs on matters like marriage which sometimes involved all members of the ethnic group or clans. Such quarrel often led to the difficulty of cultivating their jhum. Due to this reason, in the next agricultural year there usually was a shortage of food grains or paddy. Faced with such scarcity, parties of Mizos used to go to the border villages. Thus when clan feuds developed a group of Mizos or warriors often clashed with the neighbouring tribes who were under the protection of the British Government. Therefore, raids were conducted for the lust of wealth and procurement of slaves, as slaves were employed for various works in the jhums for domestic works. Thus, most of the raids were of an economic nature.

The chapter also examine whether women took part in the raid, it is found that only in one occasion, Vanhnsuathangi, sister of Suakpuilala, fought back along with other chiefs. But we can say that women indirectly took part in the raid by organizing a huge welcoming ceremony for the raiders. This occasion encouraged the males to kill their enemies as it earned them popularity among the unmarried women as well as attaining a high position in the society. Therefore, behind the affairs of men, women also contributed for the betterment of their own village/clans. Besides this, it was a woman who took the charge of a father in the family and of all the family’s administrations during the absence of her husband.

The Second section opens with the discussion on how the colonial administrators entered into the Hills. As a result of this raid, many British subjects lost their life, plunder and looting caused a huge amount of lost and damages. In order to recover the losses and to protect their tea gardens and their subjects, the British sent an expedition to the Lushai hills. It discussed how the British
authority consolidated its administration in the Lushai Hills. The British effort to free the little girl by sending columns into the hills and the subsequent subjugation of the region is discussed here. The 1871-72 Expedition was mainly a form of punishment to those Chiefs involved in the lootings, plundering and raidings of the Cachar and Chittagong hills. The responsible Chiefs were made to pay heavy fines, and captives returned. In return the British also recruited a number of Mizo youngmen either serve under their service or to work in the tea gardens. For the British, it could be considered as a successful expedition because, Mary Winchester, the main reason why this expedition was conducted was taken back safely. They signed a treaty with the descendants of Rolura and Lianlula and it also ratify that British citizens could enter the hill freely.

The expedition also resulted in the opening of three Bazaars for commercial purpose – the Tipaimukh on the Tuiruang river bordering Manipur, Sonai Bazar on the Tuirial river and the Changsil Bazar on the Tlawng river were established. Through this trade marts, there were constant ‘friendly relations’ and intercourse with the plains. In the south hills trading centre was also established in 1871 at Tlabung. By 1872 there were eleven shops in Tlabung.

Another important result of the expedition of 1870-71 was the construction of roads- From Silchar to Senvawn, Parvachawm and Daido village. Another road from Kolasib to Serkhan village. And in order to show their victory. A British flag was hoisted on a tall bare tree on 17th February 1872 at Lungverh in Vanhnuailiana’s village (Chawnchhim, Champhai). The General speech mentioned that they have reached their destination by reaching a place where Vanhnuailiana ruled. Lastly, it resulted in the inclusion of more areas within the British Jurisdiction.
During the preceding seventeen years of the 1871-72, there were no less than nineteen inroads into the British territory made by the Mizos. But raids continued and the British sent another expedition which was known as the Chin Lushai expedition of 1889. This expedition was despatched to punish the tribes that raided and committed depredations in the British territory. Secondly, to subjugate the tribes, thirdly, to explore the country lying between Chittagong and Burma, and lastly, to establish post in the regions visited so as to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power. The expedition involved the Government of Bengal, Assam and Burma (Myanmar), and marked the final colonization of Mizoram.

The Fourth Chapter is titled ‘Anti-Colonial Movement’. The chapter opens with how the punishment imposed on Lianphunga and Zahrawka, the Chief who were considered responsible in the Chengri valley raid occasioned the Chiefs and their mantris to rise against the British. Capt. Browne, the Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills held an assembly at Fort Aijal, and announced that for their complicity at Chengri valley, the two Chiefs were deposed from their Chieftainships for a term of four years and fined 15 guns. These action was least expected by the Lushais and was difficult for them to accept. The chapter is divided into three sections –

The first section deals with the resistance made by the Western Lushai. The Western Lushai was headed by Sua kpuilala, who formed the most powerful combination of the villages in these hills. After the death of Suakpuilala, Kalkhama became the leader of the clan and under his leadership, they planned to attacked the British resulting in the killing of Capt Browne and some sepoys. The attacked resulted in the arrest of Kalkhama, Thangula and Lianphunga.
The second section deals with the resistance made by the Eastern Lushais. The Eastern Lushais rose against the British due to the repeated intimation given to them that a tax of one rupee would be collected from them during the cold season. This really disappointed them as they were under the impression that they would be left free and the British would never attempt to control them. The rising was undoubtedly a serious one as all the tribes between Aijal and Lungleh were combined against the British.

The third section deals with how the different groups of Southern Lushais viz...Haulawng, Muallianpui (Fanai) and Pawi rose to oppose the British in sympathy with the Eastern Lushais. One noticeable point occurred here was the case of Ropuiliani, widow of Vandula, who strongly opposed to pay the revenue and provide coolie.

From this chapter, It is found that the main reason for their resistance was that the chiefs were made responsible for meeting the British demands could not be imposed on their people on behalf of an alien power, however powerful. Besides this, the British way of ruling indirectly through the chief was not accepted by the people. The chapter also clearly shows the patriarchal dominance in politics as there was hardly any woman who openly took part during their fight except Ropuiliani. It also shows that small parties of Lushais and other hillmen can attack the any exposed portion of the British frontier. However, despite their greatest effort, the hill was finally annexed by the British and the South Lushai Hills and North Lushai Hills were finally amalgamated on 1st, April, 1898.

The fifth chapter is titled ‘Chieftainessess: A Product of Resistance’ – The chapter discussed where society was predominantly patriarchal and patrilineal, we see some country governed by female rulers. It discussed how the representation of female rule suggest that women are in fact suited to rulership.
Taking examples of countries like Korea, China and India. The chapter analyses the rule of women and how the coming of the British occasioned the rise of female rulers in Mizoram and the role they played while resisting the British. Here women’s participation and contribution in politics is studied by exploring the unknown women who attained chieftainship during the advent of the British. Women’s activities in the field of politics and their role in encounters with the British are also discussed. Many women Chief came to the forefront in resisting the entry of external power to the Hills. Though the study of women in the field of politics covers only women leaders and some worthy women, it is helpful in investigating the hidden contributions of women in the historical records.

‘Mizo’ society was a patriarchal society and the name and titles are drawn from the father’s line. However, from the old records, we came to learn that there were some Chieftainesses of considerable influence. Some of them, namely – Lalhlupuii, Pibuki, Vanhnuaitthangi, Rothangpuii, Neihpuiithangi, Darbilhi, Pakuma Rani, Ropuiliani, Laltheri...etc. These women came to rule either due to the death of their husband and when the son to succeed had been a minor or their husband has been imprisoned by their enemies. These women witnessed the British rule and almost all of them fought against them in order to safeguard their village from the British.

Pibuki was the wife of Mangpawrha, the founder of the western Lushai House and a mother of Suakpuilala, the most powerful Mizo Chief occupies a prominent place in the annals of the female chief of the Mizo tribe. She had a unique pedigree of being the daughter of the Palian chief Lalrihua and the sister of Lalsutthlaha. She was married to Mangpawrha at the age of sixteen. She carried with her a huge ‘man’ (bride price) which Mangpawrha could not pay to his father-in-law, at the time of his marriage. So, he bequeathed part of his estate to his wife
which she ruled as an independent Chieftainess during the lifetime of her husband and his son Suakpuilala.

Vanhnuaitangi was the daughter of Mangpawrha, and the wife of Ngursailova. She was an accomplished lady and very popular among her subjects. She was the first Lushai Chieftainess to come down to the plain of Cachar, Sylhet and Tripura. Vanhnuaitangi passed through a vicissitudes of life. Her brother Suakpuilala felt the might of the British arms and the British sent her father-in-law, Lalsutthlaha to life imprisonment. Major Boyd, the Deputy Commissioner met her in her ‘zawlbuk’. She was the first Mizo lady who received a Diplomat officer of the British Government in her own estate personally. Rothangpuuii was the sister of Vanhnuaitangi, she also ruled independently but unfortunately, not much was known about her.

Neihpuithangi was the wife of the celebrated Mizo Chief Vuta, who founded the eastern Lushai clan. Vuta bequeathed Neihpuithangi a part of his estate where she ruled as an independent chieftainess. She took active part in the Lushai rising in 1893 – 1894. She could not forget the humiliation her son had to face in the hands of the British and opposed the British during the Chin- Lushai expedition in 1889 – 1890.

Darbilhi was the wife of Nochhuma, Fanai Chief. After the death of her husband, the widow was invested with the title of chieftainess by the subordinate chiefs of her husband clan. She was the head of the Fanai clan for a considerable period of time.

Pakuma Rani was the widow of the Thangluah clan’s chief Pakuma, and a daughter in – law of the famous Mizo chief Rothangpuia. Like her father in – law, she was an ally of the British and became very rich being the recipient of the British favour. The Sailo clan accused her of treachery as she betrayed the cause of
the Mizo’s. She was brutally murdered. Her murder was a shocking one as it shook the confidence of the British subjects owing allegiance to the English. The Governor-General-in-council sanctioned the Chin-Lushai expedition, 1889-90 and the Lushai Hills were annexed.

    Ropuiliani, was the wife of Vandula, Chief of Denlung and the daughter of Lalsavunga, Aizawl Chief. Both the father and husband of Ropuiliani were the most famous chiefs who opposed the British. So, it was quite natural that she did not miss any opportunity to obstruct the British administration. She was a woman of patriotic fibre, possessing indomitable spirit against the British and had a deep influence and authority over her subjects, even though she was ruling in the patriarchal society. Ropuiliani came to rule after the death of her husband in the year 1889. She strongly resisted the British occupation of Mizo Hills and remain as one of the most formidable enemy of the British till the day she died in Chittagong jail in 3rd January, 1895. Laltheri (Lalchawngpuii) was the daughter of Lalsavunga. She also ruled independently in a village which they inherited from their father.

    The chapter shows that this particular period initiated the rise of women Chiefs who fought bravely against the British government directly or indirectly. Politically, this period could be regarded as the period of ups and downs as far as women were concerned. They opposed the British with some success but once the British occupied the hills, their activities were restricted.

    The Sixth chapter is Titled ‘Chieftainesses- Resistance by Collusion’. The chapter tried to locate how the advent of the British in Mizoram ushered a new era of women’s emancipation by analyzing two Mizo women rulers – Darbilhi and Ropuiliani. In the absence of written records, regarding Darbilhi, the section relies largely on the oral tradition of the people. The life of these women rulers reflected
that there were exceptional women, who challenged the norms of that time. It also argues that even though they acted as regents on behalf of their minor son, the two Chieftainessess were acknowledged by their subjects and were very influential among their clans.

Darbilhi did not openly resist the British, instead befriended them and convince all the Fanai chiefs (the Muallianpui) not to act against the British but to show kind gesture towards them. She did this because she considered it useless to openly fight the British, who were much stronger than them. She strongly believed that if she fight the British, she and her people will definitely fall under the British hand. She believed in peace. Before the British entered her village, she heard that even the Sailos could not withstand the might of the British. However, she did not want to surrender in the British hand but preferred to be an ally of the British in order to expand and safeguard her territory. She maintained friendship with Capt. Shakespear by making him her foster brother. This proved very helpful when Zakapa, a Fanai Chief was accused of attempting to kill Lieutenant Murray and his troops. When Zakapa was tried by the British, it was Capt. Shakespear who stood on his side and Zakapa was released. This could be attained only due to the diplomacy of Darbilhi as she maintained a friendly relationship with Captain Shakespear. In this way she indirectly safe her people and her land from the annexation of the British. Even though she was a woman, she was accepted as their ruler by her subjects and other Fanai Chiefs. This is clear from the fact that she could manage to convince all the other Fanai chiefs not to shoot the British within their territory.

Ropuiliani was a leader of the descendant of Tlutpawrha as her husband Vandula had already passed away, when the British appeared in Lushai Hills for the second time. She subscribed evidently to the highest principles of patriotism in which the whole mankind shared in the decades past, that was to exalt the name of
distinct patriots and nation builders. That the administrators did not spare her, all showed that she joined hands with other freedom fighters in upsetting the administration in many ways. Evidently she was opposed to the annexation of the Lushai Hills, obviously she was anti-imperialist. Her place, the account proves, through those decades, had served as the centre of patriots, although avengeful and retaliating they could have been to be cause of English and at times, sheltered other insurrectionists. When the British forces subdued all the Mizo Chiefs by this time, Ropuiliani, who by nature, was strong-willed had even refused to talk to them. She always carried her head high and never at any point of time allowed the British to disregard her dignity and high position.

It is most significant that a woman like Darbilhi and Ropuiliani could make a name for themselves as a great Chieftainess who stood by their people till the end, when in the then Mizo society, women were given a very low status. Their exceptionality was only seen after their husband died when they began to take control. Even though their way of dealings with the British was different, such quality of rare courage, firm conviction and dauntlessness which were all exceptional. Ever unshakable in their ambitions, their high principles and commanding presence made even the male chiefs of their clan look up to them.

The Seventh chapter is the conclusion of the thesis and the research findings are given in this chapter.
1.6 The Land And The People – An Introduction

Mizoram, formerly known as Lushai Hills is situated at the extreme eastern corner of India lying between 21°56′N to 24°31′N latitude and 92°16′E to 93°16′E to 93°26′E longitude. Mizoram has an area of 21,807 square kilometres and an average height of 900 metres. The state consist of six parallel hill ranges, the highest peak is Phawngpui or the Blue mountain with an altitude of 2065 metres. The hills are steep and rugged and are separated at places by rivers either to north or south creating deep gorges between the Hill ranges. The climate is mild and is rich in flora and fauna. It is pleasant in summer and not very cold in winter. The entire state is under the direct influence of Monsoon. The Tropic of Cancer passed through the State at Thenzawl. The average annual rainfall is 3000 millimetres, the density of the population is 52 Per Square Kilometre, the male literacy rate is 93.72 percent and female literacy rate is 89.40 percent and stood second in the country.

Mizoram the 23rd State of the Indian Union is located in the North- Eastern part of India. It is bounded by Bangladesh and Tripura on the West and by the Chin Hills of Burma in the East and South. In the north, Mizoram has a common boundary with Cachar district of Assam and Manipur. The International border with Burma for about 435 kilometres and with Bangladesh for about 260 kilometres. Hence, the location of Mizoram is quite strategic for India.

When the British came to Lushai (Mizo) Hills, they called the Mizos as Lushais. They were first known to the British as ‘Kuki’, probably a Bengali word meaning hillmen or highlanders. But these people call themselves ‘Mizo’, ‘Mi’

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4 S.S Chib, North - Eastern India : Caste, Tribes and culture of India, Vol 8, Ess Ess publications, Delhi, 1984, p. 300.
The Word Mizo literally means ‘Highlander’, from mi-‘person + zo ‘hill’\(^5\).

James. C. Scott used the term, ‘Zomia’, for highlander common to several related Tibeto–Burman languages spoken in the India Bangladesh border area. More precisely, Zo is a relational term meaning ‘remote’ and hence carries the connotation of living in the hills. ‘Mi’ means people\(^6\). Although Van Schendel proposes a bold expansion of Zomia boundaries to Afghanistan and beyond, but, Scott confine his use of term to the hilly areas eastward, beginning with the Naga and Mizo Hills in the Northern India and Bangladesh Chittagong Hill Tracts\(^7\). Mizo is thus a generic term and it stands for all the hillmen or highlanders in the Lushai (Mizo) Hills.

The Mizos bear another name ‘Lusei’ which the British pronounce as ‘Lushai’. According to MC Cabe report, the origin of the name Lushai is not definitely known; it has been interpreted – Lu = Head, Shai = To cut, ie head – cutters, and also Lu = head, Shei = Long. A nickname given to this tribe by its neighbours on account of its custom of wearing the hair long and fastened in a roll at the back of the head. The terms ‘Lushai’ and ‘Sylu’(Sailo) are evidently identical, and the tribes to which these names have been applied are absolutely similar in physique, customs and language\(^8\). L.B Thanga says there is no Mizo word as Lushai. This is purely a corruption of ‘Lusei’ which is the name of one of the many sub-tribes constituting the Mizo\(^9\). Lushai is thus the name of a tribe of


\(^7\) Ibid., p.16.

\(^8\) Letter to the Secretary to the Chief commissioner of Assam from R.B McCabe, Esq. ICS. Simla Records – 1,1892/Foreign/External A/Dec/File No 42-46. NAI. P.5.

the many sub-tribe in the Lushai Hills. Formerly, the name of this area was the Lushai Hills District but nowadays this area becomes one of the constituent States of the Indian Union and is known as Mizoram.

There is no authentic record about the early history of the Lushais (Mizos). According to tradition, the Lushais came out of ‘Chhinlung’ meaning ‘Closed stone’, not a mythical rock as is believed by some, but out of a hole, in the ground, covered with a stone located in the east of Shan State in the Falam sub-division of the Chin Hills district in Burma. They migrated from this region of upper Burma in the 11th century under the pressure of the Chins and the pressure of over population. They passed through the Chindwin valley and the Chin Hills and finally came to the present habitat some time between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\(^{10}\)

The Mizos are the people who were formerly called the Lushai and whose customs have been described by many authors. Shakespeare writes:

\[\text{‘All the Lushai Kuki clans resembles each other very closely in appearance and the Mongolian type of countenance prevails. The term Lushai covers a great many clans. Under various chiefs of Thangur family, came into prominence in the eighteenth century and of the new kukis half a century later’.}\(^{11}\)

The people are traditionally nomadic and mentally volatile. The Lushai Hills was inhabited by many tribes. The major tribes are: Lusei, Ralte, Hmar, Paihte and Pawi. Liangkhaia (1951) Vanchhunga (1955) and Zatluanga (1966)

\(^{10}\text{Ibid., p. 5.}\)

\(^{11}\text{J. Shakespeare, Lushai Kuki clans, Macmillan and Co, London, 1912, pp i, xiii.}\)

\(^{12}\text{Major M.G Mc Call, Lushai chrysalis, FKLM Pvt LTD, TRI, Reprint, 1977, Aizawl, Mizoram, p.29.}\)
traced out eleven sub-tribes. These eleven sub-tribes are Chawngthu, Chawhte, Ngente, Khawlhring, Khiangte, Pautu, Rawite, Rentlei, Tlau, Vangchhia and Zawngte are known under a common name - Awzia\(^\text{13}\). The tribes and sub-tribes prefer to identify themselves as Mizo and this was formalised when the Lushai Hills District Act, 1954 was passed by the Parliament of India.

\(^{13}\) L.B Thanga, op.cit., p.5.
Despite many confusion, it is accepted that the Mizos are of Mongoloid stock. Majority of historians and scholars believed that racially they are of Mongoloid origin and they belonged to Tibeto – Burman linguistic groups whose origin is somewhere in central China. The following table illustrates the point:*

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<tr>
<th>Sino-Tibetan</th>
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<td>Tibeto Burman</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Tai or Thai</td>
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<td>Tibeto North Assam</td>
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<td>Old Kuki sub-group</td>
<td>Northern Chin</td>
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<td>Shukla or Tashon</td>
<td>Lai</td>
<td>Lushai(Duhlian) or Banjogi</td>
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The Lushais (Mizo) live in villages. A Lushai village consists of clusters of houses usually set on the top of ridges of a hill. It is strongly fenced 'with several rows of bamboo spikes outside it', in order to get a good defensive position. Lt Colonel T.H Lewin describes the Lushai village as a confused mass of houses thickly scattered over the hill-side, and nearby all on different levels. The village was surrounded by a palisade of enormous longs, as thick as the leg of an elephant and ten feet high. The entrance lay through a pointing bamboo spikes, and defended by two heavy doors of rough – hewn timber, so thick as to be practically fire and bullet.

Again, a typical Lushai village consist of an assemblage of houses with the Chief's house at its centre. Each village is an independent unit ruled by a Chief. In the Lushai Hills, each village used to be an independent unit under the concentrated power of its chiefs or Lal. The Lushais did not appear to have to have state-like institutions. However, they had a form of polity for maintenance of internal stability and meeting external threats under the leadership of the Chiefs. Thus the institution of Chieftainship had been so firmly embedded in the early history of the Lushais. Before the annexation of Mizoram by the British in the late 19th century, each village was an independent unit of administration, under a chief called 'Lal' who was like a dictator. He was the hereditary chief. But it did not mean, however, that all members of the ruling clan were chiefs, rather it was only for those who were endowed with the capacity of drawing men to them under their command. A Chief's power was measured by the number of his followers. The Chiefs, in fact, were the head of the villages, the leaders in war, owner of the village land, protector and guardians of the subjects. In the beginning, they enjoyed


enormous powers but subsequently, these were curtailed by the British after annexation. The Chiefs were the executive authority and the dispenser of justice. In them, one could fine the quality of good guardians, brave and dependable commanders and impeachable judges. They were endowed with essential attributes to organise and stabilise the punitive who were unsettled and disorganised. The Chiefs were endowed with vast knowledge of the villagers, their lives, difficulties and problems. In the hour of crisis, they used to supply essential commodities to the starving villagers.

From the above briefly discussed, it is very clear that Mizo society was patriarchal and the system of governance was based on Chieftainship, where system of inheritance was based on male lines. Therefore, existence of Chieftainessess in a patriarchal society was most unlikely to take place. The present Thesis titled “The role of chieftainessess in the Mizo Resistance movement against the British (1800-1900)” is one of the least known subject in Mizo history. But the study on women’s life, status and role has become a subject of wide concern these days. Social scientist have started giving increased attention to this subject as they have rightly realized that their study of socio-cultural or political history is not possible and will not be complete without understanding the position and role of women.

The participation of women in the freedom movement forms an important and interesting aspect of the history of Mizoram. It is of great significance in the history of Mizoram in the sense that this participation helped the process of their own social emancipation. However, at that time women in the mass did not participate in politics, barring a few women of royal and aristocratic families. On the whole it may be safely be concluded that the political participation of Chieftainessess occasioned a new event in the history of Mizo.
Therefore, this subject specifically has been chosen to analyse the activities of Mizo women rulers in various phases of resistance movement and to estimate their achievements. In this work, earnest attempt has been made to give authentic, systematic, objective and complete account of the circumstances leading to the participation of Chieftainessess during the resistance movement and their contribution. The period undertaken for the study is from 1800 – 1900, because we could see most of the Mizo female rulers during this period. The study explores the process of state formation within the Mizo society, which took place in the form of chieftainship and how women emerged as a ruler in a patriarchal society. Therefore, the study and research on the role played by Chieftainessess during the resistance movement deserve special importance. As in other civilizations, both men and women have played an important role in the society. Women have been sharing with men the work of building the country and its culture. In revolutionary war situations there is often no defined front line and both women and children can come directly under attack, thus the stereotyped image of men going off to war, and women staying at home away from the conflict, has to be radically revised. In such revolutionary conflicts, women are not merely victims but also actively work side-by-side with men in support of the war effort. The position of women in liberation struggles shows that wars have to be judged not just from the position of men, but also from the position of women who incessantly struggle to sustain the force of the revolution. The present thesis argues, therefore, that the story of a struggle against Colonialism cannot be complete without an analysis of the role women play in the resistance movement.

17 Mani Kamerkar, History: Where are the Women? Khrishna Maitreyi Raj (ed); Women studies in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986, p 89.