

**REGIONAL COUNCIL IN MIZORAM:
A CASE STUDY OF PAWI-LAKHER
REGIONAL COUNCIL
(1952-1972)**

(ABSTRACT)



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Introduction

Mizoram, is one of the States in North East India. It is surrounded by Tripura and Bangladesh in the West, Myanmar in the East and South, Manipur and Assam in the North. The Pawis and the Lakhers inhabited the southern part of Mizoram.

According to the 2001 Census, the population of Pawis of Lawngtlai District and Lakhers of Saiha District are 73,050 and 60,823 respectively, out of the State total population of 8,91,058. Though the two tribes are concentrated mainly in their own respective area, they are also to be found in other parts of the state.

The present study, in brief, traces the origin of the Pawis and Lakhers, their traditional administration under the chiefs of the villages and the political developments that took place till the time of the formation of the Autonomous District Councils for the Pawis, Lakhers and Chakmas.

The Pawis and the Lakhers have their own distinct culture, customs and traditions which still play an important role in their social, economic and political life. The Pawis and the Lakhers had the office of the traditional chiefs, who enjoyed like other chiefs, certain privileges.

The present study attempts to investigate the changes that took place in the administrative set up of the Pawis and the Lakhers right from the village traditional administration to the Regional Council and upto the time of the formation of the Autonomous District Councils. The political movements that took place in the whole of Mizo Hills or the present Mizoram are also taken into consideration to help understand the specific political developments among the Pawis and Lakhers. This study also examines the factors leading to the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in 1953, its composition, functions and workings. Moreover, the study also analyses how far the political movements among the Mizos had also their impact on the political life of the Pawis and Lakhers. This study further tries to examine and analyze the factors responsible for the demand of the introduction of the Autonomous District Councils among the Pawis, Lakhers and Chakmas.

Objectives of the Study

The first objective of the study is to trace and analyze the factors which led to the introduction of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, and the role of the elected representatives in the Autonomous District Council in Mizoram. Secondly, the study analyzes the constitutional structure of the Sixth Schedule, its powers and functions in general with particular reference to the creation of District Council and Regional Council in Lushai Hills District. Thirdly, the study also assesses and examines the power, functions, and working of the Regional Council among the Pawis and Lakhers. Fourthly, the study tries to discuss and analyze the composition, working and role of the Executive Committees of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. A critical

analysis of the Acts, Rules and Regulations passed and enacted by the Lushai Hills District Council as well as the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also finds its place in the study. Lastly, the study examines and analyzes the factors responsible for the trifurcation of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and the creation of Autonomous District Councils for the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas keeping in view of the political changes in the whole of Mizoram from a District to a Union Territory in 1972.

Methodology

The data for this study have been collected both from Primary and Secondary sources. The primary sources include Official Records, Documents, Acts, Rules, Regulations passed by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, interviews with political leaders, Members of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, Chief Executive Members, Executive Members, party functionaries, officials of the District Council and Regional Council, School teachers and other knowledgeable persons.

The Secondary sources are drawn from published and unpublished documents, articles, seminar proceedings written both in English and local language and other printed materials, journals, newspapers, mimeographs, etc.

Survey of Literature

So far as the topic under study is concerned, there are some books which have been written on the history of political administration in Mizoram, like V. V. Rao's *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India*; A. N. Ray's *Mizoram Dynamic of Change*; R. N. Prasad's

Government and Politics in Mizoram, R. Vanlawma's *Ka Ram leh Kei (My Country and I)* (in Mizo); Chaltuahkhuma's *Political History of Mizoram* (in Mizo); and others. But these books treated the case of the Pawis and Lakhers in a very general way while discussing about Mizo politics. The present study therefore aims to delve into the political history and administration of the Pawis and the Lakhers by devoting more exclusively on those political issues which have not been studied in detail by others.

Chapterization

The study has been divided into five chapters:

- Chapter I - Local-Self Government, Concept and Issues in the context of Mizo Society.
- Chapter II - Emergence of Social Forces and the Creation of Regional Council in Mizoram (including Powers, Functions and Working of the Council).
- Chapter III - Politics of Executive Committee Formation in the Regional Council.
- Chapter IV - Analysis of the Factors leading to the Trifurcation of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.
- Chapter V - Conclusion.

Chapter I

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the concepts and issues relating to Local-Self Government.

The modern State is vast in extent and its functions have become so complex that it is not possible for a single organization to deal efficiently with all its numerous activities. Decentralization of power is therefore needed for administrative convenience and efficiency on some rational basis. Hence, smaller units of administration at the local level have been established. These smaller units of administration are called Local Government or Local-Self Government. Such units of local government are created mainly for administrative convenience in local areas with limited powers. The institution of Local-Self Government is one of the backbones of democracy as it provides a sense of civic duties and responsibilities among the local residents.

In this chapter, we also discuss about the British administration and its impact on the Mizos in general as well as the Pawis and Lakhers in particular. The role and functions of the British Superintendent are also discussed so as to assess and analyze the administration under his control. The formation and role of the Mizo Union also finds its place in our discussion as this political party was responsible in bringing about many political changes among the Mizos in general and the Pawis and Lakhers in particular. The powers and functions of the Autonomous District Council introduced in Mizo Hills in 1952, are also discussed.

Chapter II

The second chapter studies and examines those factors responsible for the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Pawis and Lakhers were not happy to be under the domination of the Lushais (Mizos) who are the major tribes. As the Pawis and Lakhers are

minorities, they foresee the dangers of being marginalized by the Mizos even in administrative matters under the former Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council. They therefore demanded a separate administrative set up for themselves outside the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council. Their demand was granted in the form of the Regional Council which was set up in 1953, known as the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

This Council was formed on the basis of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Its powers and functions are clearly laid down by the concerned Schedule. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule framed a number of Acts, Rules, Regulations etc. pertaining to the customs, traditions, usages etc. of the Pawis and Lakhers and how to protect and safeguard them. An attempt has been made in this chapter to analyze those Acts, Rules etc. which have been passed and enacted by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council from time to time.

Chapter III

This chapter mainly deals with the politics of Executive Committee formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The internal differences between the Pawis and Lakhers remain unsolved during the time of the Council and these problems keep on lingering till the time when the Council had to be dissolved.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council suffered a number of problems from the very beginning. Even before the first general election which was scheduled in the early part of 1953, discontentment arose among the

Pawis and Lakhers over the allotment of seats to be contested. B. W. Roy, the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) of Lunglei had to be brought in to settle the matter which he did by allotting which seats to be contested by which community. Thereafter, elections were held and the members were elected and nominated to the newly formed Regional Council.

On April 23rd 1953, Shri Ch. Saprawnga, the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Government of Assam, inaugurated the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council at Lunglei. Though the Council has both the elected and nominated members, they could not form the Executive Committee due to the absence of any person from among the members of the Council who can man the affairs of the Council. To save the situation, two government officials from the Assam Government were deputed to run the administration for one year. After one year, a Chairman was elected and he also conducted the elections to the offices of the Chief Executive Member (CEM) and Executive Members of the Council.

The second term of the Council started in 1958 after the election of the members. During this time also misunderstanding and conflict arose as to the holding of executive posts of the Council. The Lakhers demanded the fulfillment of the earlier agreement they had with the Pawis in which key executive posts be given to them. The Pawis did not agree to that. The Lakhers boycotted the meeting as a mark of protest. Meanwhile, the Pawis and Chakmas participated in the Chairman's election. However, subsequently good sense prevailed between the two, and both agreed to work together in order to run the Council's administration smoothly.

The third term of the Council began in 1964. It may be mentioned that the Lakhers boycotted the election to the Council as a mark of protest against the Pawis whom they charged of not respecting the earlier agreement of understanding especially in terms of seats adjustment and formation of the Executive Committee.

During this period, another political development took place among the Lakhers. They formed a political party among themselves known as 'Mara Freedom Party' in 1963. The main objective of this political party was to have a separate Mara (Lakher) Autonomous District Council in order to bring the integration and unity of all the Mara (Lakher) people. Subsequently, the Lakhers formed a separate Interim Council parallel to the Regional Council to serve their interests. This chapter also discusses about the policies, programmes, aims and objectives of the Mara Freedom Party as well as the working of the Mara Interim Council. By this time, another minority community, that is, the Chakmas, played an important role in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Pawis received the support of the Chakmas in the working and functioning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. However, the working and functioning of the Council in its third term was greatly hampered due to the problems of insurgency in the entire Mizo Hills.

The Lakhers later realized that their prolonged boycott of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was not a positive attitude. They therefore decided to participate in the fourth term of the Council. This time the Lakhers contested the election under the banner of the Mara Freedom Party and three out of four candidates won uncontested.

This Executive Committee was the last to head the United Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. It remained in office till the time of the formation of the three Autonomous District Councils for the Pawis, Lakher and Chakmas after the trifurcation of the then United Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in 1972.

Chapter IV

An attempt has been made in this chapter to have a systematic analysis of the factors responsible for the trifurcation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council could not function smoothly due to inherent political differences and clashes of interests between the Pawis and the Lakher. The difficulties and problems that arose right from the beginning kept on lingering within and outside the Regional Council.

The basic problem which created disunity in the Council was over the issue of holding the Chief Executive Member's post by the Pawis for two terms of the Council consecutively against the agreement made between the two tribes to share the post term by term. In the mean time, the Chakmas also regarded themselves as being neglected by both the Pawis and Lakher under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Hence, unity among the three tribes was not in sight any more. The only alternative left was to trifurcate the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council so that the three tribes may have their own separate administrative set up to safeguard their interests.

In this chapter, the factors considered to be responsible for the trifurcation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council are discussed. The factors responsible for the trifurcation may be broadly mentioned as –

- (a) The conflict over holding of executive, political and official key posts in the Council.
- (b) Official language to be used by the Council.
- (c) Medium of instructions in the Primary Schools.
- (d) Differences in customs, culture, etc. among the three tribes.
- (e) Formation of ethnic-base political party and the Mara Interim Regional Council.

Besides these, there are other problems like sharing of benefits out of grants and other financial schemes allotted to the Council meant to be distributed among the three communities – the Pawis, Lakhers and Chakmas.

Chapter V

This chapter sums up the major findings of the study. It has been found that:

1. The Pawis, Lakhers and the Chakmas were much influenced by the political developments that took place among the Lushais (Mizos). They were, however, not satisfied with the treatment meted out to them by the Mizos especially after the formation of the then Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council in 1952.

2. In order to safeguard their economic, social and political interests, initially the Pawis and Lakhers demanded some kind of political autonomy to be granted to them under the Constitution of India.
3. The fear of being politically marginalized by the Mizos gave rise to the political demands made by the Pawis and Lakhers. As a result, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was granted to them in 1953 under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
4. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council started functioning in 1953. Elections were held to elect the members of the Council. But it was found that right from the beginning there was no mutual understanding between the Pawis and Lakhers. This was because of the internal fighting and clash of interests especially in cases of sharing of political and executive posts of the Council like the offices of Chairman, Chief Executive Member, Executive Members etc. This, therefore tremendously affected the working and functioning of the Council from time to time.
5. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council during its tenure has been able to pass and enact a number of Acts, Rules and Regulations from time to time. These Acts, Rules and Regulations relate to such important administrative affairs of the Council as well as matters pertaining to the welfare of the people within the jurisdiction of the Council. Some of these Acts, Rules and Regulations which have been passed relate to the Constitution of the Council, Procedure and Conduct of Business, Social Customs and Practices, Revenue

Assessment, Administration of Justice, etc. to mention a few of them.

6. Another finding is the rôle played by the Chakma community. This community was to some extent, happy to be initially under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Later on, they also put forward their demands for political autonomy so as to serve and safeguard their interests. The result of their persistent demand for separate administrative set up led to the trifurcation of the then United Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. They were also granted a separate Autonomous District Council of their own in 1972, along with the Pawis and Lakhers.

At the end, it may be concluded that the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council did satisfy the political aspirations of the people initially but not in the long run. The subsequent political movements show that the Pawis, Lakhers and Chakmas wanted something more in terms of autonomy. Having experienced, the working and functioning of the Regional Council and its failure to fulfill their political demands, they went ahead in demanding greater autonomy in the form of the Autonomous District Council. They succeeded in getting that too. The latest trend is again to demand more autonomy in the form of a Union Territory. However, this aspect is beyond the purview of the present ~~study~~ study.
