

**THE PROCESS OF EARLY MIGRATION OF THE
VAIPHEI AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION
IN THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA**

By:

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SUBMITTED
IN
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TO

**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY**

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2003

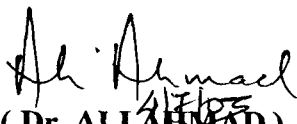
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I, Soilalsiam, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of a bonafide research work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of my previous degree or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else. I have also, not submitted the dissertation for any research degree in any other University or Institute.

This dissertation is being submitted to the North-Eastern Hill University for the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in Geography.


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The 4th July,2003

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(SOILALSIAM)

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction:

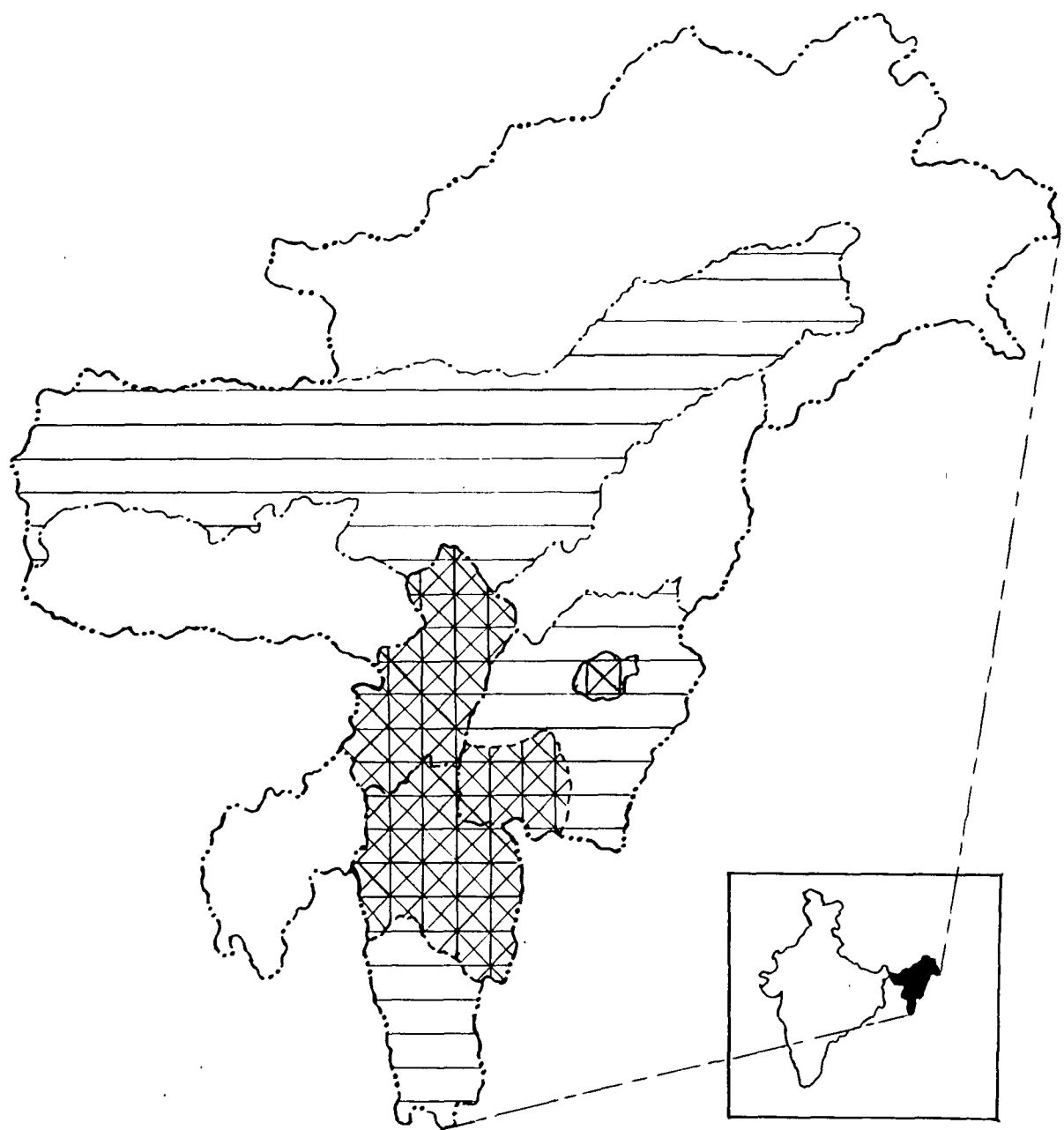
One of the distinguishing characteristics of human being is his tendency to migrate. Frequency and distance of these movements makes him unique and different from other living species. This latter aspect is largely due to cultural adaptability, which allows man to adjust to major ecological changes by employing his mental abilities and skills. These same tendency and abilities may result in the mobility of the entire social groups. A combination of the human need, effort for survival and self preservation as well as his culturally defined tendency for self improvement has resulted in the distribution of human beings to every part of the earth. [Du Joit]



Among many factors leading to migration, the economic factors act as one of the most vital determinants. The availability of good agricultural land continues to be the most important economic factor determining magnitude and direction of population migration. The areas which have acute population pressure upon their limited agricultural land resource base, thus, generate out migration whereas those new agricultural lands are available, receive such migrants. It is also a fact that people with low socio-economic status are more mobile than the other as they have little landed property to tie them to their native places. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that people migrate under compelling circumstances.

The North Eastern region of India has a rich diversity. This is reflected in its population by way of wide varieties of tribal communities. This has contributed to the country's ethnic diversity. Few regions in the country can surpass the North East region in heterogeneity of its population. The North East India has attracted waves of migrants from various parts of Tibet, South East Asia and the Indian Sub-Continent since earlier times. These waves of migration continued till the 18th Century and early 19th Century (this continues even today in the form of immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar). This may be because of the geopolitical location of the region, which frequently tends to reinforce isolation and inaccessibility. This encourages and provides safe sanctuaries to population elements and fusion between various social elements has been very slow and incomplete. There exists an acute awareness of ethnic and cultural distinctions among the people.

The North-East Region of India has an area of 255,083 Sq. kilometres accounting for about 7.76 percent of the total area of the country and have a population of about 4.36 percent of the total population of India. The scheduled tribe population forms an important element in the population of North East India accounting for 23.0% of the total population of the region. The percentage of tribal population in the region is generally high. It varies from high and very high in Mizoram (94.75 percent of the state's total population), to Nagaland (87.7%), to Meghalaya (85.53%), to Arunachal Pradesh (63.66%);

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA



 Main study area
 General study area

Map no.1

high and medium in Manipur (34.40%) to Tripura (30.90%) to low in Assam (12.83%). It has been apparent from the above data that the tribal communities show significantly uneven distribution in these states. This is due to their tendency to concentrate in the isolated hilly and forested areas of the region. Therefore, the degree of concentration and clustering of tribal population is more apparent in the districts and block levels. In fact, the tribal cluster or concentration is even higher at the village level as they have the tendency to cluster in a certain small villages.

Based on their areal spread of habitat and distributional pattern, these tribes can be grouped into four categories:

1. Tribes having large areal concentration, e.g. the Bodos of Assam.
2. Tribes having relatively smaller areas of concentration, e.g. the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya.
3. Small tribes occupying smaller areas, e.g. different tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.
4. Small tribes widely scattered or found ubiquitous over larger areas, e.g. the different tribes of Chin-Kuki groups.

The fourth category dominates the study area; where majority of the traditional communities belongs to the Kuki-Chin group. It is in this concentration that the Vaiphei community finds itself interrelated with others in

the same ethnic family. The Vaiphei tribe belongs to the Kuki-Chin group, which is a sub family of the Tibeto-Burman branch. The word 'Chin-Kuki' is used to mean many tribes like Thado, Lusei, Paite, Hmar, Simte, Gangte, Vaiphei, etc. as a whole. There is still no proper nomenclature comprising all these tribes. Moreover, there is a common principle running through them all; their traditions, religions, social and cultural lives are more or less the same. They have dialects that are similar to each other. This may be the reason why an outsider frequently failed to distinguish these tribes from one another. In other words, the Vaiphei are a small tribal group, who are dispersed and scattered over a large area of southern Manipur (they are also found scattered in the northern districts of Manipur), northern part of Mizoram, parts of Meghalaya and parts of Cachar plain and N.C. Hills in Assam.

1.2. Statement of the problem:

The early history of the Vaiphei is based on legends, traditions, customs and beliefs. There is a common belief that their ancestor emigrated from a place called '*Khul*' or '*Chhinlung*', somewhere in Southern China, more particularly from the Tan Valley in the Kanshu Province. It has also been claimed that the Vaiphei people are one of the tribes settled in the Tibetan foothills after their exodus from China. Due to some socio-political and economic reasons, they gradually move down along the Chindwin Valley and

spread in the Kachin and Shan states of the then Burma at about 996 A.D. They lived there for about 200 years.

It is a well-known fact that people with low socio-economic status are more mobile as they have little landed property to tie them to their native or original place. Moreover, insecurity was the order of the day during the early history of the Vaiphei. During those days, there were no fixed boundary and frontiers of kingdoms. Each ethnic group would like to have complete authority on the land of their occupation and would preserve their land from any interference from any other groups. But smaller or weaker groups would be overpowered and driven away by the more powerful ones. Thus, inter-tribal or even inter-clan feuds were common. So the perpetual fear of attack by other social groups compelled the Vaiphei to move to safer and defensible location in the interior. Most of their migrations were happening under the threat of subjugation. They also move to new places for better and adequate land for cultivation. The areas, which have acute population pressure upon their limited cultivable land resources, thus, generate out migration.

Further, they had to face famine (mautam) at a regular interval of 50 years and consequently they had to change their place of habitation. Apart from all these, nomadism was prevalent among the Vaiphei and this migratory spirit scattered them further more and left them without a state or land they could really call their own. Even in the few areas they occupied some decades

back, they have been either outnumbered or overshadowed by other ethnic groups. All these compelled the Vaiphei to break and scatter resulting in dispersion over different areas. In this study, attempt has been made to identify the core and peripheries of the Vaiphei settlements after all those waves of migration. The core district of their concentration and their peripheral areas are identified by using quantitative techniques. The core district is the area where the percentage of the Vaiphei population is most substantial while the peripheral areas are those areas where there is a sizeable population of the Vaiphei.

Being widely scattered over a large area and among different communities, the study area is not being confined to a particular political area. The study area includes the states where there are a sizeable Vaiphei population such as Manipur, Mizoram and Assam. Even in these states, the study area is further reduced ultimately confined to a few pockets in the district levels.

1.3. Objective:

The basic objective of the study is:

1. To get an insight into the origin and the process of migration of the Vaiphei in the North East India in the historical past.
2. To develop an understanding of the factors responsible for the redistribution of the tribes in the region.

3. To analyse the present distributional pattern; their core and peripheries in the region.

1.4. Research Questions:

1. What were the historical compulsions behind the migration of the Vaiphei from one area to another at different point of time?
2. What are the significant characteristics of their spatial redistribution?
3. What is the nature of their relationship with other social groups of the areas of their settlements in the past and present?

1.5. Literature Survey:

There are very few books written about the Vaiphei in particular, although there are books written about Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes as a whole, in the latter part of the 19th Century. Most of these books were written by foreigners who failed, many a times, to distinguish the various similar tribes and often missed out the minor tribes like Vaiphei. This may be because, these tribes are more or less the same in their tradition, religion and cultural life; and also they have their own dialects which are very similar to each other.

Some of the more useful works pertaining to the origin, migration, socio-cultural characteristics as well as the distribution of the Vaiphei are listed below:-

Vumson Suantak's '**Zo History**' contains a comprehensive analysis of the people mostly known as Chin-Kuki-Mizo. It analyses how these people migrated from Western China-Myanmar to different states of the North-East and why they migrated to the rugged hill areas they occupy now. He also emphasizes on the sub tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and their historical backgrounds.

'**The Vaiphei tribe**' (1975) by S. Prim Vaiphei is one of the most valuable account on the Vaiphei. He described the historical, social and economic background of the Vaiphei as well as their religion. This book also reveals the impact of Christianity upon the social, cultural and religious life of the tribe.

An article '**The Social Institutions of the Vaiphei**' by S. Doliand Capvung in a book '**Manipur: Past and Present**' volume III compiled by Naorem Sanajaoba also served as a useful information about the origin, social life and traditions of the Vaiphei.

‘Genealogical Tree of Zo Race’ by Captain K.A. Khupzathang unfold the origin and classification of the Vaiphei into different sub clans in the mid 17th Century A.D.

A seminar paper on **‘The Historical Background of the Vaiphei’** (1999) by S. Vaiphei IPS shows the bedrock of Vaiphei and his descendants, who later on become the sub clans of the Vaiphei tribe. He also described the probable origin theories of the tribe based on the views of different scholars.

In the **‘Bedrock of Suantak/Thuantak: 2000 Vaiphei Society’** compiled by L.K. Kaikhawthawng Vaiphei, various local writers shared their knowledge they gained through the reading of books, personal contacts and also their own knowledge as a Vaiphei.

Khaitingen’s **‘Khawsak Sulnung’** (2001) is the most recent writing on the Vaiphei which throw lights on the route of migration of the tribe in the historical past.

Sipra Sen’s (1992) **‘Tribes of Mizoram’** gives a valuable account on the Vaiphei and their inhabited areas within Mizoram.

Sipra Sen’s (1992) **‘Tribes and Castes in Manipur’** stresses some information about the distribution of different tribal groups including the Vaiphei in Manipur. It also highlighted some of their laws and practices.

G.K. Gori's (1984) '**Changing Phase of Tribal Area of Manipur**' gives some information about the culture and custom of the Vaiphei and their distribution in the different districts of Manipur. It also gives a lucid, comprehensive and objective picture of the tribal population of this area.

R.K.Das (1985) '**Manipur Tribal Scene**' unfold the question of tribal identity and their respective socio-cultural background of the tribes of Manipur.

Kaihau Vaiphei's (1999) '**Maite Days**' contained the early settlement sites of the tribe in Manipur and their probable route of migration from the east. It also highlighted the post migration of the tribes within the North-Eastern Region in the early 20th Century.

Carey & Tuck in their book '**The Chin Hills**' wrote about the history of the people called Chins in which Vaiphei were included as one of the tribes that inhabited the Chin Hills. They also described their customs, manners and a gazetteer of their country.

S.A.Ansari wrote a very useful book on the scheduled tribes of Manipur in his book "**MANIPUR: Tribal Demography and Socio-Economic Development**". He emphasis on the migration, growth, areal distribution, economy and society as well as missionaries activities on the tribal people of Manipur.

1.6. Data base and Methodology:

The method used in this study is of historical and analytical in nature. The database of this study consists of both primary and secondary sources of data. These sources include district statistical handbooks, census reports and published and unpublished dissertations, oral tradition, customs and beliefs, personal interviews and experiences.

For the study of the historical background and process of migration, books and seminar papers written in Vaiphei, Mizo, Kuki, as well as English by various authors have been based upon. These scholars have based their studies on the traditional songs and folktales of the tribes; that give ideas about their past history and their probable root of migration to their present settlements. Based on these informations, a notional map of their probable route of migration is prepared.

To analyze the distributional pattern of the Vaiphei population, various census handbooks are used. Apart from these, informations are based on observations, experiences, church sources and visits to the core and peripheries of the Vaiphei settlements. In order to understand present distributions, maps have been prepared by using suitable cartographic methods whenever it was found necessary and applicable.

1.7. Organisation of the Study:

The present study has been incorporated into six chapters. The first chapter is the introductory part. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to assess the need and relevance of the present study. The objective, research questions, methods and database and a survey of literature have also been highlighted.

The second chapter offers a general description of the physical setting and the climatic conditions of the North-East India. The physiography, drainage, climate and soil types of the region are discussed in order to understand the physical conditions of the region better. It also analyses the relationship between the geographical setting and process of migration and distribution of Vaiphei in the study area.

In third chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the origin and the early process of migration of the Vaiphei in the historical past. The historical background of the tribe based on different views has been discussed. The latter section of this chapter deals with the dispersal of the Vaiphei from their original place and the likely reasons for their migration.

Chapter IV discusses the present pattern of distribution of the Vaiphei. The movement into the region, dispersal into different states of North-East, their clans and sub-clans has been studied. In the process, the core and peripheries of their distribution has been identified and highlighted.

Chapter V deals with the problems of social and cultural adjustments and dilemmas that the Vaiphei group face while living in different areas and with different types of people. An attempt has also been made to explain some of these aspects.

Chapter VI or the last chapter consists of the summary of the results obtained from the analysis and conclusions based on observations.

CHAPTER – II

PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE REGION

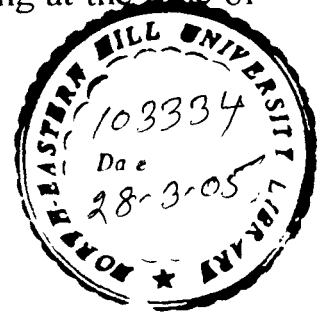
PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE REGION

The North-East India, comprising seven states, covers an area of 255,036 square kilometres which is about 7 percent of the total area of the country. It lies between 22° N and 29°5' N latitudes and 89°70' E and 97°30' E longitudes. The North-Eastern region, to a great extent, corresponds with the overall major physiographic units of India; viz. the old Peninsular Massif, Young Folded Hills and Mountains and the riverine plains, but in a more complicated form, as the folded mountains with their syntaxial bends encircles the plains and plateaus on three sides.

2.1. Physiography:

The region is dominated by three major physiographic features, namely; the Young fold mountains, the alluvial plains and the Meghalaya-Karbi plateau. While the Eastern Himalayas cover the Western part of Arunachal Pradesh other folded hills covers the Eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, greater part of Manipur, Mizoram and North and South districts of Tripura. There are four plains of which the Brahmaputra plain is the largest. This is followed by the Barak plain, the Imphal Valley and the Tripura Piedmont plain. The core of the region is the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus, an apparently detached

part of the Gondwana land or Deccan plateau.¹ This oldest Pre-Cambrian part came into existence as a result of the igneous activities occurring at the time of cooling of the earth's surface from its molten state.



2.1.1 The Young Fold Mountains:

The Mountain and hilly terrains are the predominant landform features of the region. It covers an area of approximately 150,000 square kilometres and account for about 60 percent of the total surface area of the region. It is the predominant feature of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, greater part of Manipur and North-Eastern part of Tripura. It is along the Arunachal Pradesh and Northern Nagaland that the Himalayan range takes its syntaxial bend. This changes its trend to South and South-East.² This zone can be broadly divided into (i) the Arunachal Himalaya, extending from the Eastern frontiers of Bhutan to the Siang-Dihang rivers in the East; and (ii) the Eastern hills, comprising of the Dibang- Lohit -Patkai- Naga- Manipur- Mizoram- Tripura hills.

The Arunachal Himalaya again has two distinct physiographic subdivisions; viz. the Lesser Himalayan zone and the Greater Himalayan zone. The average elevation of the Greater Himalaya is 6400 metres above mean sea level.

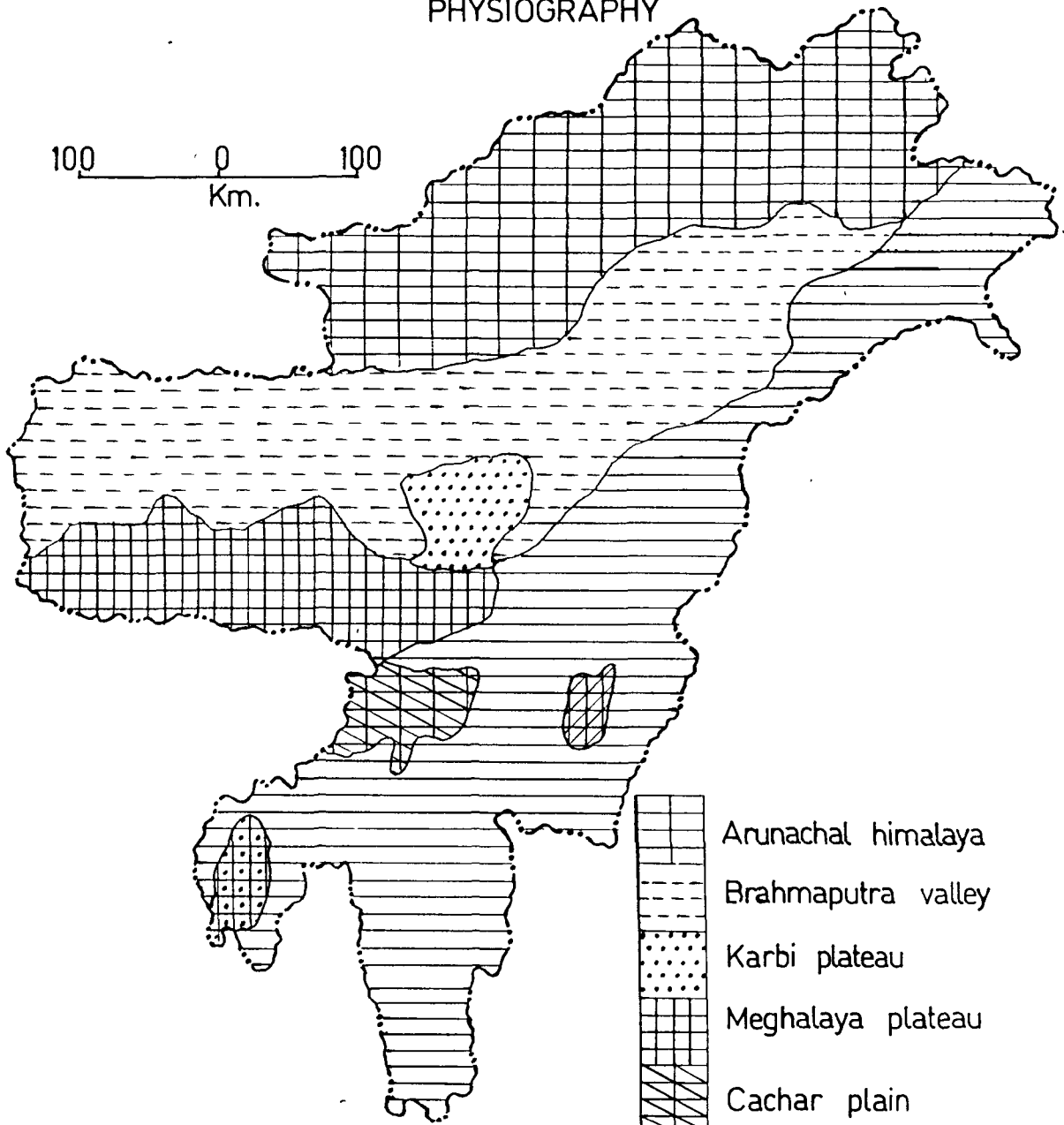
¹ Taher, M. 1886. 'Physiographic Framework of North-East India' North-Eastern Geographer, Vol. 18, No 1 & 2. p. 11









² Gopalakrishnan, R. (1995) 'The North-East India' p-59

NORTH-EAST INDIA

PHYSIOGRAPHY

100 0 100
Km.



-  Arunachal Himalaya
-  Brahmaputra valley
-  Karbi plateau
-  Meghalaya plateau
-  Cachar plain
-  Tripura plain
-  Imphal valley
-  Naga, Manipur, Mizo hills

Map no. 2

The altitude decreases north-eastwards in Upper Subansiri and West Siang to about 5200 metres.³ In Arunachal, the highest Himalayan peaks are at Kangto (7,090 m.) and Gorichen (6,538 m.). This region has predominantly glacial physiography and thick layers of fluvial-glacially transported deposits and is devoid of significantly tall vegetal cover.

The Lesser Himalayan zone rises from a mere 300 metres along the margins of Brahmaputra valley to about 5,000 metres through the hills intervened by deep gorges. This region is clothed with thick vegetation due to adequate rainfall.

The Eastern hills originated from the hill mass of Dibang- Lohit area and the hill ranges radiates Westward from here. In Tirap district, a series of parallel ranges valleys stretch out in South-West direction. These ranges culminate in the Patkai range and stand out seemingly as a barrier along the Indo-Burma border. Saramati peak (3,826 m.) in Nagaland is the highest point in Patkai range.

The Barail range, stretching in South-West direction to North-Cachar Hills (one of the study area), has a North-Eastern trend upto Kohima, where it merges with the main mountain range. The Barail range keeps up its high elevation, having a mean altitude exceeding 1,600 metres. To the East of Halflong town is located the Mahadeo peak (1,953 m.) which is the highest

³ Ibid; p-60

point in the district. It then enters Manipur. This range divides Nagaland into North-Western and South-Eastern halves. The North-Western half has a dissected terrain with elevation ranging from 600 metres to 1,400 metres. The South-Eastern half is an intermontane tract with elevation ranging between 1,200 metres and 1,400 metres above sea level.⁴

The Patkai range with a North-East to South-West trend extends into Manipur whose average heights are around 1,500 metres. Their Eastern offshoot acts as a natural boundary between India and Myanmar. While the Western ranges continue in North-South direction to Mizoram through Churachandpur district (main study area) of Manipur. The highest point of this range in Churachandpur district is at Kailam 'tang' (2,202 metres).⁵ The Major range of this district is the Len tang which runs from the East of Churachandpur town to the Chin Hills of Myanmar in the South. This Western range, on reaching Aizawl district of Mizoram (one of the study area), extends in North-South direction in a parallel alignment with deep narrow valleys. These hills are made up of shale and slate.⁶ The Eastern parts of these hills are higher in altitude as compared to the Western parts. The highest peak, the Blue Mountain

⁴ Ibid; P-60

⁵ Pakhuongte, L. 'Processes of migration and distribution of the Hmars in North-East India' Unpublished dissertation. P-21

⁶ Taher, M. Op.cit; P-14

(2,157 metres) is situated in the South-Eastern border of Mizoram. These ranges continue South-Westward and enter Tripura state in its Northern side. The general elevation decreases from 700 metres in the East to 400 metres in the West. These ranges are separated by flat-bottomed valleys.

2.1.2 The Alluvial Plains:

There are four important plains in the North-East India which are recently filled. They are the Brahmaputra plain, the Barak plain, the Manipur/ Imphal plain and the Tripura Piedmont plain.

The Brahmaputra plain covers an area of about 56,480 square kilometres and is the most extensive. It is a narrow elongated valley having an average length of 600 kilometres and average width of 70 kilometres. The general gradient falls very gently in South-West and West directions at an average rate of 13 centimetres per kilometres.⁷ There are Alluvial fans and scattered hillocks coinciding with the Bhabar zone of the Terai. The streams are braided and often disappear to reappear at a short distance. This resulted in the formation of shallow depressions that developed into swamps and bils.⁸

The Barak plain is the second largest and covers an area of 6,962 square kilometres. This plain dips Westwards with its lower parts in the middle course

⁷ Ibid P-15

⁸ Gopalakrishnan, R. Op.cit. P-62

through which the river Barak flows. Since the plain is gentle, the river is slow and meanders resulting in the formation of numerous ox-bow lakes and swamps along its course.

The Manipur plain or the Imphal valley is oval in shape and covers an area of 1,843 square kilometres. It is a lacustrine product like the Kashmir valley, with a steep gradient of about 75 centimetres per kilometres.⁹ The plain slopes gradually down from 838 metres in the North to 793.5 metres in the South. It has numerous depressions, marshes and lakes; the most important one, being, the Loktak lake.

The Tripura Piedmont plain is an extension of the Bangladesh plain. It covers an area of about 3,500 square kilometres. This plain contains both erosional and depositional features, with worn-down hillocks, terraces and thick alluvial deposits.

2.1.3 The Meghalaya-Karbi Plateau:

The Meghalaya- Karbi Plateau covers an area of about 32,281 square kilometres, which is about 12 percent of the total area of the region. Although denuded this plateau still possess a hilly character, unlike the Deccan plateau.¹⁰ From its South in the Sylhet plain, this plateau suddenly rises for about 1,000

⁹ Ibid. P-62

¹⁰ Taher, M. Op. cit. P-11

metres and maintains more or less uniform uplift. The plateau continues to rise gradually northwards till it reaches the central part, where the ranges aligned in the East-West direction. The Tura-Kylas range reaches its highest elevation in Garo Hills at Nokrek peak (1,412 metres). In Khasi Hills, the highest point is the Shillong peak (1,961 metres). The elevation of this plateau begins to decrease in successive ranges to all directions. The Western and Eastern part of the plateau are more denuded and present a deeply dissected features, which ultimately merge into Brahmaputra plains in the form of a series of isolated hills.¹¹

The Karbi plateau protrudes into the southern bank of the Brahmaputra river, resulting in the compression of the valley width. Kopili gorge and other rivers separated Karbi plateau from Meghalaya plateau in its southern side. The Karbi plateau reaches its highest elevation in its central part as in Chenghehison (1,359 metres) and Dambuko (1,361 metres). With the central part having greater elevation and heavily denuded boundaries, the plateau has become circular in shape.¹²

¹¹ Gopalakrishnan, R. Op.cit. P-62

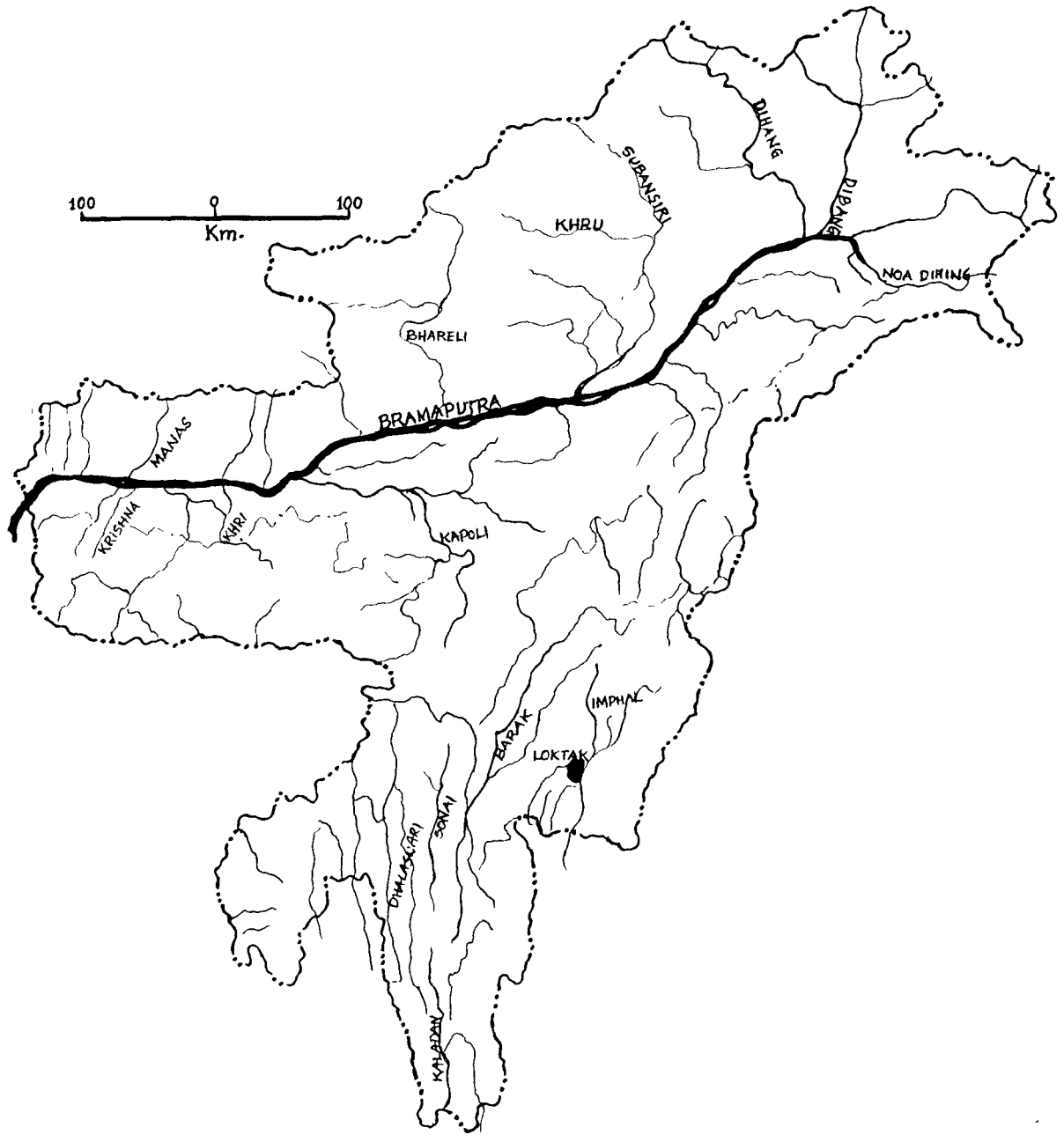
¹² Ibid. P-62

2.2 DRAINAGE:

The drainage pattern of North-East India is marked by the presence of five main river basins which are influenced, to a great extent, by the mountain building movements in the late tertiary periods. The Brahmaputra System, covering the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh, greater parts of Assam, parts of Meghalaya and Nagaland is by far the largest of them. It covers an area of about 180,000 square kilometres of North-East India accounting for 70 percent of the total area of the region. In fact, the study of the drainage pattern of the North-East is the study of the Brahmaputra and in part the study of Barak-Surma-Meghna sub-systems.

The Brahmaputra river originated in the high glacier of the Kailash range in Tibet, where it is known as Tsangpo. It flows eastwards through Southern Tibet and turns westwards through the deep gorge into Arunachal Pradesh. Known by Dihang, it emerges into the valley and the Lohit river joins it, to be known as the great Brahmaputra river.¹³ It is joined by many tributaries in its course and have as many as hundred in its southern bank and fifteen in the northern bank. It traverses a distance of 720 kilometres before turning southwards into Bangladesh. The well-known north bank tributaries includes Subansari, Jia Bharoli, Manas and Sankosh. These tributaries follow a sub-

NORTH-EAST INDIA DRAINAGE



Map no. 3

parallel course due to the presence of levees. The north bank tributaries are very active and carry unusually heavy load of boulders, pebbles and silt due to conditions of the slope. This is aided by heavy precipitation in the entire catchment area. Whereas the south bank rivers have graded course and meandered in most of their courses.¹⁴ The notable tributaries are Burhi Dihing, Dikhou, Dhasiri, Kopili and Dig.

The Barak System of Surma basin is the second largest and occupies an area of about 41,000 square kilometres. It originated in Senapati district of Manipur (one of the study area) and flows westwards initially, but later turn southwards along the western margin of Manipur. It takes a big U-turn to the north before entering the Barak plains, leaving behind many lakes in its courses.

The northern part of Manipur and eastern part of Nagaland is drained by the Tizu basin and flows into Chindwin across Patkai and Surma tract. Apart from this, the Imphal, Thoubal and Iril rivers form apart of this sub-system and ultimately flow into the Chindwin. The Chhimtuipui and Lunglei districts of Mizoram are part of Kaladine basin that flows into the Bay at Akyab in Myanmar. Its important tributaries are Chhimtuipui and Mengoui flowing in more or less parallel drainage pattern. The Karnaphuli sub-system extends upto the western margins of Mizoram and Southern parts of Tripura.

¹³ Singh, R.L. 'India: A Regional Geography' Varanasi. P-308

¹⁴ Gopalakrishnan, R. Op. cit. P-65

All the major river systems of the region fall in the heavy rainfall zone. The topographic conditions and slopes along with factors like deforestation and landslides have enhanced the erosional capabilities the rivers. This increased the scale of devastation that occurs frequently in the form of annual recurring floods. Soil erosion and silting are the problems of magnitude faced by each and every state in the region.

2.3. CLIMATE:

The climate of the North-East India have assumed regional characters and varies from one sub-region to another. This is due to its peculiar physiographic make-up and ineffective North-East monsoon coupled with the location conditions of the region. Apart from these factors, periodic oscillation of pressure cells, the influence of easterly jet streams, upper air westerlies and so on; also have contributed to effect.

The North-Eastern region of India has a sub-tropical climate with only the higher elevation in Arunachal Pradesh experiencing the Alpine type of climate.¹⁵ The trend and distribution of the mountains and hills have play a crucial role in the climatic pattern of the region. The regional orographic

¹⁵ Barhtakur, M. " Weather and Climate of North –East India" North-eastern Geographer. Vol. 18, No. 1 & 2, 1986. P. 20.

structure is so varied that the weather elements are predominantly conditioned locally to produce different climatic characteristics.

On the basis of various aspects like temperature, rainfall and thunderstorms etc., the climate of the North-east region of India can be classified as:

- (i) The cold humid monsoon climate, experience in areas lying over 200 metres above sea level.
- (ii) The wet sub-tropical monsoon climate.
- (iii) The humid meso-thermal climate.
- (iv) The meso-thermal sub-tropical monsoon climate

The cold humid monsoon climate is experience in the Arunachal Himalayas. Winter rains and snowfalls above the high of 1500 metres are the regular features of the region. The maximum rainfall is received in the month of June and July.¹⁶

The Brahmaputra valley, Meghalaya and Tripura receive heavy rainfall in the monsoon season. The southern slopes of Meghalaya receives very heavy rainfall as in Cherrapunji, one of the rainiest place in the world, receiving 11,418 millimetres of rainfall a year.

¹⁶ Singh, R. L. Op. Cit. P-483-484.

The Eastern Hills generally receive heavy rainfall with an average of 2500 millimetres annually. Manipur South District i.e. Churachandpur district (the main study area) receives about 1497.5 millimetres of rainfalls per year. June and July are the wettest months in the district. The maximum mean temperature of Churachandpur district is 26.6° Centigrade with a minimum of 6.6° Centigrade. The hills of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram experience a minimum temperature of 4°C.

Aizawl district receives an average rainfall of about 2264 millimetres annually. Its maximum and minimum temperatures are 30.9° Centigrade and 6.8° Centigrade respectively. Maximum rainfall is experience in July and August whereas the months between November and January are almost completely dry altogether. The mean temperature of North-Cachar Hills district of Assam is 25°Centigrade with the minimum temperature of 9°Centigrade. The average rainfall of the district is 3098 millimetres annually.

The region has a climate, which is influenced by the seasonal rhythm of the monsoons. Micro topographical differentiation and other local characteristics affect variation and distribution of weather elements. This makes a striking differences between the windward and the leeward side of a place.¹⁷

¹⁷ Gopalakrishnan, R. Op. Cit. P-68.

Sub-regional variation, therefore, exerted considerable influence in determining or modifying the local weather conditions.

2.4 SOIL:

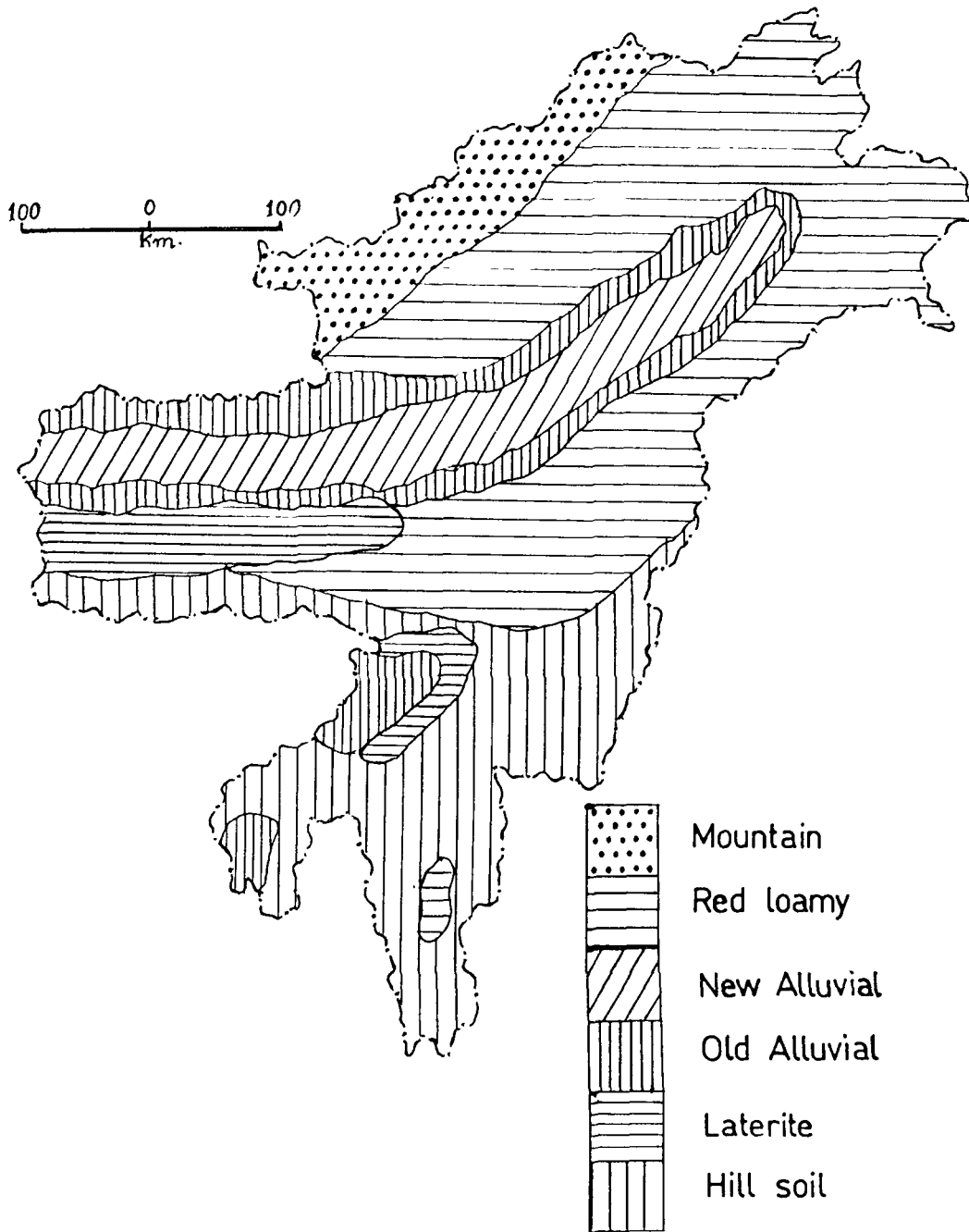
Soil is very important to support the vegetal growth in the land. Where soil cover is thick or deep, it is better suited for agricultural practices. However, soil cover is thin and shallow in the hills except in the river valleys and the foothills zone.

The soils of the region are formed from the rocks that are varied greatly in composition, age and weathering processes. The warm humid climatic conditions have attributed to the soils with varying mineralogical and chemical composition. There are factors like deforestation, landslides and so on which contributed to this and are responsible for accelerating the rate of soil erosion. The soil cover in the region varies from black to deep red, which is suited for agricultural practices. However, most of the soils are thin or shallow, except in the river valleys and some of the foot hills.

Generally, the North-Eastern region of India can be said to belong to two prominent soil types; i.e. Residual and Transported soils. A residual soil belongs to the Archean age which consists of mainly schists, gneisses and granites. Transported soils are mainly found in the valley areas which have

NORTH-EAST INDIA

SOIL TYPES



Map no. 4

different types of vegetal cover.¹⁸ As many as four types of soils, belonging to the two prominent types, are found in the region. Such as:-

A. The Alluvial Soil: The Alluvial Soils are mainly found in the valleys of Brahmaputra river and its tributaries, which are exposed to yearly floods and renewal. These are the new alluvial soils formed recently. The old alluvial soils, formed by the old deposits of the Brahmaputra River are found largely in the mountain valleys as well as in the undulating areas above the annual flood level. These old alluvial soils are quite suitable for the cultivation of tea as is in the case of the upper Assam region.¹⁹

B. Non-Laterised Soil: These soils are mixed red and black soils. The red soils are more prominent in the higher elevation, whereas the black ones are prominent in the lower areas. They are found in major part of Mizoram, Meghalaya, parts of Mikir and Cachar hills and isolated hills in Darrang, Kamrup and Dhubri districts of Assam.

C. Laterite Soil: Laterite Soils are primarily red loams or hill soils possessing reddish colour. The soils of the hills of Manipur, Nagaland, parts of

¹⁸ Ibid. P-76.

¹⁹ Singh, R.L. Op. Cit. P-313.

Darrang, Tezpur, Golaghat, Cachar hills and parts of Guwahati are all lateritic soils. The central part of Manipur which is a flood plain has thick deposits of sands, clays and silts.

D. Organic Soil: These are soils of low-lying or swampy areas. They are found in the low-lying areas of Cachar and isolated pockets in Goalpara and Kamrup in Brahmaputra valley. These areas experience floods during the monsoon period.

Based on the above study on the physical setting of the North-Eastern region of India, the following conclusions may be highlighted.

- (1) Physiographically, there are three main classifications of landforms in the North-Eastern region of India; viz. Fold mountains, Plateaus and Alluvial Plains. The Fold Mountains are comprises of the Arunachal Himalayas that stretches from the Bhutan-Arunachal Pradesh border in the West to the Siang-Dihang river in the East. The hills comprises of the Eastern hills made up by the Dibang-Lohit-Patkai-Naga-Manipur-Mizo ranges. The Plateaus are the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus, which are the separated parts of the great Deccan plateau. The Alluvial Plains in the region

are made up of the Brahmaputra plain, Barak plain, Imphal Valley and the Tripura piedmont plain.

- (2) The drainage system of the region is made up by five main river basins. The Brahmaputra basin is the largest and covers almost the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, major part of Assam, some parts of Nagaland and Meghalaya. The Barak is the second largest system of the region and occupies the southern parts of Meghalaya, North-Cachar Hills, northern and western margins of Manipur, northern half of Mizoram and north-eastern parts of Tripura and Cachar. The Kaladine river basin from Myanmar drains the southern parts of Mizoram. The rivers of the Northern parts of Manipur and south-eastern Nagaland fall under the Tizu basin. The Karnaphuli basin with its streams drains western Mizoram and southern parts of Tripura.
- (3) The North-Eastern Region of India lends itself favourably to the exposition of climate on a synoptic basis. It is very characteristic and is incomparable to any other regions of India. Local influences and relief have contributed to make the climate of the region a sub-tropical or extra tropical type. The climate has been divided into four seasons: (a) Winter (December to February), (b) Pre-monsoon (March to May), (c) Monsoon (June to September) and (d) Retreating monsoon (October to November).

- (4) Generally, the soils of the region can be said to belong to two prominent soil types; viz. residual and transported soils. The soils in the Brahmaputra valley are either new alluvium as found along the banks of a river, or old alluviums that are found above the annual flood levels. Soils in Arunachal Himalayas are alluvial in the foothills, clayey in the valleys and red or hill soils in the hills and higher areas. Meghalaya-Karbi plateau region are predominantly dominated by red or hill soils except for a small area in the south-western Karbi hills adjoining the Jaintia hills which has laterite soils. The soil cover is thin in the Eastern hills due to rapid run off along the slopes. The Eastern hills are predominantly red soil areas, but hill or laterite soils are found in the higher areas.

CHAPTER – III

ORIGIN AND PROCESS OF MIGRATION

ORIGIN AND THE PROCESS OF EARLY MIGRATION

The history of the Vaiphei people is shrouded with myths and mythology. As the sources of information available to us are very limited and very few scholars have attempted to study them, it is rather difficult to trace their earlier history. In view of the fact that the elders who depended upon words of mouth from their memory bank could not provide us with a complete process of historical development, but only tends to create more confusion instead of a solution. There is also no written history of the Vaiphei as they did not possess any script of their dialect. In the absence of any written records, it is not possible to develop any full-proof theory about the exact area of their origin and the route they have taken to their present locations, in the historical past. It, therefore, becomes necessary to apply modern methods of historical research with the help of folktales, poems, legends and traditional accounts that had been handed down through generations.

3.1. Who are Vaiphei ?

Unlike any other Chin-Kuki-Mizo sub-groups, the problem of this study starts right from the name of the tribe itself. Vaiphei, not being the name of a human-being, does not find a place in the genealogical tree of the people. This,

therefore, is considered a nickname or an alias.¹ According to the historical accounts passed down the generations, it is commonly believe that the name 'Vaiphei' is derived from the name of the village "*Khaw-Vaiphei*" which means the village was at length and breadth and vast. The literal meaning of '*Khaw-Vaiphei*' is '*Khaw*' means village, '*Vai*' means breadth and '*phei*' means plain. The people who lived in that village for a pretty long enough time and moved out last of all had acquired the name of the village as their group or tribal identity.

The oral genealogy maintained by the Vaiphei people in Manipur claimed that they descended from Neilut and Vanglua; the second and fourth sons of Suantak. This has been always spelled out in the '*hanla*', which is a cry of triumph or success; on killing prized animals like tiger, bear, wild boar etc. or on occasions such as '*Chawng*', '*Bu-aih*' and '*Sa-aih*'..

The first settlement of the Vaiphei people in the Chin Hills was at Sizang area between 1780 A.D. and 1830 A.D. In course of their migration towards Manipur-Mizoram from Chin Hills, they lived in a number of villages; such as Tiddim, Saizang, Lailo, Tualzang etc. These villages were situated in the eastern bank of the Manipur River. It is believed that while a group of people

¹ Vaiphei,S. "Historical Background of the Vaiphei"

who came to be known as the Vaiphei were living together with a number of other tribes in Phaiza village, the population was so large that the village expanded breadth-wise along the horizontal saddle of the hill range. Later on the village acquired the nick-name 'Khaw-Vaiphei'.² There are a number of songs or cry of triumph or success that proved this theory. Some of those songs are:

*“Laisimlu tawh Khaw-Vaiphei thil in jawt ing.
Sial lum leh In Khaw-Vaiphei jang masuan ing;
Ka leido mangpa chung ah ka chuang e!”*

This means:

“Walking on with enemy’s head towards destination Khaw-Vaiphei
Spotting a Shield walking towards Khaw-Vaiphei;
I triumph over my great earthly foe”

Another song which substantiated the Khaw-Vaiphei theory is:

*“Ka thang e! Ka thang e! Ka chun leh ka zuan thangnan chembang ei
chawi e! Namtin Khaw-Vaiphei lai ah, guallai lawi ang ka thang e!”*

This, translated, means:

“I am famous! I am famous! My parent praise me like double edged
sword! Among many people in Khaw-Vaiphei, I am famous!”

² Ibid.

It is further said that after all other tribes further moved on, i.e. migrated, the people who continue to live on in village Phaiza alias Khaw-Vaiphei, and migrated last of all came to be identified as Vaiphei people.

Another version says that the Suantak people who latter came to be known as Vaiphei lived with other social groups in the village of Liankhama Sailo. One particular day, one Pawi member of that village by the name of Thangvuka killed one of the Suantak people; and ate the heart of the man he killed, in front of his relatives. This infuriated the Suantak people so much that they chased the killer Pawi all over the village, with intent to kill and avenge themselves. Sensing the danger to his life, the Pawi darted inside the chief's house and hugged the prime pillar. According to the Zo custom, such a criminal who seek refuge under the protection of the chief is safe from any harm by becoming the slave of the chief the rest of his life. This is known in Lusei as '*Chemsen bawi*'. Realising the implication of the custom, the enraged Suantak people, who failed to take revenge felt no more desirable to live together in that village side by side with that hatred Pawi killer. So, they migrated from that village en-masse which is express in Lusei dialect as "*An vai-in an phei tawh*", which means 'they left in body or mass exodus'. Thence, wherever these people lived, they came to be known as 'Vaiphei people'. According to the genealogy of the Sailo clan, Liankhama Sailo lived during the period from 1850 to 1875.

Therefore, whichever theory may be the truth, as to the meaning and origin of the word 'Vaiphei', these two theories have been established. If the first theory i.e. the 'Khaw-Vaiphei theory is to be accepted, then it is most probable to assumed that the term 'Vaiphei' was used to referred to this current tribe, long before they had even entered India. As the probable date of the Phaiza village could not be established, right now there is no means to find out the population of the people who lived and acquired the name Vaiphei from village Phaiza. Again, if 'Liankhama Sailo Village Incident Theory' is to be accepted, then one can safely conclude that the term was first used not too long ago, but after settling in the present Mizoram. It may also be possible that the Suantak people who latter acquired the name Vaiphei could have live there in that village several years, ahead of the incident and could have been already using the Vaiphei dialect, which was derived from the Lushai language. The total Vaiphei population in 1850 A.D. could be around 600-700 persons.

The Vaiphei were also known by different names by different people. Along with Vaiphei, the Luseis in the South and the Hmars and Thados in the North were travelling close by. These tribal groups had cultural and social affinity with each other. In fact, at one point of time, this entire group was collectively known as the 'Kuki' tribe. The term 'Kuki' was given by Bengalese to differentiate the savage tribesmen from the civilized settlers. These tribal

groups were constantly at war with each other over their claim over possession of territories.

3.2. Origin

According to their tradition, the Vaiphei people came out of a 'Khul' (Cave) or 'Chhinlung'. However, they have no physical proof of their claim. The Vaiphei were a primitive tribe who did not possess any script until the early twentieth Century; and did not leave behind any written records of their past history. Therefore, the oral traditions in the form of legends, folktales, folklores, folksongs and verses chanted by the priests have to be relied upon. Apart from this, place names also have to be taken into consideration.

Even though the exact location of 'Khul' is still not known, every Vaiphei understands and accepts that Khul is his ancient home from where his ancestor originated. This Khul tradition has been substantiated by their '*hanla*' (song of the braves); which goes as:

"Ka thang e! Khul ah ka pian in Aw;

Ka chun leh zua'n thangnan chembang ei chawi e;

Namtin guallai lawi ang ka thang e!"

Which, translated, means

"I am famous! Since I was born from Khul;

My parents praise me in the village of many people;
Among many people I am famous!"

The above *hanla* bears testimony of the claim that the Vaiphei people originated from Khul. From this song, it can be understood that Khul is a place revered among the Vaiphei and they were proud to be originated from it.

There is a controversy regarding the exact location of Khul. The scholars and historians who have attempted to absolve the problem seem to have only confused the matter even more. However, the various theories formulated upon Khul or Chhinlung are nevertheless very interesting and have to be taken into consideration.

It is, therefore, necessary to highlight briefly the various theories developed on Khul. The first view, shared by some writers, believes that the location to be some where in China; probably the name given to the bowel of the earth or a cave from where the kindred tribes including the Vaiphei had come out.⁴ Their reasoning is that the word 'Khul' itself means a hallow or cavern, and the word 'Chhinlung' is a combination of two words in Lusei; 'Chhin' meaning cover, and 'lung' meaning stone; and thus it implies 'stone covering'. Although this view is based only on simple literal translation, yet it is

⁴ Ibid. P-13

a common belief shared by other kindred tribes like the Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Thado etc.⁵

Mc Cullock (1959:55) contended that all these cognate tribes were known as Kukis, and that they:

“.....bring their progenitors from the bowels of the earth, and they relate the manner of their reaching its surface thus: one day their king's brother was hunting hedgehogs; when his dog in pursuit of one, entered a cavern, and he waiting for its return remained at the mouth. After lapse of sometime, the dog not having returned, its master determined to go in and see what had become of it. He did not find the dog, but observing its tracks and following them, he found himself suddenly on the surface of the earth. The scene presented to his view both please and astonished him. Returning to his brother, he related about his adventure and counselled him to annex the new country to his territory, which the king did”.

By way of explanation of their amalgamation with the tribes who speaks different languages, if not dialects, they relate:

“.....the three grandsons of the chief: while, one day, all playing together in their house; were told by their father to catch a rat. They were busy about it when, being suddenly struck with a confusion of tongues; they were unable to achieve their object. The eldest son spoke Lamyang, the second the Thado, the third,

⁵ Lalrinawma, 'Settlement patterns of Mizos.....' P-14.

some say the Vaiphei and some the Manipore language. Thus, they broke into distinct tribes”.

Several writers and scholars have attempted to locate ‘Khul’ or ‘Chhinlung’ some where in China. Songate suggests the possibility of the present day Tailing or Silung of South-west China being misunderstood as Chhinlung/ Sinlung. V.L.Siama suggest that these cognate tribes had come from North-East China. There are also some scholars who maintained the view that Khul/Chhinlung is located in Tibet. (Ginzatuang 1973:5). Further, Khul, according to some other scholars and writers, is at the source of the river ‘Gun’ which seems to be identical with the Imphal river in Manipur. Etymologically, the word ‘Gun’ in Vaiphei means the Imphal River. Whatever the arguments and believes may be, all the scholars and writers and the Vaiphei people themselves agree that Khul is their original place which is located some where in Southern China.

3.3. Process of early migration:

One of the distinguishing characteristics of human being is his tendency to migrate and Vaiphei are no exception to this character. After the Vaiphei people came out of the Khul, they settled at ‘Khua-Sinlung’.⁶ As far as their

⁶ Vaiphei, S.P. “The Vaiphei Tribe” P-3.

old-men can trace; their origin, dispersal and the process of migration began the moment they left 'Khua-Sinlung'. Before they came to Chin Hills, they crossed a very big river called Chindwin by what they called '*Pum*'* at about 996 A.D. They settled and lived there for about two hundred years.

The migration of the Vaiphei people from one place to another and to their present settlements took place due to several reasons. They moved to new places for better and adequate land for cultivation. The other important causes of their migration can be the feeling of insecurity which they felt during their habitation. The frequent inter-tribal disputes and pressures from numerically more powerful tribes compelled them to migrate to safer places. So, it appears that the Vaiphei left Khua-Sinlung due to the notion that the general streams of Chinese immigrants as well as political and social pressures in their earlier habitation.

It is not known exactly what direction they took to, but there is a strong possibility that they could have followed the other cognate tribes who headed southwards. So, it appears that the Vaiphei followed a step migration, if not a nomadic way of wandering. They did not know where and what kind of new land they would eventually be led to, in the process of their earlier migration. According to Lalbiakthanga as well as Vumkhohau, the Zo people including the

* *Pum*: A platform or frame made of bamboo and used for sailing in the water as boat.

Vaiphei, migrated from Kale Valley to the Chin Hills around 1374 A.D. under the pressure of a cruel Shan king, which coupled with a severe famine. During those days, most sub-groups of the Zo were not in a position to stand on their own, which results in many groups living within the limits of more powerful groups. B.Lalthangliana (1977:28) writes:

“.....in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, ‘*Seipui*’⁴ became fairly prosperous. Relying on its defensive power, such groups as Vuite, Vaiphei and Ralte came to live within the limits of Seipui.⁷ That period coincide with the period of Teddim, in which Mualbem strove with such contending tribes as Vaiphei, Guite, Thado and Yo; most of whom fled Teddim to seek refuge outside Teddim.”

The people who lived in Teddim under Kamhau are said to have comprised of Saizang, Teizang, Thado and Vaiphei etc. A Vaiphei song that tells the oligarchic rule of Kamhau is preserved as this:⁸

“Sinthu sawiding Tual Awn Pa;
 Dokim tu lu Am Thang Pa aw.
 Dokim tu lu Am Thang Pa aw.
 Vannuai lutsial a tuna Za Tual Pa aw e!

This means;

⁴ Scipui: The cradle of Lusei-Hualngo speakers.

⁷ Lalthangliana, B. (1977) ‘History of Mizo in Burma’ P-28.

⁸ Singkhawkhai (1995) ‘Zo People and their Culture’ P-29

[The Statesman Tual Awn's father;
 Generalismo Am Thang's father.
 Generalismo Am Thang's father.
 The collector of any riches Za Tual's father!]

E.R. Leach advances a theory that the ancestors of these people did indeed come from the North, but they did not come as the social and cultural units we know today and cannot be identified with any particular groups of today.⁹

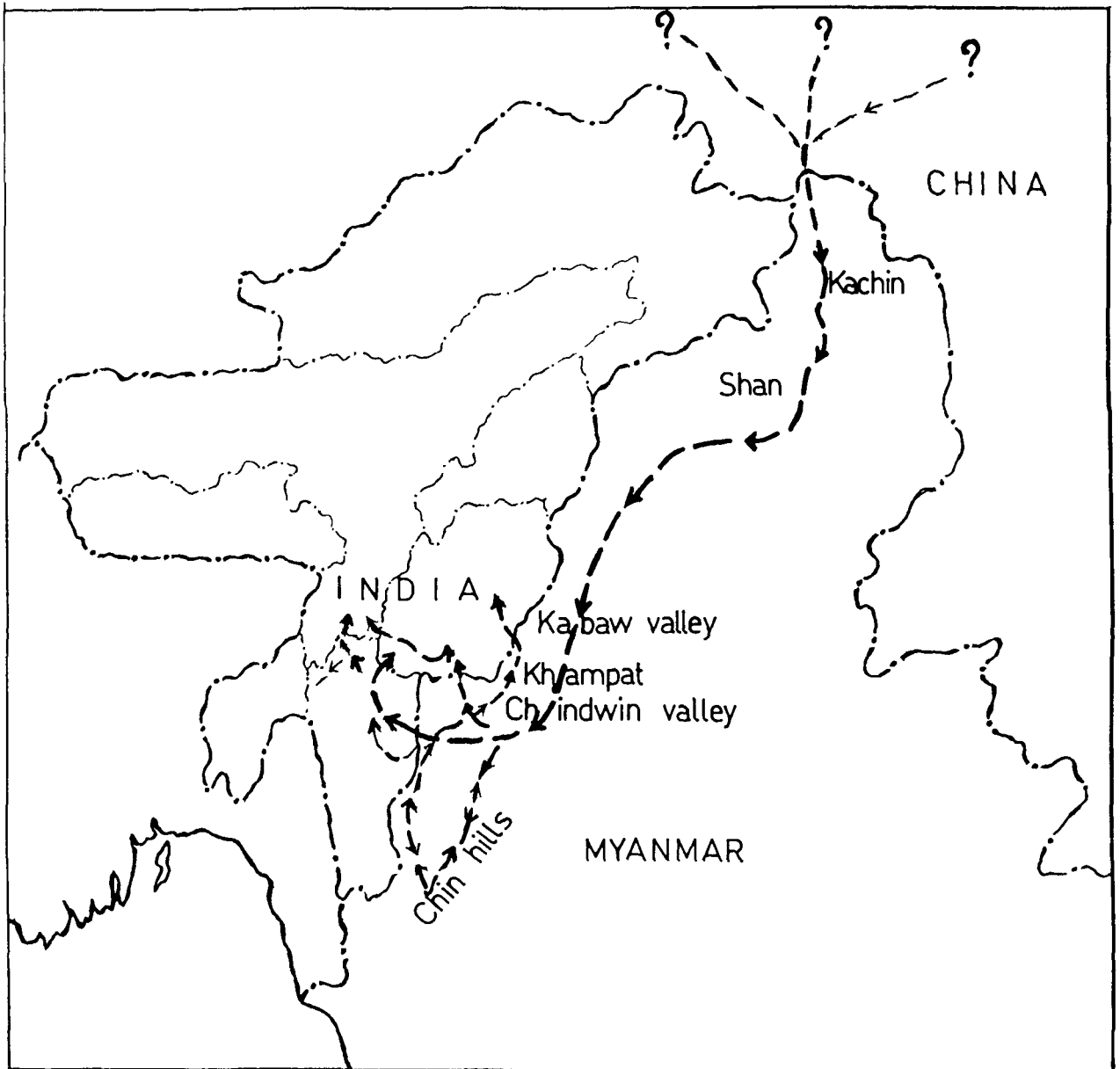
The migration of these people continued throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Their migration had made them developed migratory nature. But it should be noted that their migration was an aspect of their struggle for survival from the attacks of the more powerful and aggressive clans, their search for better cultural lands and their needs for shelter and peaceful settlements.¹⁰

It is believed that the Vaiphei, the Thado and the Yo(Zou) have lived together for many years; until the Vaiphei and the Thado quarrelled over the tails of a deer and a flying squirrel. It is said that the Thado killed a deer and as was tradition, distributed the meat of the deer to every one in the village. The Vaiphei then killed a flying squirrel. He did not share the meat with the other

⁹ Lehmann, F.K. (1978) "The Structure of Chin Society" in Journal of Burma Research Society, Aizawl. Vol.42. P-1.

¹⁰ Gangumei, K. (1995) 'Genesis of the ethnoses of Manipur' in "MANIPUR: PAST AND PRESENT". Vol.III. P-44.

PROBABLE ROUTE OF VAIPHEI MIGRATION



A notional map

Map no. 5

villagers as it was too small; but hung up the squirrel skin to dry in the sun. The tail of the squirrel was much longer and bigger than that of the deer. The Thado thought the squirrel must have been a very big animal. The Thado were, then, angry with the Vaiphei for not sharing the meat. A quarrel broke out and the Vaiphei have to move out and settled near a salt spring called 'Sizang'. Some section of the Vaiphei moved to Tuitawng, on the border of the plains and the hills. After sometime, they were in conflict with the Shans of Nansaungpu and those who lived in Tungzang were under the yoke of the Sukte. They migrated to the west, settling in the hilly regions of Mizoram and Manipur.¹¹

The two sons of Suantak, Ngengu and Daitawng, founded Khuasak village which is located a few miles from the present Khuasak village in Chin Hills. Ngengu's son Lamtam founded the village of Lophei. Vanglok's son Hangsawk founded Tavaak village; and Thuklai founded Vumzang village which is near the present Thuklai village in Chin Hills. The Vaiphei have been in this area for about seventeen generations. It can be safely assumed that when they reached the Chin Hills of Myanmar, they must have established villages according to clans. Under such circumstances, a feeling of territoriality and ethnic identity could have easily developed. This would naturally lead to unhealthy relations and rivalry among themselves. Apart from inter-tribal feuds,

¹¹ Vumson, "Zo History" P- 83.

inter-clan clashes were also there and the losers would have no other choice but to leave and try to settle somewhere else.

Carey and Tuck in their book “The Chin Hills” Volume I (1932:2) remarked:

“...We know from our experience that the drift of migration has changed and is now towards the North. The Gwite, Vaipe (Vaiphei) and Yo (Zou), who within the memory of men resided in the Northern Chin Hills, have almost entirely re-crossed the Northern border, either into the hills belonging to Manipur or to the South of Cachar; and their old village sites are now being occupied by Kamhau clan of Sukte, which is also steadily moving northwards”.

Map No.5 is a notional map prepared from the limited information available on it. It shows the probable routes the Vaiphei could have taken in the process of their migration from Khul to their present settlements.

Based on the above study on the origin and the process of early migration of the Vaiphei, the following conclusions have been made.

- (1) Two different views on the meaning and origin of the word ‘Vaiphei’ have been found out:

- (i) The first view is based on the ‘Khaw-Vaiphei Theory’. It is a widely accepted view. It is believed that the name ‘Vaiphei’ is derived from the name of the village ‘Khaw-Vaiphei’; ‘*Khaw*’ means village; ‘*Vai*’ means breadth and ‘*Phei*’ means plain: which means the village was at length and breadth and vast. The people who lived in that village for a pretty long enough time and moved out last of all came to be identified as the Vaiphei people.
- (ii) Another view is the ‘Liankhama Sailo Village Incident Theory’ (1850-1875). The Suantak people who lived together with other groups in the village had failed to take revenge on a hatred Pawi killer, due to the implications of their custom. They felt no more desirable to live in that village side by side with their enemy. They migrated from that village en masse; which is expressed in Lusei as “*an vaiin an phei tawh*” meaning they all left in body or exodus. There after, people started calling them ‘*Vaipheihoh*’ and thence, wherever these people lived, they came to be known as Vaiphei.
- (2) Every Vaiphei understands and accepts that ‘*Khul*’ is his ancient home from where their ancestor originated. Even though there exists different views on the name as well as its exact location still controversial, it

is believed and accepted that it is somewhere in southern China; and Khul is a place revered among them and were proud to be originated from it.

- (3) The sequential order of their migration from Khul is 'Khaw-Sinlung', Kale valley, Chindwin valley, Chin Hills and Mizoram-Manipur. This process of migration is due to the inter-tribal feuds, in search of a better land for cultivation, the need for shelter and peaceful settlement.

CHAPTER – IV

PATTERN OF DISTRIBUTION

PATTERN OF DISTRIBUTION

The dispersal of the Vaiphei people into different areas is believed to be from the village Sizang. From Khuasak in the Sizang area, they came along the course of the Gun river and found a suitable place for settlement near a hill stream called Ngatan Lui. This place had a spring called 'si'; and they settled on both sides of the spring 'si'. The group, which settled on one side of the spring, came to be known as Sizang (Sizang-Suantak) people, while the other group on the other side of the spring was known as the Vaiphei. The 'Sizang' has been corrupted into 'Siyin' by the Burmese and the 'Vaiphei' into 'Waiphei' or 'Vaipe' by some other people in the historical past. The Vaiphei people were also called as Tantes or Tanktes in the historical records of Manipur. However, it was from Sizang area that the Vaiphei tribe witnessed a major dividend.¹ The Sizang group remained there in Chin Hills of Myanmar and the Vaiphei group migrated into the present Mizoram, Manipur and further into the neighbouring areas at about 1830 A.D.² This can be proved by the fact that Zakhawthang Suantak and Pumkhawzam Neihzial were already in Chandrakirti Maharaja's army in 1857

¹ Neihzial, T. 'The Vaiphei Tribe' in "ZILLAI FOOTPRINTS-2000".

² Vaiphei, S. 'The historical background of the Vaiphei Tribe'.

during Manipur-Kamhau war. According to Tualchin Neihzial, some group of the Vaiphei moved into Manipur during the Chin Hills Expedition during 1889-1891.

4.1. The Vaiphei Clans:

Before analyzing the distribution of the Vaiphei into different areas in detail, it will be interesting to mention the various clans, which constituted the Vaiphei tribe. These clans in turn are further divided into sub-clans and families.

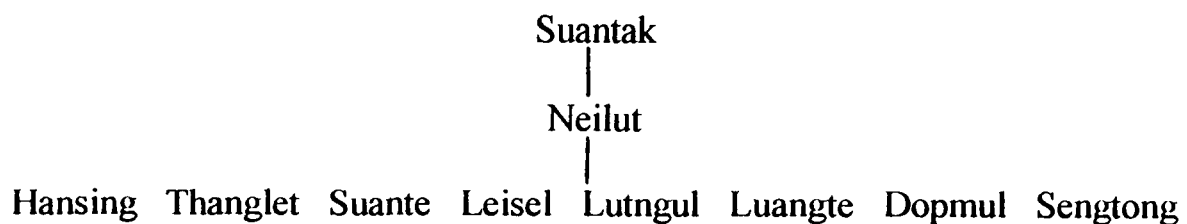
The main clans of the Vaiphei are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| (1) Suantak (Neilut) | (2) Baite | (3) Tawmsawi |
| (4) Vangsa (Khaute) | (5) Vanglua | (6) Buite |
| (7) Vang-em (Neihzial) | (8) Thangniang | (9) Sialiap |
| (10) Lupheng | (11) Ngoilu | (12) Misau |
| (13) Milhiam | (14) Ngulkai | (15) Thawlphut |
| (16) Guisum | (17) Musia | (18) Duhlian |
| (19) Hawinge | (20) Neitham | (21) Hatlei |
| (22) Hatzaw | (23) Hatlang | (24) Langel |
| (25) Pulamte (Lam Vaiphei) | (26) Suante | (27) Thawllut |
| (28) Luphaw | (29) Tusing | (30) Khala |
| (31) Hejang | | |

It may be noted here that Suantak, the main clan of the Vaiphei, is found assimilated/embedded in almost all the cognate tribes of Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups. Moreover, the Suantaks (Siyin) of the Chin Hills of Myanmar do not accepted the name Vaiphei; instead they believed and accepted that Suantak is the ancestor of most of the Zo tribes including the Luseis. According to Vumson in his book 'Zo History', the descendants of Suantak include the following:



The most powerful chiefs of Lusei were Sailo, who were descendants of Boklua, the son of Ngengu- the progenitor of the Sizang/Suantak.



It may be mentioned here that the members of the Vaiphei community consist of a small section of the descendants of the Suantak. Some faction of the descendants of the Suantak is the children of Zahmuaka, who are speaking Duhlian-Lusei Language; other faction such as Siyins or Sizangs in Chin Hills are now speaking Tedim-Chin dialect. The Tungnung, Tunlut, Tungdim(Lhungdim), Phiamphu etc. are speaking either Zou, Thado or Paite. While they are fully aware about their genealogical line of Suantak descends, these people are identified by three distinct aliases.³

- 1) A section of Ngengu descend (Zamuaka) such as Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Thangur(Sailo), Rivung, Rokhum came to be known as Lusei.
- 2) A section of Vanglok, i.e. Thuklai, Limkhai, Daitong etc. are known as Siyin (Sizang Suantak) in Chin Hills.
- 3) A section of Neilut and a section of Vanglok descends are identified as Vaiphei.

4.2. Settlement in Mizoram:

Before analyzing the settlement in Mizoram, it is necessary to find out when and where the Vaiphei dialect was acquired. Taking into account the fact that 80 percent of the vocabulary of the Vaiphei dialect is common to the Lusei word, except that the Vaiphei does not like to make effort to pronounce 'R', 'Tl',

‘Thl’ and the like combination by rolling his tongue or doing a little bit of self exertion. Apart from this, there is Duhlian clan within the Vaiphei fold, using Vaiphei dialect. It is, therefore, strongly believed that the Vaiphei dialect must have developed after the separation from their cousins of Sizang, among the Duhlian-Lusei speaking people. It is also believed that the Vaiphei dialect must have developed during their sojourn in areas East of the Var and Tiau Rivers or after crossing the Tiau river.

The Duhlian-Lusei language was popularised between 1750-1803 by Lallula Sailo. The Vaiphei must have lived close by Lusei speaking people, from where they started developing the Vaiphei dialect. It is also possible that they could have been speaking the Sizang dialect at the time of separation from their cousins of Sizang. Then, they walked into Lusei village, lived there for a pretty long time, during which they started speaking Duhlian-Lusei language but refused to take the extra trouble of overcoming difficult phonetic sounds and continued his easy Sizang pronunciation where Lusei becomes difficult.⁴

As for the name ‘Vaiphei’ it is possible that it was acquired from village ‘Phaiza’ alias ‘Khaw-Vaiphei’ and afterwards the language developed on coming in contact with the Lusei-Duhlian people. It is also possible that after they parted from their Sizang cousins, they walked into the Lusei village, developed a

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Vaiphei dialect; then the Thangvuka incident compelled them out of the village and thereafter acquired the Vaiphei name or nomenclature.⁵

The people of Sizang remembered and recorded the migration of the last remnants of their cousin Vaiphei people from Tuizang village. The Vaiphei who earlier lived in Tungzang (1867), Suangkong and Tuitwang (1976) came back to this village Tuizang which the British destroyed and constructed Stockade No.3 near Fort White in 1888-1889, as punishment for helping the Sizang in their war against the British in 1888-1889. Since then the Vaiphei people might have left Sizang for the present Mizoram and Manipur states. This is mentioned by Carey and Tuck in their book, 'The Chin Hills' Volume I (1932):

“.....Besides these villages (i.e. Khuasak, Thuklai, Sakhileng, Buanman) there was one called Tuijan(Tuizang) near the site of our No.3 Stockade, inhabited by the last remnants of the Vaiphei tribe. After their village was destroyed, the inhabitants no longer lingered, but migrated Northward and over our borders, where they joined their tribesmen, who had long before moved out of the Siyin and Sokte country.”

⁵ Ibid.

The Vaiphei people were one of those tribes who were the first to enter the present Mizoram. In course of their migration from the Chin Hills towards their present settlements, they lived in a number of villages such as Tedim, Saizang, Lailo, Tualzang, on the eastern bank of Manipur River; and villages such as Lousau, Khopual, Simzawl, Kaptel, Tuitaw, Laitui, Mualnuam, Phaiza, Khawzim (North of Rih lake). Their settlement sites in Mizoram are the north-eastern part of Aizawl and northern part of Champhai districts. Some of their settlement sites in Mizoram are Tungzang, Buanli, Ngente, Lungchuangtlang, Tuisalui, Zoupi, Selam, Kawlbem, Khuainuai, Hianguinek, Khawdungsei, Lunglentlang, Chiahpui, Vaikhawtlang/Sialkaltlang, Vaikhawmun etc. Most of them eventually migrated into Manipur and other parts of North-East because of continuous inter-tribal feuds and in search of a better agricultural land.

4.3. Dispersal into neighbouring states:

As the migration or movement of the Vaiphei was not in exodus, but in small groups at different timings and different speeds along various different routes, the accounts of all groups are not available except that of a large groups who came into significant notice of the British officers who recorded it. Those were the days when inter-tribal wars or a war against each other was the order of the days due to want of jhumming land and dispute over territorial possessions. In addition to this, the offences made by the Chin in turn made the Thangur clans

to move westwards driving the earlier occupants; the Vaiphei and other similar tribes, out of their habitations.⁶ Not all of them moved away, however, some stayed behind and did not mind being absorbed by the Lusei clans or in other words Lusei chiefs. Those who did leave move into Manipur and from there to other North-eastern states of India. Thus, in course of time, some of them who stayed back in Mizoram were eventually assimilated socially and politically by the Lusei clans, and subsequently lost their own dialect as well as their distinctiveness. This process of assimilation is still going on even today. This may be the reason why some Vaiphei people living in Mizoram would call themselves Mizo but not those living outside Mizoram as they would rather be called Vaiphei. Thus, despite many Vaiphei living in Mizoram, the Census of India, 1991. Language Table C-7 showed only one person speaking Vaiphei dialect.⁷

4.4. Distributional pattern of the Vaiphei:

The historical outline of the Vaiphei people gives the picture that they were very widely scattered in the North-East region. This picture is more or less the same till now. The Vaiphei are very unevenly distributed in the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and even in Meghalaya.

⁶ Shakespear, J. "Lushai-Kuki Clans". P-3.

⁷ Census of India. Language Table, C-7. 1991.

As the Census of India is not cent percent reliable in case of the Vaiphei people, or is quite different from the ground truth, another method is being applied. In the present study, an attempt is being made to collect all the Vaiphei villages of the North-East India, in order to get more accurate picture of the Vaiphei population and their distribution in the region.

Before analysing the Census of India for their distributional pattern, it will be appropriate to study the villages where the Vaiphei people resided in the region. In Manipur, the Vaiphei are found scattering in as many as 175 odd rural villages, excluding those who settled in towns and the state capital, Imphal. These villages, in a region wise, are listed below:

(I) South-Western part of Churachandpur District:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1) Maite | 2) Bualtang | 3) Phaipheng | 4) Mualkui |
| 5) Umtal | 6) Thiakbung | 7) Sinzang | 8) Thingkeu |
| 9) Chawngkhozo | 10) Tawnglawn | 11) Lungchuang | 12) Mualdak |
| 13)Kawlhen | 14) Khiangbung | 15) Phailianbung | 16) K.Tuili |
| 17) Phunchongzang | 18) Sainolian | 19) Tuilileibul | 20)K.Munpi |
| 21)Kaimunnuam | 22) D.Munhoi | 23)Suangpha | 24) N.Saikot |
| 15) D.Munlui | 26) Dawzang | 27)Puaktam | 28) B.Munpi |
| 29) Vawkbual | 30) Bualmual | 31) Dumdephai | 32) Sialsi |
| 33) Chiangpi | 34) S.Khawlian | 35)Lenglakot | 36)S.Bualkot |

- 37) Vantungbung 38)Naupanglon 39) Phaikholum 40) Phainuam
 41) Phaiba 42)Tuipiphai 43)Tuikumualum 44)Leizangphai
 45) Tallian 46) Khantang 47) Thencham 48) Saihum
 49) Geltamzang 50)D.Lopum 51)Mualhoichiang 52)Sanglel
 53)Luangpi 54)Lengluang 55)Mualdak

(II) South-East Churachandpur District:

- 56)Mualkawt 57)Tuikham 58)Sumtuk 59)Saipum
 60)Lingsiphai 61)Tualnuam 62)S.Bualkot 63)Mata
 64)New Mata 65)Tangmual 66)Bisanmual 67)Buallian
 68)T.Kawtlian 69)Belpuan 70)S.Geltui 71)Panglian
 72)B.Tuallian 73)Belbing 74)Changlian 75)Salem
 76)Tuiningkhal 77)Pangmual 78)Hawnglian 79)Dumlian
 80)Gangpimual 81)Phaimual 82)L.Khonomphai 83)Hengken
 84)T.Lailoiphai 85)Lungngil 86)T.Lamlai 87)Dongjang
 88)Mualnuam 89)Phaikon 90)Keipham 91)Moljawl
 92)Gangpijang 93)Utengpokpi 94)Makhau 95)Sokom
 96)Boljang 97)Litansareikhong 98)L.Chingphei 99)Maipi
 100)Mongneljang 101)Goellabi 102)Chalnontengnoupal
 103)Ukontingkangphai 104)Khongnangpheisabi 105)B.Phaicham
 106)Sugnu Tribal Colony

(III) North Churachandpur District:

- 107)K.Kawtlian 108)Kangvai 109)Tualbung 110)Pengjang
 111)Zikpitampak 112)S.Kawtlian 113)Lawklaiphai 114)Liklai
 115)Zews Colony 116)Bualjang 117)Thingchawm 118)Leisang
 119)Tharoiluak 120)Phuaisanphai 121)Ningthiching 122)Laika
 123)Mualngat 124)Leisanbung 125)Khawnuam 126)Leikot
 127)Tualnuam 128)K.Mualjawl 129)Tuaitengphai 130)Bijang

(IV) Northern Districts of Manipur (Sadar Hills Area):

- 131) Phailengjang 132) Vaiphei Pakai 133) Sialhau Vaiphei
 134) Haukhuangphai 135) Haukhuangching 136) Salemphai
 137) B.Phainuam 138) Nongpok Centre 139) Phainuam
 140) Phovaibi 141) Leilawn Vaiphei 142) S.Kanan
 143) NongpokPhaijang 144) Phaizawl 145) Sarampatawng
 146) Thangza 147) Elimphai 148) New Khawlal
 149) Kamuching 150) Kamuchingjang 151) Saronphai
 152) Kamutampak 153) LairokVaiphei 154) Kamulairok
 155) Kamutangnuam 156) S.Mualzawlphai 157) Heiroklian
 158) Pheitaiching 159) Zerukanan 160) Langmaiching
 161) Gawtangkawt 162) Mualkawnbung 163) Beulahland
 164) Happy Valley 165) Salamching 166) Suangtun

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 167) Mishihoubi | 168) Leilawphaijang | 169) Harauthial |
| 170) Nakhujang | 171) Kharam Vaiphei | 172) Suangpekjang |
| 173) S.Changoubung | 174) N.Changoubung | 175) S.Mualnuam |

(V) Half-long and Cachar areas of Assam:

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Nachangzawl | 2) Kai-engphai | 3) Lalzar |
| 4) Disamatang | 5) Khiangcham | 6) Taizawl |
| 7) Bawmbaithawl | 8) Diglang | 9) Chandikhar |
| 10) Zawrkha | 11) Ningpu | 12) Dittocherra |
| 13) Alambak | 14) Luitui | |

In Mizoram, since they can not maintained their distinct identity and their own dialect, most of their settlement sites become a history. They were found scattering, if not embedded, in many villages or clans. Because of this kind of assimilation to the Lusei tribe, the Vaiphei speaking population in Mizoram in 1991 Census comes out to be only one person.

According to Census of India-1991, the total Vaiphei speaking population in North-East region was 26,185 persons. The state-wise break up of this population figure is: 25,136 persons in Manipur, 519 persons in Assam, 505 persons in Meghalaya, and the rest are in Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In 2001 Census, the Vaiphei population in Manipur State increases to 27,791

persons. If the states as a unit are taken to analyse the distribution of the Vaiphei population, it is observed that the Vaiphei population is very insignificant, as their population is very low in percentages to the total population of each state in the North-East region. Even if the percentages of Vaiphei to the total Scheduled tribe population of each state are taken, the figures are still low.

The proportion of Scheduled Tribes to the total population of each state in the North-East is exceptionally high. The Following table shows the proportion of S.T.s in each state.

Table No.1. The Proportion of S.T.s to the Total Population in the North-Eastern States of India.

State	Total Population	S.T. Population	% of S.T.s
Assam	22,414,322	2,874,441	12.83
Arunachal Pradesh	864,558	550,351	63.66
Manipur	1,837,149	632,173	34.41
Meghalaya	1,774,778	1,517,927	85.53
Mizoram	689,756	653,565	94.75
Nagaland	1,209,546	1,060,822	87.70
Tripura	2,757,205	853,345	30.90
Total	31,547,314	8,142,624	25.97

Source: Census of India-1991. Series-I Paper-1 of 1992. Vol. 1.

The percentage of Scheduled Tribe population to the total population of each state in the North-East region, as shown in the above table, is exceptionally high, except in the states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur. As the main study area is in the state of Manipur, it will be appropriate to highlight the percentage of S.T.s to the total population of state. The total Scheduled Tribe population, according to 1991 Census in Manipur is 632,173 persons, which represents 34.41 percent of the total population of the state. The percentage of S.T.s population to the total population in some selected sub-divisions of tribal dominated areas in the state is worked out.

When the percentages of the Vaiphei to the total tribal population of each district are taken, they become a bit more significant. As mentioned earlier, the Vaiphei are the tribe, widely scattered in a small or insignificant numbers and are found ubiquitous in almost everywhere, not only in Manipur state but also in the different states of North-Eastern region of India.

Table No.2. Percentage of S.T.s Population to the total population in some sub-divisions of Manipur

State/Sub-division	Total Population	S.T.s Population	% of S.T.s
Manipur	1,837,149	632,173	34.41
Paomata	41,661	41,516	99.65
Churachandpur(N)	20,455	20,385	99.66
Churachandpur(W)	93,882	83,664	89.12
Churachandpur(S)	18,643	18,457	99.00
Tipaimukh	23,995	23,038	96.00
Thanlon	19,209	19,165	99.77
Nungba	25,303	24,558	97.06
Sadar Hills(E)	40,069	37,786	94.30
Sadar Hills (W)	77,000	50,088	65.05

Source: Census of India, 1991. Manipur. Series 15. Part-XI. P-98.

When the percentages of the Vaiphei to the total tribal population of each district are taken, they become a bit more significant. As mentioned earlier, the Vaiphei are the tribe, widely scattered in a small or insignificant numbers and are found ubiquitous in almost everywhere in the North-Eastern region of India.

Table No. 3. Percentage of Vaiphei to total S.T.s Population in Manipur

Year	Vaiphei Population	Percentage to total S.T.s Population
1961	8,215	3.30%
1971	12,347	3.70%
1981	15,462	4.00%
1991	25,136	4.18%
2001	27,791	8.59%

Manipur had a total scheduled tribe population of 2,388,634 in 2001 Census, out of which the total Vaiphei population was 27,791 persons. The Vaiphei accounts for about 8.59 percent of the total Scheduled tribe population of the state. Incidentally, the largest share of Vaiphei population of the North-East India is found in Manipur state.

The distributional pattern of the Vaiphei population in the districts of Manipur is also very uneven. They are found in all the districts of the state. However, their main concentration is in Churachandpur district, where more than 56 percent of them live. A large chunk of Vaiphei people inhabits Manipur North district, i.e. Sadar Hills area of Senapati district. The Vaiphei people who live in the North district accounts for about 27.70 percent of their total population of the state.

The populations of the Vaiphei people in other states have been insignificant and it is not possible to give their exact numerical strength. The reason is that in the Census of India handbooks, they were included in the category of any Kuki tribes or any Mizo tribes, where the exact number of their population can not be identified. This is due to the fact that everywhere the Vaiphei lives, there are other social groups who are numerically stronger than they are; and they were partially or totally assimilated into those stronger groups.

It is mentioned in the book “Maite Days” by K.Vaiphei that the Vaiphei for the first time migrated to Assam in 1925 due to severe famine in their settlements in Manipur during that time. It is also mentioned that they first settled in Selphai village in N.C.Hills under the leadership of Pu,Thanggin Hansing. Since they were not contending with their settlement site in Selphai village, they took permission from the then Governor of Assam to established their own village. They established their own village in Taizawl area in 1929. During this time, the Vaiphei were said to be about 32 households with an approximate population between 300-350 persons. Malthusian Theory says that a population doubles every twenty-five years under normal situations, devoid of wars or natural calamities. On the basis of this theory, it may be safely assumed that the total Vaiphei population at present will be around 3,000 persons. The following table shows the increase of the Vaiphei population in Cachar and Halflong area of Assam, according to Malthusian Theory.

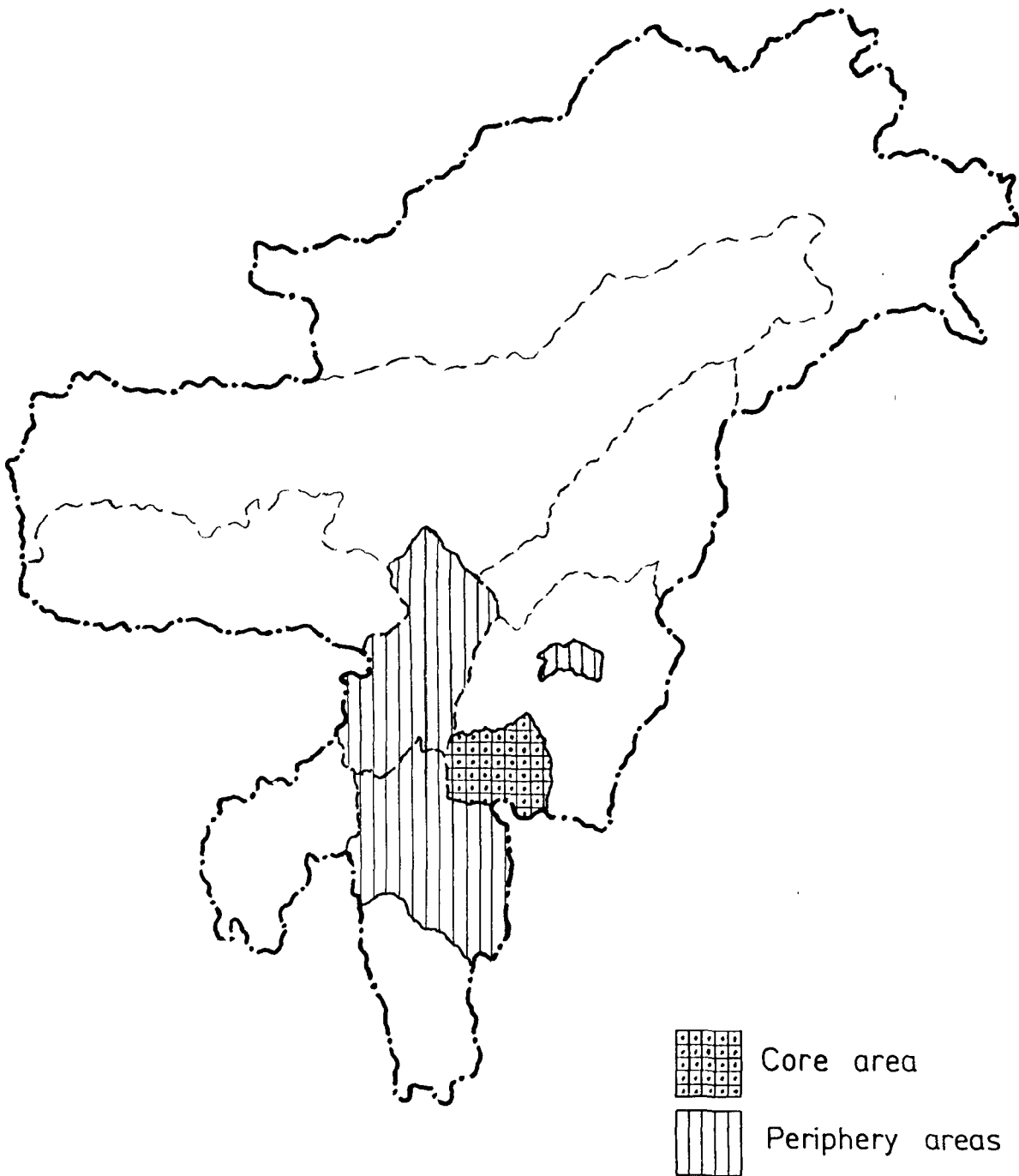
Year	Population
1925	300
1950	600
1975	1,200
2000	2400

4.5. Core and Peripheries of the Vaiphei distribution:

To understand the pattern of spatial distribution of the Vaiphei tribe, a more effective means can be used by identifying the core and periphery of their distribution in the region. This identification of core and periphery areas is based on the assumption that if the Vaiphei people has a high proportion of its total population concentrated in a certain area, that area would be the core area of the tribe. The percentage of the Vaiphei people concentrated in the Churachandpur district of Manipur is approximately 56 percent to their total population in the region. The other notable concentration of the Vaiphei people are found in the Sadar Hills area of Senapati district in North Manipur, Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam and North-East part of Mizoram; where their percentage to the total Vaiphei population of North-East are roughly 18, 12 and 9 percent respectively. In this study, Churachandpur district has been identified as the core of the Vaiphei distribution, as it had a substantially high proportion of the total Vaiphei population in the region. The peripheral areas of the Vaiphei distribution

NORTH-EAST INDIA

CORE AND PERIPHERIES OF THE VAIPHEI



are Sadar Hills areas of the Manipur North, North-East Mizoram and Cachar area of Assam. These core and peripheral areas of their distribution in the region are presented in Map No.6. It should be noted that the core and peripheral areas of the Vaiphei distribution were identified purely on the percentage of concentration of the Vaiphei population or people. It does not, therefore, necessarily mean that these areas belong to them or they are dominant. Since the district level data were the smallest unit of administration available, their core and peripheries appears as districts.

The non-availability of tribe-wise data for the smaller levels becomes one of the problems faced in this study. Due to this reason, the spatial distribution pattern of the Vaiphei people can not be accurately shown in this study. They are found in all the districts of Manipur State. Even in their core area, i.e. Churachandpur district, the Vaiphei people are found scattering in all the subdivisions of the district. They are found living in about 130 villages, most of which have a population less than 500 persons. The following table shows the number of Vaiphei villages in the core area classified by their population.

* Table-4: Number of Vaiphei Villages classified by population in Churachandpur district.

Size of population	No. of Villages	% to total population
Less than 50	8	1.30
51-100	21	9.11
101-200	68	27.26
201-500	28	48.09
501-1,000	5	7.53
Above 1,000	2	6.71
Total-	130	100.00

Even though the Vaiphei people live in as many as 130 villages in Churachandpur district alone, most of these villages are very small in terms of their population. Only two villages of the Vaiphei settlement have a population more than 1,000 persons and five villages with a population between 501-1,000 persons. About 48.09 percent of their total population live in villages that have a population less than 500 persons.

* This table is prepared by the author from the informations collected from various sources, for better understanding of the Vaiphei distribution and concentration in the core area.

Furthermore, about 27.26 percent of the Vaiphei population settled in villages whose populations are below 200 persons. This also clearly indicates the lack in the tendency of the Vaiphei to concentrate in large groups.

Based on the analysis on the present pattern of the distribution of the Vaiphei in the North-Eastern region of India, the following conclusions are made:-

- (1) The Vaiphei tribe is divided into many clans and sub-clans and families. Some clans have their own dialects. There are as many as 31 clans and more than 100 sub-clans and families in the Vaiphei tribe. The Vaiphei people, especially the Suantak clan (main clan of the Vaiphei), is found embedded or assimilated in almost all the cognate tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups.
- (2) The Vaiphei were one of those tribes who were the first to enter Mizoram. In course of their migration, they settled in a number of villages; some of which still bears the original names, which, the Vaiphei people have given. Some of those who stayed back were ultimately absorbed or assimilated to the Mizo society, losing their own dialect and distinctiveness. Want of jhumming land and other

territorial possessions cause the tribal to be always at war against each other leading the weaker tribes to migrate to neighbouring areas to Manipur, Cachar and other places.

(3) North-East India is predominantly a tribal region, except for the states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur which had 12.83, 30.90 and 34.41 percents of scheduled tribe population to each state's total population respectively.

(4) The Vaiphei people were found scattered in three states, viz. Manipur, Mizoram and Assam. The total Vaiphei population, according to 2001 Census was 27,791 persons. Even in the above three states, the Vaiphei have a tendency to live in few pockets in district levels. In Manipur, they are mostly found in the Southern and Northern districts. In Mizoram they are found in North-Eastern part of Aizawl. Whereas in Assam, Cachar and N.C.Hills districts are the main areas where the Vaiphei are found.

(5) In the present study, Manipur South district i.e. Churachandpur district has been identified as the core of the Vaiphei concentration. About 56 percent of the total Vaiphei population of the North-East is

found in this district, although they constitute about only 18 percent of the total population of the district.

- (6) Manipur North i.e. Sadar Hills area of Senapati district, Aizawl district and N.C.Hills district of Assam are identified as the peripheral areas of the Vaiphei distribution as these together constitute 32 percent of the Vaiphei population in the North-East region of India.
- (7) In their core area, more than 130 villages that are Vaiphei dominated or wholly their villages can be identified. Whereas in their peripheral areas, Sadar Hills of Senapati district of Manipur have 45 Vaiphei villages, Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam had a total of 14 Vaiphei villages.
- (8) Although the Vaiphei people are living in as many as 175 villages in Manipur State alone, these villages have rather small populations. About 47.09 percent of the villages where they live have a population less than 500 persons.

CHAPTER – V

PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENTS

PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENTS

In view of the fact that the Vaiphei people are small tribe distributed over a large area along side many other similar tribes, they are bound to have problems of adjustments or interaction with other social groups. In keeping with the objectives and research questions of this study, it has been attempted to indicate some of the problems of adjustments they are facing; arising out of their distributional pattern over different areas. This attempt is based on information gathered from experiences, observations, church sources and interviewing some of the people of the core and peripheral areas of the study areas.

It has been discussed in the previous chapter that the Vaiphei are concentrated mainly in four districts of North-East; with South district of Manipur being the core, Sadar Hills area, N.C.Hills and Mizoram as the peripheral areas of their distribution. These four areas possess diverging natural environment and also have different socio-economic set up. Therefore, the nature and degree of their problems of adjustments are also not the same between the core and peripheral areas.

5.1. Core area: Churachandpur District:

Churachandpur district of Manipur is the core area of the Vaiphei distribution in North-East India. The district is in the South-Western part of Manipur lying between 24°0'N and 24°3'N latitudes and 93°15'E and 94°0'E longitudes. It covers an area of 4,570 square kilometres. The hills are aligned in a North-South direction. In general, the elevation is more in the eastern side, with an average height of 1,200 metres and low in the western part with an average height between 300 metres and 600 metres.¹ The relief features of the district are characteristically hills and river basins.

The district is well drained as many rivers flows through it. Rainfall is almost equally distributed through out the district and is abundant. The average annual rainfall is 1497.25 square millimetres.² June and July are the wettest months and January is the driest and coldest month of the year. The mean maximum temperature of the town is 29.3°C.³ The summer is hot and humid while the winter is drier and longer than in the plains. However, temperature varies from place to place.

Churachandpur district is characterised by the presence of many similar cognate tribes of people accounting for about 87 percent of the district's total

¹ Varte, I.K. (1987) 'A Historical and Political Geography of the Mizos' P-50-53.

² District Census Handbook, Churachandpur. 1991.

³ Ibid.

population of 1,76,184 persons, according to 1991 Census.⁴ The important tribes include the Thado, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Simte, Gangte and Zou. This social structure shows the various tribes are more or less proportionate. Therefore, in the district per se, any tribe is not in a position to have absolute majority. The density of population in the district, according to 1991 Census, is 38.5 persons per square kilometres.⁵

5.1.1. Problems of Adjustment in Core areas:

The main problems of adjustment in the core area of the Vaiphei people can be identified under the following headings. Some of these problems are peculiar to the Vaiphei, while others are common to the people of the district as a whole. In fact, some of the problems are primarily locational in character. These facts are also more or less common in peripheral areas.

5.1.1(a) Problems of Social Adjustment:

As mentioned earlier, the social structure of Churachandpur district is composed of many tribes. These tribes again are more or less equal in proportion to the total population of the district, without any particular tribe domination. When two or more social groups with different cultures exists together side by side, two sets of forces are in operation. One of this is the awareness of

⁴ Special Tables for S.T.s Census of India, Manipur.1991.

⁵ District Census Handbook, Churachandpur.1991.

dissimilarity, which results in 'us' and 'them' attitudes. Each tribe tried hard to maintain their distinct culture so as to protect it from assimilation. Therefore, demarcations or gaps are there among these tribes, though not physically. The resultant social action is either avoidance or conflict.⁶ The other set of forces emerge from common needs and problems arising out of dividends and lack of co-operation. It is a widely known fact that the society or tribe who has the upper hands are those who were in power politically and economically. Some form of accommodations is worked out through a compromise between the above two forces. So, mutual helps and co-operations play an important role in maintaining the status quo of the different tribes.

5.1.1(b) Competition:

As no single tribe or sub-group is dominant racially, linguistically or numerically, no one group is able to exercise power over the other groups. This results in competition or confrontation between the different sub-groups in every field. This competition or confrontation in one way has prevented a lot of violent conflicts through culturally established restrained and locational character of the tribes. Hostility between groups is also reduced by the necessity to co-operate for mutual welfare and development. On the other hand, this also leads to many

⁶ Bell, E.H. (1961) "Social Foundation of Human Behaviour" P-364.

DISTRIBUTION OF VAIPHEI VILLAGES IN THE CORE AREA (CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT, MANIPUR)



Map no.7

unnecessary activities and tensions between the different groups. There is, no doubt, an assertion of identity by the respective sub-groups as they are competing for space. This differentiation coupled with loyalty towards one's tribe brings about more competition among the various sub-groups. The Vaiphei people are no exception to this and have to face a lot of competition for every aspect of economic and political relations with other sub-groups. Thus, even an insignificant issue has a potential to create deaf rift or up to the extent of conflict among the sub-groups.

The Vaiphei people are a late starter in the field of education which results in a very poor representation in the governmental services and participation in the decision making body of the states as compared to other sub-groups. The differences of participation in services created more gaps between the tribes. Some groups are more influential than the other in the tribal relations of the district. The Vaiphei are one of the most affected tribes in this regard. This is due to the prominent locational disadvantage coupled with the effects and problems of alcoholism among the Vaiphei people.

5.1.1(c) Status of Vaiphei Dialect:

Each tribe wants to preserve and maintain their own distinct dialects and cultures in the district. The Vaiphei are no exception to this. They tried hard to preserve it from being totally lost, though many of them are using different

prominent dialects other than Vaiphei. This created the fear among the Vaiphei of losing not only their dialect but also their identity to the more numerous social groups. This also led to the break up of churches on the ground of dialects.

In the church, Vaiphei people used their own translated Bible and they have their own hymns composed by themselves or translated from English/Mizo/Kuki etc. They have no problem being Vaiphei in Churachandpur district of Manipur or their core area. Thus, the status of Vaiphei dialect in different churches of the Vaiphei is absolute, in the sense that Vaiphei is used in all these church services and activities. Apart from this, those schools run by churches include Vaiphei literature or subjects in their syllabus upto Class-VI. This greatly helps in providing basic educational facilities to the majority of the rural Vaiphei.

In the market places or public, all the dialects in the district enjoy more or less the same status. The people there understand one another's languages or dialects. The problem of using a common language does not arise. So, the Vaiphei dialect can be used by Vaiphei in the market or public places. This means that a Vaiphei will speak in his own dialect and the other non-Vaiphei will understand him and vice versa. This is the important peculiar characteristic of Churachandpur district of Manipur. Though most Vaiphei spoke Vaiphei in their households, many Vaiphei still speak other dialects and even lost their own identities to it.

5.1.1(d) Problems of Economic Adjustment:

Predominantly rural in character, the agriculture scenario of the district is dominated by jhum or shifting cultivation. Farming techniques is either out-modelled or too traditional, not only to have any decisive impact on production, but also to meet the minimum requirements of food-grains. Only along the banks of Khuga river is permanent cultivation of rice practised. Here also the farmers have to rely on the vagaries of the monsoon rains due to the absence of proper irrigation. Very few Vaiphei have surplus productions, which were marketed. Most of them do not even produce enough food-grains for their own consumption and are very poor. The main workers account for 44.2 percent of the entire population of the Vaiphei and the non-workers represent 55.2 percent. The cultivators account for 84.5 percent of the main workers. There is, therefore, concentration of main workers in agriculture, which only reflects the economic backwardness of this tribe as they cultivate the land and grows crops for consumption and hardly they have any surplus for the market. On their jhums, they grow whatever they needed for consumption, though their production is usually very low. Apart from food-grains, they also produced pineapple, orange, ginger, chillies etc. which were marketed in Churachandpur town. Due to a number of factors like unfavourable locations from market, inadequate transportation, negligence from the government etc., all the developmental

processes of the district, especially in the Vaiphei villages, were arrested. The resultant outcome is frequent famine, apart from a routine famine 'mautam' (bamboo flowering) at the interval of 50 years (due in 2007).

Transport and communication is inadequate and not properly developed in the district. Most of the road networks are fair weather roads and during raining seasons, the villages are cut off from the town due to landslides or the bad condition of the roads. Further, there are not enough buses to carry people to different areas of the district to and fro. When a bus does ply, it is usually overcrowded with passengers piling up even on the top of the bus. It has been often referred to as one of the important factors that retarded the economic development of the district as a whole.

5.1.1(e) Problems of Political Adjustments:

There was no political consciousness among the Vaiphei people earlier; no sense of unity and no sense of their separate identity from their neighbouring sister tribes. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes as a whole regarded themselves as one. Due to a steady (but slow) development/ increase in the field of education, people become more and more conscious about their separate identity from

others. This resulted in separation or disunity within the cognate tribes in the district.⁷

In Churachandpur district, the Vaiphei areas are divided into various constituencies, thereby reducing them to a minority in each constituency. This has subdued the political voice of the Vaiphei people not only in the state but also in the district. The electoral opportunities to project themselves in the government were diluted.* The other tribes living in the district are politically more united as compared to the Vaiphei. This frequently leads to an impasse when specific interests in developmental programmes are projected. This suggests that the state have to formulate a comprehensive for overall development that includes all the population sub-groups of the state if not the district.

5.2. Problems of Adjustments in the Periphery areas:

1) Aizawl and Champhai Districts of Mizoram:

One of the important periphery areas of the Vaiphei distribution in the North-Eastern part of India is Aizawl and Champhai districts of Mizoram. The Vaiphei tribe were found in the north-eastern part of Aizawl district as well as

⁷ Vaiphei, S.P. 'The Vaiphei Tribe' P-58.

* The Vaiphei were one of the first tribes to have their own MIA in Manipur state (Dr.Damzakhai in 1948) as well as Minister of State (Pu, Pauncikhai in 1967). After this, no Vaiphei have come up in the list of MI.As; untill the recently concluded election(2001), where two Vaiphei candidates were elected in Henglep and Singat Constituencies.

the northern part of Champhai district.⁸ The natures of the physical, social and economic structures are quite different from that of Churachandpur district of Manipur. As such the problems of adjustments faced by the Vaiphei were not the same as those of their core area.

It is a well-known fact that many Vaiphei lives in Mizoram.[□] Some of their settlement sites in Mizoram are Tungzang, Buanli, Ngente, Tuisalui, Lungchuangtlang, Zoupi, Selam, Kawlbem, Khuainuai, Hiangtuinek, Khawdungsei, Lunglentlang, Chiahpui, Vaikhawtlang or Sialkaltlang, Vaikhawmun etc. These are the place where the Vaiphei people made their home for a considerable number of years. Carey and Tuck in their book “The Chin Hills” Vol.I writes;

“...on the summit of Lunglen peak(North-EastMizoram) is found the remains of an ancient Vaipe (Vaiphei) village, which was defended in a most extra-ordinary manner by boulders and sungars”.

This explains that the Vaiphei were no more to be found in their ancient settlements in Mizoram and most of their settlement sites become a

⁸ Sipra Sen, “Tribes of Mizoram” P-

[] It may be mentioned here that Pu Rokunga (1914-1969)-the greatest poet in Mizoram, who composed about 200 songs and Pu Hrangbana-in whose name Hrangbana College was set up and also runs a Maruti Agency in Aizawl, to mention a few, are outstanding members of the Vaiphei community living in Aizawl.

history. Due to the dominant Lusei tribe that exerted strong absorbing influences, the Vaiphei in Mizoram were facing an identity crisis. It is estimated that the population of the Vaiphei who were still in Mizoram is about 2,500 persons. However, in the Census of India records, they were no where to be found. This is due to the fact that they have been living with the more dominant tribe for many generations; and in course of time, they inter-married and have become so bio-culturally mixed that their distinctiveness is disappearing. The Vaiphei, then, are completely assimilated to the Lusei community in their every way of life and they do not have any separate status.

5.2 (2) Cachar and North Cachar Hills Districts, Assam:

Though Cachar District and North Cachar Hills District of Assam are separate districts, it is taken as one area in this study. The nature of the relief and climate, the social composition and economic characteristics of Cachar and N.C. hills District of Assam is different from the other areas that have been mentioned so far. As a result, the nature of problems of adjustments of the Vaiphei living in this area is quite different. Before discussing the problems of adjustments, it will be appropriate to mention how and when the Vaiphei enter this area.

The Vaiphei people have been one of the recent tribes who entered Cachar area. Due to the great famine in their former settlement in Manipur, some elders decided to leave that place for a better one. In the year 1925, 32 households or

families of Maite village migrated to Half-long, under the leadership of Pu, Thanggin Hansing. With the permission from the then Assam governor they established some new villages in Half-long area.⁹ In due course they dispersed into other neighbouring villages and established many new villages of their own. Today, the Vaiphei are found living in, as many as, 14 villages of their own in this region.

There is no doubt that the Vaiphei are living among other tribes who are not akin to them in language or traditions. In this kind of social structure, problems or difficulties are the order of the day, for the new and minority groups like Vaiphei. The status of their dialect is different from that of other Vaiphei areas and is altered by the differences in the social structure of the area. The Vaiphei used their own dialect in their dominated areas, especially in their own established villages. In the church where different communities attend, the more dominant dialect like Mizo, Kuki or Hmar dialects are used as common language. In Cachar and North-Cachar areas, many Vaiphei are found using other dialect other than Vaiphei, not only in the church services but also in their own households. Further more the Vaiphei have faced little problems in preservation of their culture. Though the dominant Dimasa tribe in N.C. Hills and Bengalis in Cachar districts did not cause problems in this regard, there are some tribes like Kuki and Hmar, whose cultures and dialects were close to the Vaiphei's;

resulting in the erosion of the new arrival Vaiphei's culture and dialect. However, majority of the Vaiphei people still maintained their own dialect. In fact their dialect is gaining popularity among themselves through church activities and conferences.¹⁰

The N.C.Hills district has a poorly developed economy. Many areas of the district cannot have a permanent agriculture owing to its topographic characteristics and the people of N.C.Hills resort to the cultivation of upland rice and jhumming. But it has the highest work participation rate in the whole of Assam with about 41 percent. The majority of the people in the district are predominantly engage in unproductive agricultural practices in the form of shifting cultivation. Though this practice is not profitable, it is the sole system of agriculture they know to produce food grains to support one's family. Those Vaiphei living in and around Half-long town are engage in jobs; whether government or private. Though some of these jobs are high ranking post; majorities are peon or clerk jobs. Nevertheless, this adds considerably to the economic welfare of the Vaiphei living there.

⁹ Vaiphei, K. (1999) "Maite Days" P-16-17, 319.

¹⁰ Golden Jubilee Souvenir of Kristian Khanglai Khawmpi, 1998.

5.2. (3) Sadar Hills Sub-Division of Senapati District of Manipur:

Senapati District is a part of the Manipur Hills micro region. The district has an area of 3,271 Square kilometres (including some part of Imphal district) with 208,406 persons resided in 496 rural villages. Of the total population of the district, Scheduled Tribes have the large share of 83.75 percent. The literacy rate of the district is increased to 38.88 percent in 1991 census, from 31.03 percent in 1981 census. As the district is predominant in agricultural activities, the workers constitute 51.78 percent of the total population.

Sadar Hills sub-division of the district extends over the South-Eastern part and South-western parts of the district. The region is drained by the rivers of Iril, Imphal and Thoubal flowing towards the South. The soils belongs to Udalfs-Ochrepts and Udalfs-Orthents types and the geology of the region is form of Brail Series and Simorang formation with transported Alluvium.¹¹ As regard to the relief feature of the region, it has four prominent hill ranges. The maximum height of these ranges is found near Kanem village in the western side, which is 2,832 metres above sea level. The maximum height in the Eastern side of the region is 2,261 metres near Wangshangphung village. According to 1991 Census, the Sadar Hills region is inhabited by 90,896 persons in 377 villages, excluding

¹¹ Census of India, 1991. Regional Divisions of India. Series I Vol. XIV, Manipur.

the population of 25 villages which are geographically located in Imphal district. The region recorded about 1473.24 millimetres of rainfall annually.

The social structure of Sadar Hills area indicates the dominance of Kuki over all other communities inhabiting this region, but in those areas adjoining Imphal district or the plain, Meiteis were dominating. Therefore, there are some problems of adjustment that the Vaiphei population is facing while living in this region. The domination of this area by the two communities makes the Vaiphei feel that they are being swamped by these communities. Vaiphei here are very conscious about their status as a minority in this area. They have to work extra hard or take extra care to keep their culture and society intact from being assimilated or influenced too much by these communities. The Vaiphei there may not be aware of it but slowly and steadily their everyday life is being altered as they pick up some minor characteristics of these communities.

Taking into account the status of their dialect, the Vaiphei used their own dialect in the Church services and activities. But in other areas like in markets, schools etc. the Vaiphei dialect is not being recognised and Manipuri language is used as common language. Thus, the Vaiphei who lived in this region have to know Manipuri language to get by. Therefore, the Vaiphei dialect gets a low status here and Vaiphei dialect is used only in the Vaiphei villages. Because of the prolonged contact as well as inter-marriage between different communities, there are many cases of Meitei or Kuki speaking in Vaiphei and vice versa.

Every Vaiphei used Vaiphei dialect in their homes while speaking to each other. There are also few cases where both Manipuri and Vaiphei are used together in a family. This is due to the fact that almost all the Vaiphei in this region are fluent in both the languages.

Although the economic structure of Sadar Hills areas would indicate that the economic development or conditions is rather better as compared to the other areas of the study, yet the Vaiphei here have a number of economic problems. Poverty is the main characteristic of the condition of the Vaiphei in general. No doubt, there are some who are economically better off, but there are much more who are under abject poverty. This is due to the fact that the population pressure on the plain area is very high and the Vaiphei finds it difficult to acquire good arable land to practice permanent agriculture. As a result, many of them live in the hilly areas and work on their jhums. This makes the people poorer that they have no other means to find and earn a living to support their family, other than the practice of shifting cultivation.

The major factor for the political adjustment problems of the Vaiphei is the social structure of the region/district. The Vaiphei are faced with some political problems being in great minority. The Vaiphei used to have a representative in the District Council in the form of M.D.C. This person helped his people to a small degree in the village or block administration. However, this small position

of having a fellow tribesman in the District Council is not permanent and there is a chance that this may be lost to other communities forever.

Based on the above discussions, it may be concluded that the various problems of adjustments of the Vaiphei are different in different areas. Some of the main conclusions may be pointed out as follows:

- (1) The main problems of adjustments of the Vaiphei are primarily due to the social structure of the districts where they lived. Where the Vaiphei are in large numbers, the status of their dialect is high, as in the case of Churachandpur district of Manipur. But again, the status of their dialect is low in areas dominated by non-Vaiphei, as in Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam, Mizoram and Sadar Hills areas of Manipur North. In Mizoram and to some extent in Cachar areas, the Vaiphei faced identity crisis; but in other areas the Vaiphei have been able to assert their own identity as Vaiphei.
- (2) So far as the economic position of the Vaiphei is concerned, Sadar Hills areas of Manipur North seem to be where the Vaiphei are better off on an average to the total population in the region. Jhumming with out-dated method is practised in all the areas where the Vaiphei lives. Transport and communication is one of the major problems the Vaiphei are facing in the region.

- (3) Looking at the problems of political adjustments, the Vaiphei felt they need adequate representation in the state government or district councils, especially in Mizoram North and Cachar areas of Assam. Everywhere they live, they are divided into many constituencies making them a minority in every constituency. This is one of the biggest problems the Vaiphei are facing today.

Besides the above problems, there is one major factor, which has divided the Vaiphei for a long long time. This is the division of the Vaiphei into Churches. Recently, there is a movement to unite all the Vaiphei into one Church organisation. Though this movement is not cent percent successful, majority of the tribe is now under one umbrella. This division indirectly affects the development of the Vaiphei in general, as they are a divided lot. If the Vaiphei can become united as one consolidated front in Church, they would have been more developed.

CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, an attempt has been made to understand and analyse the early process of migration and distribution of the Vaiphei in the North-Eastern region of India. The nature, origin and the process of migration of the Vaiphei in the historical past has been discussed. The present patterns of distribution of the tribe have also been analysed, and their core and periphery in the region have been identified. As a result of which, the nature of their relationship and some of the problems of adjustment that the Vaiphei are facing in different regions has also been discussed.

The major summary and conclusions derived from the present study are as follows:

- (1) Physiographically, there are three main classifications of landforms in the North-Eastern region of India; viz. Fold mountains, Plateaus and Alluvial Plains. The Fold Mountains are comprises of the Arunachal Himalayas that stretches from the Bhutan-Arunachal Pradesh border in the West to the Siang-Dihang river in the East. The hills comprise of the Eastern hills made up by the Dibang-Lohit-Patkai-Naga-Manipur-Mizo ranges. The Plateaus are the Meghalaya-Karbi plateaus which are the separated parts of the great Deccan plateau. The Alluvial

Plains in the region are made up of the Brahmaputra plain, Barak plain, Imphal Valley and the Tripura piedmont plain.

(2) The drainage system of the region is made up by five main river basins. The Brahmaputra basin is the largest and covers almost the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, major part of Assam, some parts of Nagaland and Meghalaya. The Barak is the second largest system of the region and occupies the southern parts of Meghalaya, North-Cachar Hills, northern and western margins of Manipur, northern half of Mizoram and north-eastern parts of Tripura and Cachar. The Kaladine river basin from Myanmar drains the southern parts of Mizoram. The rivers of the Northern parts of Manipur and south-eastern Nagaland fall under the Tizu basin. The Karnaphuli basin with its streams drains western Mizoram and southern parts of Tripura.

(3) The North-Eastern Region of India lends itself favourably to the exposition of climate on a synoptic basis. It is very characteristic and is incomparable to any other regions of India. Local influences and relief have contributed to make the climate of the region a sub-tropical or extra tropical type. The climate has been divided into four seasons: (a) Winter (December to February), (b) Pre-monsoon (March to May), (c) Monsoon (June to September) and (d) Retreating monsoon (October to November).

(4) Generally, the soils of the region can be said to belong to two prominent soil types; viz. residual and transported soils. The soils in the Brahmaputra valley are either new alluvium as found along the banks of a river, or old alluviums that are found above the annual flood levels. Soils in Arunachal Himalayas are alluvial in the foothills, clayey in the valleys and red or hill soils in the hills and higher areas. Meghalaya-Karbi plateau region are predominantly dominated by red or hill soils except for a small area in the south-western Karbi hills adjoining the Jaintia hills which has laterite soils. The soil cover is thin in the Eastern hills due to rapid run off along the slopes. The Eastern hills are predominantly red soil areas, but hill or laterite soils are found in the higher areas.

(5) Two different views on the meaning and origin of the word 'Vaiphei' have been found out:

(i) The first view is based on the '*Khaw-Vaiphei Theory*'. It is a widely accepted view. It is believed that the name 'Vaiphei' is derived from the name of the village 'Khaw-Vaiphei'; '*Khaw*' means village; '*Vai*' means breadth and '*Phei*' means plain: which means the village was at length and breadth and vast. The people who lived in that village for a pretty long enough time and moved out last of all came to be identified as the Vaiphei people.

(ii) Another view is the '*Liankhama Sailo Village Incident Theory*' (1850-1875). The Suantak people who lived together with other groups in the village had failed to take revenge on the hatred Pawi killer, due to the implications of their custom. They felt no more desirable to live in that village side by side with their enemy. They migrated from that village en masse; which is expressed in Lusei dialect as "*an vaiin an pheï tawh*" meaning they all left in body or exodus. People started calling them '*Vaipheïho*' and thence, wherever these people lived, they came to be known as Vaiphei.

(6) Every Vaiphei understands and accepts that 'Khul' is his ancient home from where their ancestor originated. Even though there exists different views on the name as well as its exact location still controversial, it is believed and accepted that it is somewhere in southern China; and Khul is a place revered among them and were proud to be originated from it.

(7) The sequential order of their migration from Khul is 'Khaw-Sinlung', Kale valley, Chindwin valley, Chin Hills and Mizoram-Manipur. This process of migration is due to the inter-tribal feuds, in search of a better land for cultivation, the need for shelter and peaceful settlement.

(8) The Vaiphei tribe is divided into many clans and sub-clans and families. Some clans have their own dialects. There are as many as 31 clans and more than 100 sub-clans and families in the Vaiphei tribe. The Vaiphei people, especially the Suantak clan (main clan of the Vaiphei) is found embedded or assimilated in almost all the cognate tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups.

(9) The Vaiphei were one of those tribes who were the first to enter Mizoram. In course of their migration, they settled in a number of villages; some of which still bears the original names, which, the Vaiphei people have given. Some of those who stayed back were ultimately absorbed or assimilated to the Mizo society, losing their dialect and distinctiveness. Want of jhumming land and other territorial possessions cause the tribal to be always at war against each other leading the weaker tribes to migrate to neighbouring areas to Manipur, Cachar and other places.

(10) North-East India is predominantly a tribal region, except for the states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur which had 12.83, 30.90 and 34.41 percents of scheduled tribe population respectively.

(11) The Vaiphei people were found scattered in three states, viz. Manipur, Mizoram and Assam. The total Vaiphei population, according to 2001 Census

was 27,791 persons. Even in the above three states, the Vaiphei have a tendency to live in few pockets in district levels. In Manipur, they are mostly found in the Southern and Northern districts. In Mizoram they are found in North-Eastern part of Aizawl. Whereas in Assam, Cachar and N.C.Hills districts are the main areas where the Vaiphei are found.

(12) In the present study, Manipur South district i.e. Churachandpur district has been identified as the core of the Vaiphei concentration. About 56 percent of the total Vaiphei population of the North-East is found in this district, although they constitute about only 18 percent of the total population of the district.

(13) Manipur North i.e. Sadar Hills area of Senapati district, North-East part of Mizoram and Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam are identified as the peripheral areas of the Vaiphei distribution as these together constitute 32 percent of the Vaiphei population in the North-East region of India.

(14) In their core area, more than 120 villages that are Vaiphei dominated or wholly their villages can be identified. Whereas in their peripheral areas, Sadar Hills of Senapati district of Manipur have 45 Vaiphei villages, Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam had a total of 14 Vaiphei villages.

(15) Although the Vaiphei people are living in as many as 175 villages in Manipur state alone, these villages have rather small populations. About 48.09 percent of the villages where they live have a population less than 500 persons.

(16) The main problems of adjustments of the Vaiphei is primarily due to the social structure of the districts where they lived. Where the Vaiphei are in large numbers, the status of their dialect is high, as in the case of Churachandpur district of Manipur. But again, the status of their dialect is low in areas dominated by non-Vaiphei, as in Cachar and N.C.Hills districts of Assam, Mizoram and Sadar Hills areas of Manipur North. In Mizoram and to some extent in Cachar areas, the Vaiphei faced identity crisis; but in other areas the Vaiphei have been able to assert their own identity as Vaiphei.

(17) So far as the economic position of the Vaiphei is concerned, Sadar Hills areas of Manipur North seem to be where the Vaiphei are better off on an average to the total population in the region. Jhumming with out-dated method is practised in all the areas where the Vaiphei lives. Transport and communication is one of the major problems the Vaiphei are facing in the region.

(18) Looking at the problems of political adjustments, the Vaiphei felt they need adequate representation in the state government or district councils,

especially in Mizoram North and Cachar areas of Assam. Everywhere they live, they are divided into many constituencies making them a minority in every constituency. This is one of the biggest problems the Vaiphei are facing today.

Besides the above problems, there is one major factor, which has divided the Vaiphei for a long long time. This is the division of the Vaiphei into different Churches. Recently, there is a movement to unite all the Vaiphei into one Church organisation. Though this movement is not cent percent successful, majority of the tribe is now under one umbrella. This division indirectly affects the development of the Vaiphei in general, as they are a divided lot. If the Vaiphei can become united as one consolidated front in Church, they would have been more developed.

One may conclude from this study that the physical setting of the region had a large impact upon the migration and settlement pattern of the Vaiphei in the North-Eastern Region of India. One can visualise that the physical environment of the region allowed only particular type of economic development as the technology used by the people, especially Vaiphei, was quite primitive in nature. The Vaiphei perhaps found that this area were suitable for their way of life and ideal for settlement. They must have been practising primitive jhum cultivation, prior to their entry into the North-East region. And when they entered the region,

they opted for hilly and forested tracts of the region that offered them scope to practice jhumming which was the only way they knew to produce foodgrains. There is another reason for the Vaiphei to settled in the hilly and forested regions, that is, due to the fact that these areas of the region were less settled as compared to the valley regions. Had they possessed the technology of settled agriculture, they might have settled in the valley regions or even advanced upto Brahmaputra valley. Being settled in the negative region, it was not possible for them to modify the environment according to their needs, but to adjust to the natural physical environment.

It is found that the pattern of migration and settlement of the Vaiphei was influenced by the physical environment of the region. This migration and settlement pattern, in turn, had significant impact on the pattern of the present distribution of the Vaiphei in the North-Eastern region of India. The present pattern of distribution of the Vaiphei is responsible for the problems of adjustments they are facing in the areas of their occupation. It is observed that the problems of adjustments have been different from one region to another. The main problem of adjustment they are facing is the social problem that is due to the social compositions of the areas of their habitat. In the core area, the status of their dialect was high and they have no problem in retaining their identity. But in

the periphery areas where the Vaiphei were in great minority, the status of their dialect and the scope of asserting their own identity as a tribe were low.

In the end, it is desirable to mention that this study has its obvious shortcomings and its own limitations due to shortage of time, paucity of materials and vastness of the area under investigation or study. It may be suggested that to clearly understand the present pattern of distribution as well as the core and peripheries of the tribe, such data as pertaining to the tribe's distribution at smaller levels like Blocks or even villages would have given a clearer picture.

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 (SOILALSIAM)