

MIZO MIGRATION AND GENDER RELATIONS

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

A

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN HISTORY

B. LALRINCHHANI

TO

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG
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**To
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**NORTH EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
APRIL 2008**

I, B.Lalrinchhani declared that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me and that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me, or to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University.

This is being submitted to North East Hill University for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in History.

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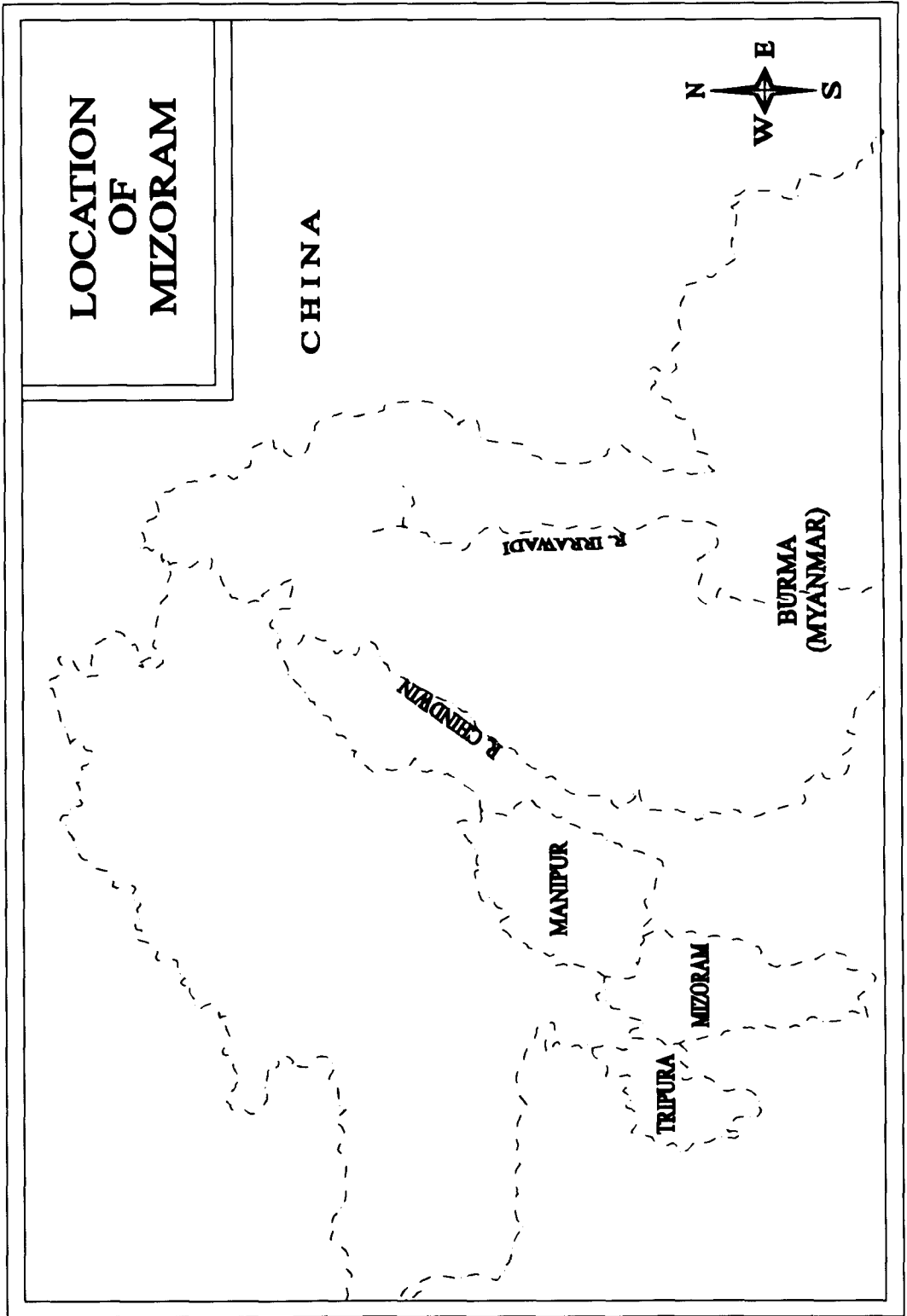
This thesis was prepared under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Manorama Sharma. Her valuable comments, advice and suggestions at every stage of the work have gone a long way in improving and enriching this study. I take this opportunity to thank her for her sympathetic guidance and ungrudging gift of her time through out the course.

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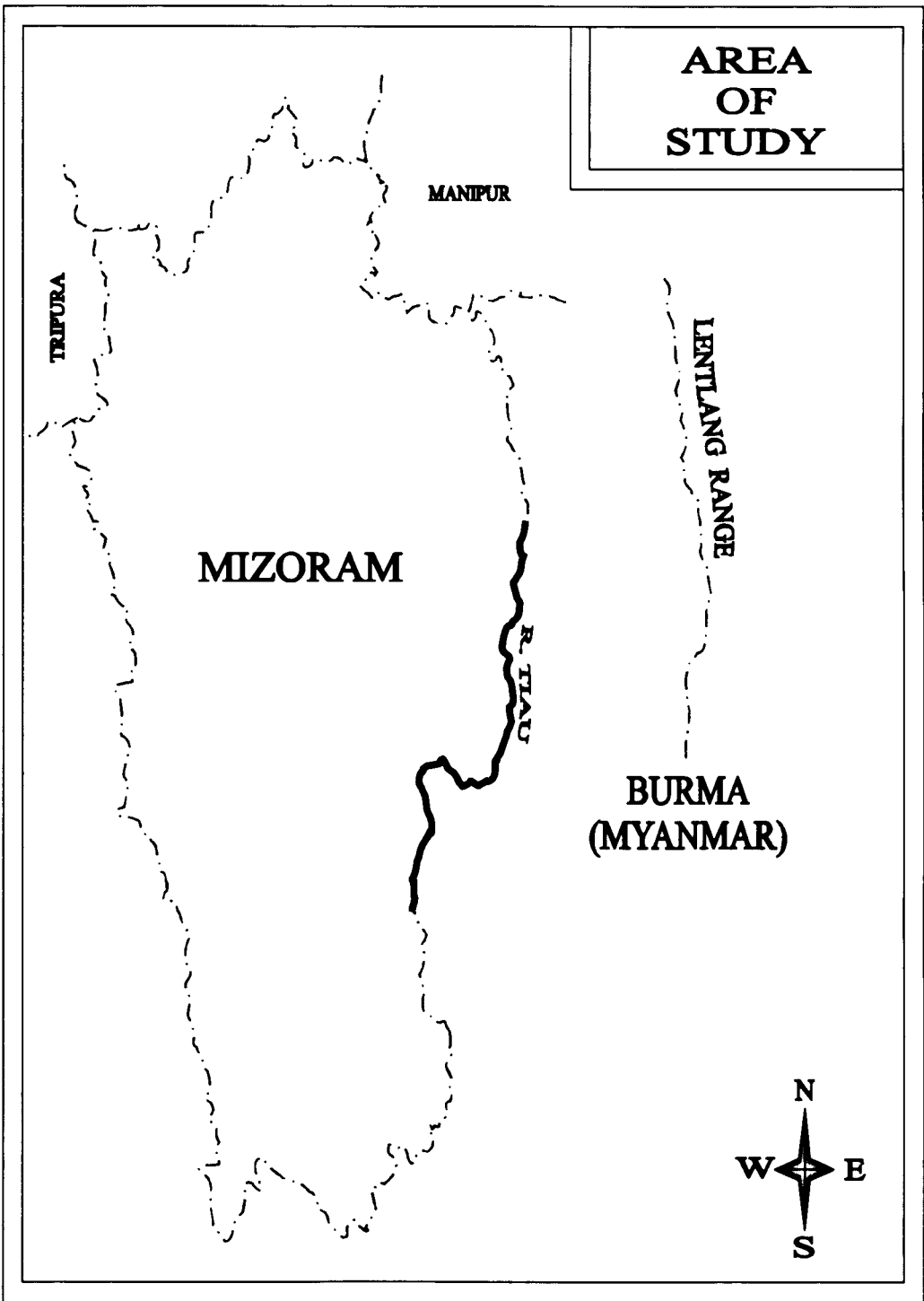
I am also grateful to my family members and friends for their moral and physical support.

Dated Shillong the 3rd April 2008

B.Lalrinchani
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MAP NO.1



MAP NO.2

Introduction

The world has always been shared by men and women. They have lived together, worked together and have participated in the making of history. However, in the recorded history, women's actions and their active role in history were not recorded by the historians. Thus, the recorded history was always dominated by men. What women have experienced and have done were ignored and marginalized in the recordings of history.¹ There were of course some women who found their place in the recordings but these were mainly women whose achievements were noteworthy by male standards. Thus women, their lives, aspirations and achievements were removed from the recordings of history.

The main reason for women to be hidden in history was the domination of patriarchal thoughts and values. In patriarchy, men are considered superior to women in almost all spheres of life. These ideas had affected the psychology of men and women and had also influenced different cultures all over the world. These same ideas had also influenced the minds of most historians both male and female. Until the most recent past, historians have been primarily men and so all their works and interpretations of history have reflected male value systems as they have written it from the perspective of the men. Hence, it was always the men who have selected the events to be recorded and interpreted it according to their choice. They have called this 'History and claimed Universality'² for it. Thus it was due to patriarchy and patriarchal values that women were marginalized in the recordings and writings of history.

¹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, 1986), p.5

² *ibid.*, p.4

The patriarchal thought which envelopes the different societies have also set assumptions about gender and gender relations. According to Gerda Lerner, "gender is the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given time."³ It is therefore clear that though men and women are different biologically, yet, the different roles they are required to play and the values and systems based on the difference is the result of the ideology of gender. So gender is socially constructed.

However, women slowly began to question the difference and also their own status in the society. This became more prominent after the World War II even though there were some women who fought against discrimination even in the 18th century. Women from different parts of the world began to realize that they were forced to be a subordinate group and that they have suffered many wrongs. During the French Revolution women felt that the principles of the Enlightenment should be applied to them too, and that political rights belonged to them as much as to men. Inspired by this idea Olympe de Gouges wrote *Declaration of the Rights of Women* in 1790. This influenced Mary Wollstonecraft too and her pathbreaking work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792.⁴ She wrote that women should have equal status with men with respect to education, work and politics. Her work and the impact it had was often regarded to be the origin of the Women's Movement. These ideas grew into political movements in Britain and the United States. There started different programmes and campaigns by women in which there was a demand for reform of divorce and child custody laws, for women to have the

³ *ibid.* p.238

⁴ Sheila Ruth, *Issues in Feminism* (California, 1995), p.19

access to education and employment and right to own property.⁵ The first Woman's Rights Convention in history was held in Seneca Falls in New York in 1848 under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁶ The convention issued a Declaration modeled on the 1776 Declaration of Independence and demanded the rights of women to vote, to property, to education, to employment and to public participation in politics and the church. This convention is regarded as the beginning of the movement for women suffrage in the world and also the beginning of the organized Woman's Movement. Feminist consciousness began to develop all over the world and this resulted in an interest in the study of the lives of women and of gender biased systems.

Gender studies became more popular and important as it gradually came to be realized that various institutions of society like kinship, marriage, caste and village structure have traditionally been male oriented. There was no critical consideration of what this has meant for women's lives and of what is necessary to maintain more women friendly gender relations. Hence, writing of history has been largely carried out without examining how life conditions could have changed for different persons according to the prevailing gender relations. It is therefore important to study gender relations as it helps us to know the place or the position of the sexes in a society and also to understand how women got to be marginalized in history writing. This would also enable us to have a holistic approach to history. However, when studying gender relations, it is important to realize that there cannot be generalizations of such relations for different cultures or societies as gender

⁵ *ibid.*, p.38

⁶ Sudhir Varma, *Women's Struggle for Political Space* (New Delhi, 1997) p.27

relations can be different in different societies. However, the values and the principles of patriarchy are the same all over the world. It should also be noted that the level of discrimination against women can also be different in different societies. Moreover, the workings of patriarchy also have not been constant in all periods of history.

As gender studies became more popular, more scholars especially women began to take interest in studying gender relations. The status of women in India also came to be studied with interest. This had its effect in North East India too. Studies on women of the tribal society of North East were taken up by many scholars.⁷ Mizo women also began to question their status and studies began to be undertaken on these lines. But these studies were mainly taken up by Mizo women theologians such as Dr. R.L.Hnuni⁸, Dr. Lalrinawmi⁹ and Dr. T. Vanlaltlani¹⁰. These Mizo women theologians realised that though they were theologically qualified, the church would not ordain them due to their sex. So they began to study with interest the status of Mizo women and realised that they were not given the posts of ordained ministers due to patriarchal values.¹¹

The term Mizo literally means Zo people and is a generalised name for the people living in Mizoram having the same origin and a common way of life. So, Mizo could cover all ethnic Zo people. It should be noted that the name *Zo* was not

⁷ To name just a few refer to:

Lucy Zehol (ed) *Women in Naga Society* (New Delhi, 1998)

Chie Nakane, *Garo and Khasi: A Comparative Study in Matrilineal System* (Paris, 1967)

Manju Chaki Sircar, *Feminism in a Traditional Society: A Study of Manipur* (New Delhi, 1982)

⁸ R.L.Hnuni (ed), *Transforming Theology for Empowering Women* (Jorhat, 1999)

⁹ Lalrinawmi, "Crab Theology: A Critique of Patriarchy – Cultural Degradation and Empowerment of Mizo women" D.Min dissertation, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, 1993.

¹⁰ T.Vanlaltlani, *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh* (Aizawl, 2005)

¹¹ B.Lalrinchhani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District" Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Deptt of History, NEHU, 1998

of recent origin and this could be seen in the records of the British administrators. T.H.Lewin the first British to enter present Mizoram had written that he came to know in the Lushai expedition of 1871-72 that "the generic name of the whole nation is Dzo".¹² Grierson also wrote that the people living in the country between Burma and the then Assam and Bengal provinces called themselves "zo" and variably "yo" or "sho".¹³ The name Zo could also be seen in many of the village names in Mizoram and in the Chin Hills such as Zokhua, Zopui, Zobawk, Zotlang etc. So, it can be seen that the so called Chin-Kuki-Lushai generic name was Zo. Once Zo is accepted to be the generic name, the problem of adding *mi* as a prefix or suffix is not very important as *mi* means people. Hence whether we call *Mizo* or *Zomi*, the meaning is just the same. When the British administered present Mizoram, they identified the people living in it as Lushais and the land was called Lushai Hills District. Since there were other clans of the same origin other than the Lusei, the *Mizo Union* Party submitted a memorandum demanding the change of the name Lushai Hills to Mizo Hills. The Government of India accepted the demand and in 1954 changed it accordingly. After Mizo Hills attained the status of Union Territory in 1972, it became known as Mizoram.

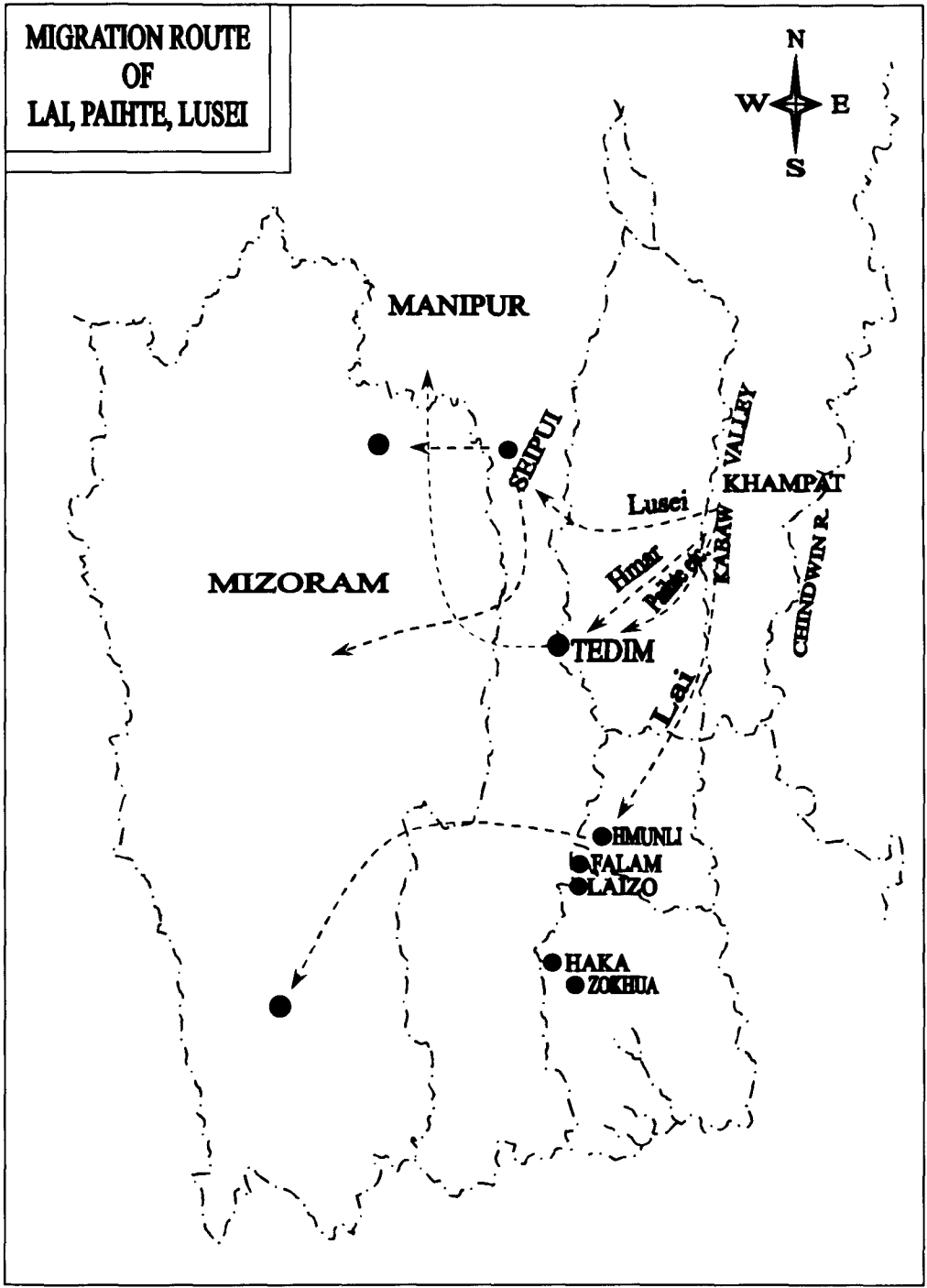
The history of the Mizo had been written by many historians and other writers. They have all written that Mizo tradition regarded Chhinlung to be the name of their origin. However, opinion differed on what Chhinlung was. In the traditional myth, Chhinlung was a big cave. Some writers claimed it as a name of a place while others have regarded it as a name which other neighbouring people used for them.¹⁴

¹² T.H.Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel, or How I helped to Govern India* (Aizawl, reprint,) p.246

¹³ G.A.Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol III, Part III (Delhi, reprint, 1967) p.2

¹⁴ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte* (Aizawl, 1976) pp.5-6

**MIGRATION ROUTE
OF
LAI, PAIHE, LUSEI**



MAP NO.3

Regardless of the differences of opinion on this there however seems to be a consensus that the early Mizo people inhabited some parts of China. Since they were nomadic and due to the fear of the Chinese, they moved to Chindwin Valley of Myanmar. It is important to note that most of the oral traditions available till date relate back to the settlement period in Myanmar and not China. However they did not settle here for a long time and moved to the Kabaw Valley. Their settlement stretched from Khampat in the north to Pandaung Hills in the south. It was believed by the Mizo historians that it was from this later part of their settlement in the Kabaw Valley that the different tribes of Mizo began to group themselves according to their tribes. Most of the tribes moved westward to Lentlang, a mountain range in present Chin Hills. In this mountain range, the people of these different tribes lived according to their clans. Thus the tribes began to differentiate themselves from each other. The Hmars, Thados, Pangs etc continued their westward movement and settled in the Indo-Burman border. The Lusei settled around Seipui and the Lai settled at Hmunli. The Lai then spread to Thlantlang, Zokhua, Zotung and Haka in Burma and some settled in the southern portion of present Mizoram.¹⁵ Meanwhile the Lusei also moved west, drove out the earlier settlers and soon spread their settlement under the Sailo chiefs. The Hmars and other tribes then moved towards Manipur and the Cachar areas. Thus the different Zo groups began to live in different areas. (See Map No. 3 for details of these migration routes). This study however is not mainly concerned with the origin of the Mizo or the route they took in their migration process but it tries to see how gender relations would have been changed

¹⁵ This information has been collected from Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl, 1976) p.52

in the migration process. So the origin and migration process has been basically drawn from studies which were earlier carried out by other historians.

Mizo society is a strictly patriarchal society. The lineage and heredity pass through the male line only. But all the domestic chores and major works in the fields were done by women. However although women worked a lot for the family, "custom has not sanctioned ownership of property by women, except on a very special and limited account."¹⁶ These and other related issues are the main subject matter of this work.

When the Christian missionaries entered Mizoram, they opened schools for boys and later for girls. Education enabled the Mizo to acquire professions other than agriculture. It also helped some women to become economically independent. Though women have come out of the traditional mould, yet the patriarchal attitude towards women has not changed. An instance of this would be seen in the church where women are not yet allowed to be ordained as ministers.¹⁷

There are a number of works which have been done on various aspects of the Mizo society but these works did not study indepth about the gender relations in the society. It thus becomes necessary to study the gender systems from the perspective of a woman. For this purpose, it would be of interest to study the three major clans – Lai (Pawi), Lusei and Mara (Lakher). These three are the majority tribes in present Mizoram as the others such as the Ralte are mostly absorbed into Lusei. Moreover they are all intermixed and are scattered all over Mizoram. Since all of them have the same origin and being intermixed for a long time they follow more or less the same

¹⁶ A.G.McCall. *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977) p.106

¹⁷ B.Lalrinchani. *op. cit.*

culture. There are little differences between them. So when speaking of the culture and society of the Mizo, these three tribes can be taken as representative of the society in general. When some dissimilarity is observed among them the point of difference and the name of the tribe such as Lusei, Lai and Mara have been mentioned in the course of this work.

It would also be interesting to study the Lai-Zo in Burma. However it should be noted that not only the Lai-Zo tribe (who are within the Falam area) but the people of other Lai in Burma such as the Haka have also been included. This has been done because studying only the Lai-Zo would be quite limited and as the other Lai tribes are also in close connection with Lai-Zo, they have therefore also been included in the present study. Moreover, they are the ones who did not migrate to present Mizoram but had stayed back in Burma (Myanmar). In this study the Mizo tribes of Myanmar have been mentioned as Zo since Zo is accepted by all different tribes such as the Lai from Falam and Haka; and Paihte from Tiddim region as their original name.¹⁸ Hence the Baptist organisation of the above mentioned different hill tribes in Myanmar have adopted the name as Zomi Baptist Convention¹⁹ and was later changed to Zo Baptist Convention. **Moreover in this study, referring to the people from Mizoram as Mizo and those in Burma (Myanmar) as Zo has been done in order to easily distinguish them when studying and making a comparison.** Since the Zo and the Mizo in Mizoram had the same origin, a comparative study between them has also been undertaken in order to examine whether the process of migration had affected the gender relations in the society or

¹⁸ Sukte.T.Hau Go in Sing Khaw Khai. *Zo People and Their Culture* (Churachandpur. 1995) p.70

¹⁹ *ibid*

otherwise. Studying the Lai-Zo was also helpful in understanding to some extent the origin of patriarchy in the Mizo society and to assess whether there had ever been any mother rights in the early Mizo society and whether the settlement in different eco-geographical areas and exposure to different social and political systems brought about any major changes in gender relations amongst the Mizo.

Studying the Mizo and the Lai-Zo would also give a picture of the gender relations in the early Mizo society. It would also be interesting to see whether gender relations are constant in patriarchal societies or do they differ in relations to the exposure to different forms of changes like culture, religion and political system. In other words, how is patriarchy altered or reconstituted after migration has been a major concern of this work. Moreover, it would also be useful to see how gender systems can differ in different periods of time.

Review of Literature

There are a number of works done on the status of women since the issue is studied with interest by many scholars. They try to know the reasons for the many problems faced by women in relation to their livelihood, political voice and their own lives. Thus studies on women and gender relations have been gradually producing a lot of literature.

In the broader context, a number of works exist which reflect this situation. Mary Wollstonecraft in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*²⁰ focussed on the status of women and said that patriarchy is man made and is the cause for the subordination of women. She studied how women were denied of their rights and wanted women to gain those rights. Wollstonecraft's work in fact is a pioneering

²⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London, reprint, 1922)

work in the studies on women's rights. Gerda Lerner in her works, *The Creation of Patriarchy*²¹ and *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*²² studied the historical origin of patriarchy and also how some women tried to free their minds from patriarchal thought to achieve feminist consciousness. There are also works on how women took part in the process of history but were hidden in the recordings or writings of history. Some of these works would be discussed very briefly. Mary R. Beard in *Women and Force in History*²³ studied how women took part in all the events of history despite several legal disadvantages. Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden from History*²⁴ examines the situation of women in contemporary capitalism and how class affected women. Judith P. Zinsser *History and Feminism*²⁵ studied the androcentric nature of history and also studied how despite several changes in today's world, women's history is still marginalised. Studies has also been done to assess the different feminist theories. Some of these works can be seen in the edited work of Nancy Mandell, *Feminist Issue*²⁶ in which she studied about the various feminist theories. Alison M. Jagger in her work *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*²⁷ studied and compared the various feminist theories – Liberal Feminism, Marxism, Radical Feminism and Socialist Feminism. She has made a critical assessment of the use and utility of the different theories of feminism. Alice W. Clark in her edited work, *Gender and Political Economy*²⁸ focussed on historical and contemporary issues in the lives of women and it also explored theories of

²¹ Gerda Lerner, *op.cit.*,

²² Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York, 1993)

²³ Mary R. Beard, *Women as Force in History* (New York, 1962)

²⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History* (New York, 1974)

²⁵ Judith P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism* (New York, 1993)

²⁶ Nancy Mandell (ed), *Feminist Issues* (Ontario, 1995)

²⁷ Alison M. Jagger, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (USA, 1983)

²⁸ Alice W. Clark(ed), *Gender and Political Economy* (New Delhi, 1993)

gender relations in a South Asian context. Frederick Engels in his book *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*²⁹ deals with the issue of women's subordination which he believed began with the development of private property. There are also works in which the authors tried to assess how women struggled and were often denied political space. The edited work of Barbara Nelson and Najma Chowdhury *Women and Politics Worldwide*³⁰ studied the level of participation of women in politics in different countries. All these works are educative in examining the obliteration of women in the writings of history and give us an insight into the perceptions about women. Since many of them also studied the various Feminist Theories, they have helped in developing a theoretical structure for the present study.

In India studies on women, gender relations and women's rights have shown considerable development in the last few decades. A few of the works are reviewed here to give an indication of the nature of the works done on India. Geraldine Forbes in her work *Women in Modern India*³¹ made a comprehensive study of Indian women from the 19th century to the 20th century. Kiran Devandra's work *Status and Position of Women in India*³² studied about the status of women before and after independence. Susheela Kaushik in her edited work *Women's Participation in Politics*³³ examined the level of women's participation in politics while Vijay Agnew's *Elite Women in Indian Politics*³⁴ focused on the women who took part in Indian politics. M.Indu Menon in *Status of Muslim Women in India*³⁵ examined the

²⁹ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Moscow, reprint, 1977)

³⁰ Barbara Nelson & Najma Chowdhury (ed) *Women and Politics Worldwide* (Delhi, 1997)

³¹ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1998)

³² Kiran Devandra, *Status and Position of Women in India* (Delhi, 1985)

³³ Susheela Kaushik(ed), *Women's Participation in Politics* (New Delhi, 1993)

³⁴ Vijay Agnew, *Elite Women in Indian Politics* (Delhi, 1979)

³⁵ M. Indu Menon, *Status of Muslim Women in India* (New Delhi, 1981)

share of education in raising the status of Muslim women in Kerala. The edited work of J.Krishnamurthy *Women in Colonial India*³⁶ deals with women's issues and their role in Indian social and economic history. Virginius Xaxa his article "Women and Gender in the Study of Tribes in India" in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*³⁷ examined women and gender and critically assessed the bride price which exist among various tribes of India. Bina Agarwal's *A Field of One's Own*³⁸ studied land rights for women and how women were denied this right which led to their subordination in economic, social and political fields. She then tries to give some suggestions as to how women could be freed from this subordination. All the works which have been mentioned above enable us to know about the general status of women in India and have been helpful in dealing with the present study. However these works do not include any studies on the tribal societies of North East India (except Bina Agarwal who had written about the Garos, Khasis and Lalungs to show women's land rights in traditionally matrilineal societies) especially Mizo society and this gap in the existing literature on women in India needs to be taken seriously.

In trying to understand the various dimensions of the problems of migration certain works have been helpful. For instance, works like. T.V.Sekher's, *Migration and Social Change*³⁹, edited works of Paul White and Robert Woods *The Geographical Impact of Migration*⁴⁰, John Connell et al, *Migration from Rural*

³⁶ J. Krishnamurthy (ed), *Women in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1989)

³⁷ Virginius Xaxa, "Women and Gender in the Study of Tribes in India" in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol II, No.3. September – December 2004, New Delhi

³⁸ Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own* (New Delhi, reprint, 1998)

³⁹ T.V.Sekhar, *Migration and Social Change* (New Delhi, 1997)

⁴⁰ Paul White & Robert Woods (ed), *The Geographical Impact of Migration* (London, 1980)

*Areas*⁴¹ and Kevin R. Cox *Man, Location and Behavior*⁴² have provided some insight into migration theories. They have also studied the impact of migration on the economy and society of the people. Since the present study is on the change of gender relations in the migration process, the above mentioned works are useful to see how and why people used to migrate in the primitive and even in modern age though they do not directly deal with changing gender relations.

There are works done on women of North East India. In S.L. Baruah's edited work *Status of Women in Assam*⁴³ we get some glimpses into the status that Assamese women have in the society. It deals with the position of women in relation to economic, social and religious life. Deepti Sharma's *Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle*⁴⁴ looks into the role played by the women of Assam in different phases of the freedom movement of India from 1921 to 1947. G.K. Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh in *Women of Manipur*⁴⁵ and Manju Chaki Sircar in *Feminism in a Traditional Society: A Study of Manipur*⁴⁶ discuss about the Manipuri (Meitei) women. Sircar in her book studied about the patriarchal society of the Meitei and when assessing it, she saw an expression of feminism in the Meitei culture which "encourages women to be individually self-reliant and collectively powerful without necessarily involving a sex war". Lucy Zehol's edited work *Women in Naga Society*⁴⁷ studies the Naga society from the traditional to modern scenario which provides vital information on the Naga women. In this book the different women of

⁴¹ John Connell, et al. *Migration from Rural Areas*

⁴² Kevin R. Cox, *Man, Location & Behaviour-An Introduction to Human Geography* (USA, 1972)

⁴³ S.L. Baruah (ed), *Status of Women in Assam* (New Delhi, 1992)

⁴⁴ Deepti Sharma, *Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle* (Calcutta, 1993)

⁴⁵ G.K. Ghosh & Shukla Ghosh, *Women of Manipur* (New Delhi, 1997)

⁴⁶ Manju Chaki Sircar, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Lucy Zehol (ed), *op.cit.*

Naga society are studied and it showed how the level of patriarchy has been different in the different society. The edited work of Soumen Sen, *Women in Meghalaya*⁴⁸ also studies about the role of women in a matrilineal society of Meghalaya. All the works mentioned above enabled us to have an idea about the status of women in North East India and also of some of the tribal societies. Apurba K.Baruah and Manorama Sharma have also studied and questioned about “Matriliny, Land Rights and Political Power in Khasi Society” in *Indian Journal of Human Rights, Volume III*⁴⁹. Frederick S.Downs in *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India*⁵⁰ discusses the women of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram in the light of the impact of Christianity on the women of Nagaland and Mizoram. He concluded that Christianity contributed towards the progress of women mainly through education and the work of women for women but the church in North East India was a patriarchal church and hence paved the way for the process of patriarchalization.

To understand the history of the Zo in Burma it was necessary to look into works on the history of Burma which would provide information about the people living in that country. Nicholas Tarling’s edited work of *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*⁵¹; W.S.Desai’s *A Pageant of Burmese History*⁵²; F.S.Donnison’s *Burma*⁵³; G.E.Harvey’s *History of Burma*⁵⁴; Reginald Le May’s *The Culture of*

⁴⁸ Soumen Sen (ed), *Women in Meghalaya* (Delhi, 1992)

⁴⁹ Apurba Baruah & Manorama Sharma, “Matriliny, Land Rights and Political Power in Khasi Society” in G. Haragopal (ed), *Indian Journal of Human Rights*, Vol.III. Hyderabad, 1999

⁵⁰ Frederick S.Downs, *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India* (Shillong, 1996)

⁵¹ Nicholas Tarling (ed), *The Cambridge History of South East Asia Vol II* (Cambridge, 1992)

⁵² W. S. Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History* (Calcutta, 1961)

⁵³ F.S. Donnison, *Burma* (London, 1970)

⁵⁴ G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (London, 1925)

*South East Asia*⁵⁵ and Arthur d. Phyre's *History of Burma*⁵⁶ provide a lot of information on the origin and culture of the people who have lived and are still living in Burma. These works mainly deal with the history of Burma and have less information on the Chin Hills. F.K.Lehman's *The Structure of Chin Society*⁵⁷ studied the people inhabiting the Chin Hills in Burma. Carey and Tuck's *The Chin Hills Vol I*⁵⁸ dealt with the entry of British government in the Chin Hills and also information on the people living in the Hills. All these works throw some light on the origin of the Mizo. H.N.C. Stevenson's work *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes*⁵⁹ deals with the Lai of Burma. Stevenson studied in detail about the socio-economic condition of the different tribes of the Chin Hills and also the impact of western culture on the economy of the people. Sing Khaw Khai's work *Zo People and their Culture*⁶⁰ studied about the origin and cultural life of the Zo. These works give us a view of the Lai-Zo in Burma and have been helpful for the present study. Maung Shwe Wa's book *Burma Baptist Chronicle*⁶¹ deals with the American Baptist Missionaries work in Burma and it also included the mission's work among the Zo of Burma. It is therefore an important source to know how the mission work had tried to evangelize the people through education and medical works. The major aspect missing in these works is the gender analysis but the information available in them has definitely helped in looking at the historical process from the perspective of the woman.

⁵⁵ Reginald Le May, *The Culture of South East Asia* (London, revised, 1956)

⁵⁶ Arthur D. Phyre, *History of Burma* (London, 1983)

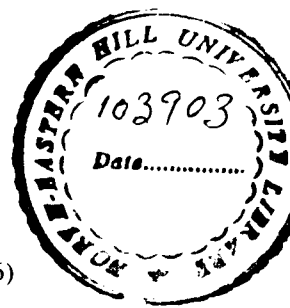
⁵⁷ F.K.Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl, reprint, 1980)

⁵⁸ Bertram S. Carey & H.N.Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)

⁵⁹ H.N.C.Stevenson, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes* (Aizawl, reprint, 1986)

⁶⁰ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and their Culture* (Churachanpur, 1995)

⁶¹ Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicle* (Rangoon, 1963)



There are also a number of works both in English and the vernacular in regard to the history of the Mizo. A.G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis*⁶²; Alexander Mackenzie's *The North East Frontier of India*⁶³, A.S. Reid's *Chin Lushai Land*⁶⁴, T.H. Lewin's *Wild Races of South Eastern India*⁶⁵ and *A Fly on the Wheel* are the most popularly referred works on the Mizo and all of them provide information not only about the various British expeditions into the land but they also discuss about the culture of the people. But they do not have specific discussion on gender though some of them have descriptions about the activities of Mizo women. J. Shakespeare in *The Lushei Kuki Clans*⁶⁶ and N.E. Parry in *A Monograph of Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* and *The Lakhers*⁶⁷ throw light on the customs of different clans of Lusei and about the tradition and culture of the Lakher (Mara). Mrs.N.Chatterji in her work *Status of Women in Earlier Mizo Society*⁶⁸ studied Mizo women before their exposure to Christianity. She gave a rosy picture of the status of the Mizo women and claimed that the Mizo women's position and status were much better than the women of other tribes. She however did not make an indepth study of the Mizo women as she emphasised only on the customs of the traditional society and did not compare the women's status with that of the men. The same author also wrote *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in Mizo Society*⁶⁹ in which she studied the *zawlbuk* (bachelor's dormitory) and in a way eulogised its importance in the society but the

⁶² A.G.McCall, *op.cit*

⁶³ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India* (New Delhi, reprint, 1999)

⁶⁴ A.S.Reid, *Chin Lushai Land* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)

⁶⁵ T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South Eastern India* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977) and *A Fly on the Wheel or How I helped to Govern India* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977)

⁶⁶ J. Shakespeare, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (Aizawl, reprint,1988)

⁶⁷ N.E.Parry, *A Monograph of Lusshai Customs and Ceremonies* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988)
The Lakhers (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)

⁶⁸ Mrs. N.Chatterji, *Status of Women in Earlier Mizo Society* (Aizawl, 1975)

⁶⁹ Mrs. N. Chatterji, *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society* (Aizawl, 1975)

work had no gender dimensions in it. Sangkima's *Mizo Society and Social Change*⁷⁰, Animesh Ray's *Mizoram*⁷¹, Lalrinmawia's *Mizoram-History and Cultural Identity*⁷², C.Nunthara's *Mizoram – Society and Polity*⁷³ have thrown some light on Mizoram and the various changes in the society though gender relations do not form a part of their analysis. There are also some works on the Christian missionaries in Mizoram. Zairema, *God's Miracle in Mizoram*⁷⁴, C.L.Hminga's *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*⁷⁵, J.M.Lloyd's *History of the Church in Mizoram*⁷⁶ discuss how the missionaries entered and worked in Mizoram. They also wrote about the impact Christianity had on education and the people. J.V.Hluna's *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram*⁷⁷ studies the impact of Christianity on the political development in Mizoram. All these works are helpful to know about the Mizo society and the various changes in it but practically none of them have laid any emphasis on women and gender relations.

In the vernacular also, not much emphasis was placed on the lives of women.

B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin*⁷⁸; L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thu Hla*⁷⁹; K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin*⁸⁰; H.L.C.A. *Zofate Chanchin*⁸¹; V.L.Siama, *Mizo History*⁸²; Lalthanliana *Mizo Chanchin*⁸³ and H.Lalrinawma *Hmasang Zofate*

⁷⁰ Sangkima, *Mizo Society and Social Change* (Delhi, 1993)

⁷¹ Animesh Ray, *Mizoram* (New Delhi, 1993)

⁷² Lalrinmawia, *Mizoram-History and Cultural Identity* (Guwahati, 1995)

⁷³ C. Nunthara, *Mizoram-Society and Polity* (New Delhi, 1996)

⁷⁴ Zairema, *God's Miracle in Mizoram* (Aizawl, 1976)

⁷⁵ C.L.Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, 1987)

⁷⁶ J.M.Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl, reprint, 1991)

⁷⁷ J.V.Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram* (Aizawl, 1985)

⁷⁸ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001)

⁷⁹ L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thu Hla* (Aizawl, 1994)

⁸⁰ K. Zawla, *op.cit.*

⁸¹ H.L.C.A., *Zofate Chanchin* (Tahan Kalemyo, 1995)

⁸² V.L.Siama, *Mizo History* (Aizawl, 1953)

⁸³ Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2000)

*Chanchin*⁸⁴, Liangkhaia's work *Mizo Chanchin*⁸⁵ and Remkunga's *Mizo Pi Pute Khawsak Dan Tlangpui*⁸⁶ have all narrated from their own perspectives the history of the Mizo, their culture and traditions and some of them have also focussed on the British administration in Mizoram. Duh Cung Nung's *Lai Nunphung*⁸⁷ deals with the Lai (Zo) of Myanmar. One major problem with most of these works is that they have not indicated the source of their various kinds of information. The information contained in such works therefore needs to be used with caution and after due corroborations. These male writers of Mizo history have not written anything specific on women though some of them have some sections on women. They also have not made a comparative study of the Mizo in Mizoram and of the Lai-Zo in Myanmar. However a re-interpretation of these works from the perspective of gender relations can provide a lot of information for the present study. To understand the Mizo society and also the changes which could have occurred during the process of migration one needs to study the Mizo history not only from the male perspective but also from the perspective of women. There are also works done on women by Mizo women theologians. T.Vanlaltlani *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*⁸⁸ and P.C.Laltlani *Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin*⁸⁹ wrote on the status of Mizo women. However their main emphasis was on women's contribution and position in the church. Though their works are important to know about the status of women and their role in the church yet their works did not go back to discuss the gender relations in the process of migration. Lalsangzuali Sailo in her work *Tlawm ve lo Lalnu*

⁸⁴ H.Lalrinawma, *Hmasang Zofate Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2000)

⁸⁵ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1976)

⁸⁶ Remkunga, *Mizo Pi Pute Khawsak Dan Tlangpui* (Aizawl, 1977)

⁸⁷ Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nunphung* (Falam, 2001)

⁸⁸ T.Vanlaltlani, *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh* (Aizawl, 2005)

⁸⁹ P.C.Laltlani, *Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2003)

*Ropuiliani*⁹⁰ had done an extensive research on the life of a woman chief Ropuiliani. This book is useful to know about the life of this woman chief. However she deals only with the life of Ropuiliani and has not tried to place her in the larger context of gender relations in Mizoram. Thus it becomes clear that most of the writers of Mizo history have not written anything specific on women and also have not made a comparative study of the Mizo in Mizoram and of the Lai-Zo in Myanmar. However a re-interpretation of many of these works from the perspective of gender relations provided a lot of information. To understand the Mizo society and also the changes which could have occurred during the process of migration one needs to study the Mizo history not only from the male perspective but also from the perspective of the women.

Thus we see that the study of Mizo women and the change of gender relations in the process of migration continued to be an area less explored by social scientists. The primary objective of this research therefore has been to study the evolution of patriarchy in Mizo society by tracing the migration process of the Mizo and the subsequent developments particularly in the context of gender relations. (However it should be noted that this work is not a study of the history of migration.) It also makes a comparative study of the Lusei, Lai and Mara in Mizoram and the Lai-Zo in Myanmar to ascertain whether exposure to different forms of changes like culture, religion and political system brought about any major changes in gender relations and whether patriarchy has remained constant or does it vary in different periods of time.

⁹⁰ Lalsangzuali Sailo, *Tlawm Ve Lo Lalnu Ropuiliani* (Aizawl, 1999)

This kind of a study has been done by adopting the methodology of qualitative analysis and a re-interpretation of the sources and a comparative study of the tribes mentioned in lines with gender history. The theoretical framework is based on the Socialist Feminist approach and the analysis has been made on the lines of additive gender history in which available sources are re-examined from the perspective of a woman to know the contributions and roles of women.

Why have we used this socialist theoretical framework?

Sharp class differentiations in Mizo society have not really crystallized and are still confined to a very small section of the population. So, social differentiations are at a very low level. Though there are slight variations in the status of the wives of the chiefs and the educated women, yet cutting across all classes are the patriarchal norms which allot women a subordinate status in all sections of the society. Therefore a theoretical framework was required which would combine both the class and feminist perspective and socialist feminism provides that.

The data is collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes relevant government reports, gazetteers and church papers. To corroborate and add to the data, oral history sources have also been tapped. The secondary sources include published works and unpublished works of some researchers. Articles appearing in newspapers have also been used. Various websites from the internet which are relevant for the study are also used. So from the data collected from the primary and secondary sources gender relations in the Mizo society during the process of the migration has been analysed.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCING PATRIARCHY AND GENDER HISTORY

In today's world, there has been a lot of study on gender and gender roles in the society. One of the reasons for this can be attributed to feminists who studied women vis-à-vis men in the society. As the studies progressed it was found that most of the societies in the world are dominated by men. The histories of different countries and culture are all about the history of men and what they had achieved. These histories were written by men and they wrote that which they assumed to be important. Some of the works which are mostly used in studying history, to name a few, are the works by Edward Gibbon¹, C.J.H. Hayes², Henry Beveridge³, Arnold J. Toynbee⁴. In these works it can be seen that women's participation in history was totally neglected and they were rather pushed to the background. Women's participation in the evolution of society and the fact that they were partners in the process of civilization were completely ignored. The authors of the traditional histories shared the positivist image of the masculine, a set of superior dominating characteristics even though they were living in different countries. Judith Zinsser observed that 'a brief survey of some of the "great historians" from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries shows the ways in which the realities of women's past disappeared in the denigrating, stereotypical portraits painted of individuals, and in the rhetorical uses made of women in the abstract.'⁵ However, when women like

¹ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (Hartfordshire, 1998)

² C.J.H. Hayes, *Modern Europe to 1870*, (Delhi, 3rd Indian reprint, 1998)

³ Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India*, (New Delhi, 6th reprint, 1974)

⁴ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York, 1962)

⁵ Judith P. Zinsser, *History & Feminism*, (New York, 1993) p.7,9

Mary Wollstonecraft, Sheila Rowbotham⁶ and others began to look for the women in history they came to know more about their history and how they were hidden in the writings of history and how they were subordinated. They also realised that they were subordinated primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideas in the recording and writing of history.

The word patriarchy which is frequently used by feminists and writers literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' in a family where the eldest male is the head of the family and controls his wife, children, other members of the family and slaves⁷. According to Gerda Lerner, the period of the establishment of patriarchy was not one event but a process which developed over a period of nearly 2500 years from approximately 3100 to 600 BC.⁸ As time passed the word patriarchy came to be generally used to refer to male domination in the family, society, polity etc whereby men are the decision makers in all aspects of life. It is a system of social structures and practices in which men selfishly dominate and exploit women to their own satisfaction. It can also be said to be an ideology in which men are seen as superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and that they are part of men's properties.⁹

Patriarchy can be seen in almost all the societies in the world. But it should be noted that its nature is different in different societies, in different classes in the same society and also in different periods of history. For instance, the practice of *purdah*, (the veil used by Hindu and Muslim women to cover their faces), which is

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London, 1992); Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History*, (New York, 1974)

⁷ Kamla Bhasin, *What is Patriarchy*, (New Delhi, 1994) p.3

⁸ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, 1986) p.8.

⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, (New York, 1993) p.3,4

one of the forms for subordinating women can be different for women of different region. It can also vary for Muslim and Hindu women. This custom can also differ according to the changes in time. An example for this can be inferred from the days of the Taliban in Afghanistan when all women were forced to cover themselves from head to toe even covering their faces, forbidden to work and leave the house without a male escort. But after the fall of the Taliban, women have been allowed to return to work and the government no longer forces women to cover themselves.¹⁰ However women still faced a lot of problems and discrimination. Another example for the difference of subordination of women through the changing times can be also seen in the case of widow remarriage. Traditionally in Indian society, widows were not allowed to remarry. However as time passed the Widow Remarriage Act (Act XV of 1856) was passed in which widows could remarry without any fear,¹¹ although the societal acceptance of this was a different matter. So though the function of patriarchy may vary, yet the concept remains the same. In all patriarchal societies, economic, political, religious, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men.

The family, which is the basic unit of society, can be said to be the most patriarchal. A man is assumed to be the head of the family and it is he who controls women's labour or production and mobility. Decisions about reproduction are also generally under the control of the male members. This has been noted by Kathleen A. Lahey when she wrote, "Most women procreate and nurture under conditions of such unrelenting male control that it is fair to say that all of women's reproductive

¹⁰ www.afghan-web.com/woman

¹¹ Shailly Sahai, *Social Legislation and Status of Hindu Women*, (Jaipur, 1996) p.21

arrangements are subject to some form of patriarchal domination."¹² The mother is also made to internalise the belief that she should be under the authority of the husband. Hence it is from this unit that the first lesson of patriarchy is taught and where a hierarchical system is created. The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow what is being taught, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order.¹³ When the children follow this order, the next generation is socialized into those patriarchal ideas through the family.

In the religious sphere it can also be seen that all established religions in the world are patriarchal as they regard male authority as supreme. In Brahmanical and Vedic teachings women were described as property. The Bhagavad-Gita places women, *vaisyas* and *shudras* in the same category and describes them all as being of sinful birth, and punishment for killing either a woman or a shudra is the same.¹⁴ The *Atharva Veda* has said that women should be kept away as sinfulness, deceit and ignorance are inherent in them.¹⁵ In Islam also, women had no recognised place. They were treated like properties bought by a price. Women also cannot be a *kazi*. "Women are like jewels are admired and sought after, but should be protected and guarded lest they be stolen. They are property, valuable property, but really not persons, and must not take upon themselves the prerogative of persons who are after all exclusively male."¹⁶ The *Quran* also said that "men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence and also because

¹² Kathleen A. Lahey, "Celebration and Struggle: Feminism and Law" in Angela Mies & Geraldine Finn (ed), *Feminism, From Pressure to Politics* (Jaipur, 2002) p.104

¹³ Gerda Lerner, *op. cit.* p.217

¹⁴ Neera Desai & Maithreyi Krishnaraj, *Women and Society in India*, (Delhi, 1987), p.34

¹⁵ Bibekananda Das & L.N.Dash, *The Feminine Gender*, (New Delhi, 1995) p. 61

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.64

they furnish dowry for women."¹⁷ Patriarchal idea is also seen in Christianity. The Old Testament of the Bible placed women in a secondary position. In today's church also a lot of discrimination is seen against women. In the church women play an important role but very often they are given a secondary position. Though some churches have allowed women to become a minister / pastor, yet majority of the churches including the churches in Mizoram still have not permitted women to be ordained ministers and elders.¹⁸ Hence women cannot occupy the position of decision makers. So it can be said that all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men. Women are hardly seen in the forefront. It is always the men who have defined morality, ethics, behaviour and even law. So in all religions the world over women are subordinated and pushed to the background.

Men also control the economic institutions. In Asian countries where majority of the people live in rural areas, land is an important significant form of property. Land determines a person's economic well being, social status, and political power¹⁹. Men are the ones who own most of the land and hence they tend to have more power than women and very often women had to be subservient to them. So, women had to be dependent on the male members of the family and had to be under their authority. Even if they happen to have some land, they hardly have any control over it. Ownership of land does not necessarily mean control over of the land.²⁰ Some women might have access to the land, but they hardly have any rights over it. In matrilineal societies also, it is found that even though women may inherit

¹⁷ Quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York, 1984) p.115

¹⁸ B.Lalrinchhani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District", Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, NEHU, 1998

¹⁹ Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own* (New Delhi, reprinted, 1998) p.xv

²⁰ *ibid.* p.12

the land, they could not dispose of it or take action on it as they wished. They had to have the consent of the brothers or uncles in the family. This becomes evident from the existing studies on the matrilineal societies like the Khasis and the Garos. Among the Khasis, women have no power or authority over the inherited property without the consent of the male members like the brothers or uncles.²¹ Among the Garos also, although the property is registered in the wife's name, the husband has the power to override her decision and wishes and women are under the control of their husbands.²² Women who work in the field had to toil for long hours and when they return to the house, they again had to do the many household chores without having any rest. In today's world many women are employed in offices. However in these cases it is seen that despite having a career outside the home they still have to look after the family. Hence they had to work outside to supplement the family's income and also had to bear the responsibility of being a mother. In spite of working hard for the family, the household works are not considered to be productive work as it is seen as personal work rather than an economic activity. If they did not happen to work outside, the chores which kept them busy all day long were not considered to be labour and therefore such women are often referred to as non-working women. It should be remembered that women maintain the other members of the family and makes it possible for them to reproduce the means of life through labour.²³ However women's role as producers, rearers of children and housework as mentioned is not considered to be an economic contribution. Women also have no control over their

²¹ Cerilla Khonglah, "Khasi Women and the Indigenous Question" in Walter Fernandes & Sanjay Barbora (ed), *Changing Women's Status in India: Focus on the NorthEast* (Guwahati, 2002) p.169

²² Caroline R. Marak, "Matriliny and Education among the Garos" in Walter Fernandes & Sanjay Barbora (ed), *ibid.* p.161

²³ Sheila Rowbotham, *op. cit.*, p.xxix

own production. They often had to submit whatever they earn to their husbands or to the male head in the family.²⁴ Even if both the husband and wife are earning, the wife's earnings are mainly used for family maintenance while men kept back their income for spending on food and drinks.²⁵ So it can be said that women have little access to resources and also have little control on the distribution of the products of their labour. They also have no control on reproduction. The numbers of children were often determined by the husband.

In political system also, it is seen that women rarely come to the forefront. The reason for women's exclusion in the polity was mainly because women were considered to have no reasoning power and that they were inferior. Aristotle reasoned that as males were superior and female inferior so men rule over women.²⁶ Moreover very often women were economically dependent on men and had no resources of their own. Since they did not have an earning to fall back on they were regarded to be of no significance and would not be able to contribute to the society. Moreover, it was believed that politics belongs to the public sphere where intrusion of women is not welcomed.²⁷ Hence, the structures and institutions of the state have been made by men and embody their interest rather than those of women. It took a long time even in the west for women to get suffrage. Even in the United States of America, when it was debated whether the American Indians should be able to cast their vote, the issue of women was not debated at all. There was no need felt even to mention or justify that while women were counted among the whole number of free

²⁴ Dr. Santosh, *Cultural Pattern and Economic Participation in Women* (New Delhi, 1996) p.86

²⁵ Bina Agarwal, *op. cit.*, p.28-30

²⁶ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York, 1993) p.6

²⁷ Kiran Saxena (ed) *Women and Politics*, (New Delhi, 2000) p.21,22

persons in each state for purposes of representation, they had no right to vote and to be elected to public office.²⁸ It was only in the 20th century that women the world over received the right to vote. This shows that women were not regarded to be citizens and their status was lower than that of the men. As women were regarded to be inferior and devoid of reasoning power, they were excluded from the important decision making bodies. This idea is reflected even in the constitution making bodies of India and USA. In India, the members of the drafting committee of the constitution were A.K.Ayyar, N.G.Ayyar, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Dr.K.M.Munshi, M.Saadulla, B.L.Mitter, D.P.Khaitan and N.M.Rao²⁹ who are all men. This has to be seen in the context of the fact that women participated in large numbers in the Indian National Movement, and there were educated and qualified women too. It also needs to be asked that even though there were women members in the Constituent Assembly, did their voice make a very big difference in the field of gender concerns? The Constitution of USA was also drafted by representatives of twelve states³⁰ who were referred as the founding fathers which showed that they were all men. Thus the state constitutions, laws and other ordinances of the countries are all drafted and decided by the male members of the society without considering the opinions of the women. The exclusion of women as decision makers and denying them the right to vote indicates that the state consider women as unfit members of the polity. There

²⁸ Gerda Lerner, *The of Feminist Consciousness, op. cit.*, p.8

²⁹ V.D.Kulshreshtha's *Landmarks in Indian Legal and Constitutional History*, Revised by B.M.Gandhi (Lucknow, 2005) p.349

³⁰ S.E.Morison, *The Growth of the American Republic* Vol.One (USA. 1970) p.245

are some women who are seen in the political field. It was said by feminists that women who took part in Marxist-Leninist organizations were often the wives or lovers of male leaders and their opinions tend to be indistinguishable from those of their mentors.³¹ In India too we see that Indira Gandhi was an important Prime Minister.³² There are also other prominent leaders in many Asian countries like Benazir Bhutto, Sirimavo Bandarnaike, Khaleda Zia and Corazon Aquino. But when studied closely it can be seen that these women are visible due to their association with some male political personalities. If the life of Indira Gandhi is carefully studied, one see that she was carefully groomed by her father Jawaharlal Nehru. This is revealed in the many letters sent by Nehru to her daughter Indira.³³ In the life of Benazir Bhutto it is a known fact that after she completed her studies in Oxford, she wanted to join Foreign Service. But her father Z.A.Bhutto insisted that she contest the elections and at the time since she was not very experienced she assisted her father as an advisor and later became the Prime Minister of Pakistan.³⁴ Indian women politicians also perceive their participation in politics as being supportive of the activity of their male family members, husbands, brothers and fathers.³⁵ They were active in politics but the structure and pattern of gender relationship was not disrupted. They were involved in politics with the consent of their male family members. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, one of the pioneer Indian women politicians also

³¹ Alison M.Jagger, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (New Jersey, 1983), p.232

³² N.B.Ghodke, *Indira Gandhi* (Jaipur, 1987); Don Moraes, *Mrs Gandhi* (New Delhi, 1980)

³³ Sonia Gandhi (ed), *Freedom's Daughter, Letters between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi, 1992)

³⁴ www.storyofpakistan.com/person

³⁵ Vijay Agnew, *Elite Women in Indian Politics*, (Delhi, 1979) p,138

acknowledged that she was able to participate in politics because her husband agreed and encouraged her to do so.³⁶ So it can be said that women's involvement in politics showed the spirit of cooperation and not of competition with men. Moreover it can be asked whether they had really challenged patriarchal system. This can be questioned as they had the conventional attitude and were not mobilized on the basis of personal gain or from a desire to emancipate women or to demand an equal share of political status and prestige. There are some women in politics like Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir who did not have significant relations with other prominent men but it should be noted here that they also functioned within the structure and principles which were laid down by men which was an accepted framework. If they had questioned or tried to undermine patriarchy it can be wondered whether they would have been welcomed by other members of their party. Thus it becomes clear that women hardly have any place in the political institutions and hence "in no country do women have political status, access, or influence equal to men's."³⁷

Thus it can be said that in a patriarchal society men have to a certain degree, a sense of freedom. But on women, a 'cultural lobotomy'³⁸ is performed in which men undermine women in their physical and intellectual capacities under the most exploitative conditions. Hence there are divisions, distinctions and oppositions in the society. Patriarchal knowledge systems are also seen to emphasise specialization, to

³⁶ *ibid.*, p,139

³⁷ Barbara Nelson & Najma Chowdhury(ed), *Women and Politics Worldwide* (Delhi, 1997) p.3

³⁸ Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, *Women Cross Culturally – Change and Challenge*, (Chicago, 1975) p,286

be narrowly compartmentalized and fragmented and unable to see the wholeness of phenomena.³⁹

As patriarchy is seen in almost all societies in the world, many writers have debated over its origin or why women were subordinated. There were some anthropologists and historians who were known as the maternalists who assumed that the family had originally been matriarchal in nature. They postulated their theory from the evidence of mother-goddess figures in many ancient religions and said that this proved the existence of female power in the past.⁴⁰ To prove that matriarchy had existed they cite the status of Iroquois women who they claimed had powerful public role in controlling food distribution and in the Council of Elders.⁴¹ However, other anthropologists when studying about these people found out that the Iroquois women never held the office of the leaders of the tribes and never became chiefs. According to Lerner, the maternalists who talked of matriarchy where women subordinate men could not cite anthropological, ethnological or historical evidence. They based their assumptions on myth and religion.⁴² Moreover when further studies were carried out, it was found that most of the societies which were said to be matriarchal were instead matrilineal and matrilocal where women did not have political power and all authorities were not vested in them. There were many societies where a sort of egalitarian system was found and this was usually seen among hunting / gathering tribes which are characterized by economic interdependency. This can still be seen among the Kalahari Bushmen where men

³⁹ Alison Jagger, *op.cit.*, p.367

⁴⁰ Gerda Lerner, *The ...of Patriarchy, op.cit.*, p.28 ff

⁴¹ *ibid.*,p,30

⁴² *ibid.*, p.31

hunt and women are the gatherers and among the Eskimos the raw materials to be used for hunting were processed by women⁴³. This economic interdependency does not mean that women and men are equal and as Margaret Mead has shown that men and women are not taken as equal in any culture of the world.⁴⁴ In some societies power is shared between the women and men and in some groups women greatly influence the power of men. However a matriarchal society where women held power over men and made all the important decisions in all aspects of life is not to be found.

It has also been said that women were subordinated by men 'by reason of his greater strength, his stronger sex drive, his insistence upon exogamous marriage, or some similar reasons relating to his greater sexuality or aggressiveness.'⁴⁵ However, this has to be examined closely. Men appear to be stronger physically as they were conditioned right from childhood to be strong and were taught by the father and other male elders so as to make them appear strong and brave. Researchers have found that "fathers sex-type children more than mothers. They treat sons and daughters more differently and enforce gender role expectations more vigorously than mothers do."⁴⁶ The question of aggressiveness also cannot be ascertained as the level of aggressiveness is not clear. Hence the traits which are placed on men seem to be socially determined rather than biologically determined. Therefore the male character traits cannot be used for subordinating women. So it needs to be

⁴³ Bibekananda Das & L.N.Dash, *The Feminine Gender*, (New Delhi, 1995) p,45

⁴⁴ Margaret Mead, *Male and Female*, (London, 1950) p.8

⁴⁵ Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, *op.cit.*, p.286

⁴⁶ Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective" in *The Polity Readers in Gender Studies* (Delhi, 2002) p.45

questioned whether male subordination of women has been physically conditioned or socially conditioned.

While some feminists have accepted that women's subordination was because of men's greater physical strength, F.Engels in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*⁴⁷ had postulated that women's subordination is historically related to the development of private property and emergence of a class society. Before private property and wealth were accumulated, there existed the mother right. The division of labour was also clearly drawn. "The men went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw materials for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house, and prepared food and clothing; they cooked, weaved and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house."⁴⁸ In case of separation also, men could take the objects or the tools which were used by them for hunting or working and the cattle while women could retain household goods.⁴⁹ Inheritance and lineage were drawn from the mother's side. But as wealth increased through domestication and owning of slaves and private property became more prominent, surplus was produced in areas controlled by men. Men then wanted their wealth to be under their name and to be inherited by their sons. So monogamy for women and the bondage of women to men was insisted upon and thus the mother right was overthrown and this was described by Engels as the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*.⁵⁰ Patriarchy then became to be enforced and women became dependents on men which enabled

⁴⁷ F.Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (Moscow, reprint, 1977)

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.155

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.55

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.57

men to subordinate them. Thus, Engels's view was that subordination of women took place when private property emerged. However this has been critiqued by more recent studies which talk of the existence of patriarchy in pre-private property societies. Women may not have been systematically subjugated however women were not entirely equal to men as mentioned earlier. The studies also mentioned that there were assumptions in Engels theory like the desire for men to leave property to his heirs; an original and natural division of labour between the sexes. The theory that men created the first wealth was also challenged as they pointed out that women were the first cultivators who both provided subsistence and produced the first surplus.⁵¹ Engels was also criticized on his theory of sexual division of the family. It was stated that "the naturalistic account of the division of labour i.e. men doing social production and women doing the household work is contradicted by ethnographic and socio-logical data showing that women regularly contribute to subsistence activity and thereby to social production."⁵² But these critiques of Engels have not shown very clearly why and how male supremacy had been asserted.

However, through all the anthropological and historical debates on patriarchy one common feature that has emerged is that patriarchal domination is more a socio-historical construct than a biological construct. Thus it is not to be wondered that patriarchy was also present in the tribal societies of the North East. Prior to the British administration, many of the tribes in North East India including the Mizo engaged themselves in Inter-tribal and inter-village wars. Hence to protect

⁵¹ Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory* (New York, 1992) pp.73-75

⁵² Meena A. Kelkar, *Subordination of Woman* (New Delhi, 1995) p.17

themselves from invasion they used to raid other villages or ambush their enemies. After killing their enemies they used to cut the head and take it to their village to show that they have really killed the enemy. This practice is often referred to as head hunting. The head of the slain enemy was taken not only to prove their word but also as a symbol of their bravery. It was also believed that the slain enemy would serve the slayer in the next world provided the slayer organised a ritual or ceremony called *ral aih*.⁵³ In many of the tribes in Southeast Asia who practiced head hunting, the slayer was considered to be a brave warrior and enabled them to boldly ask a woman to marry them.⁵⁴ So, head hunting was also used for attracting girls. The warriors who used to take home the heads were all men and since they were regarded to be protecting the village including women and children, they gained the respect of the elders and other people in the village.⁵⁵ By achieving prominence they also had a strong influence in the affairs of the society and they were given leadership roles. Women also had to obey their authority since men were the ones to protect them from being killed or from being taken as a slave. Hence in the tribal societies of North East India, head hunting is seen as one of the factors that contribute to subordination of women and their exclusion in leadership roles.⁵⁶ As mentioned, since women looked up to the men for their survival, women therefore had to bow down under the authority of the men folk. So almost all the tribes of the Northeast except the Khasis, Garos and Rabhas are patriarchal society where man is the head

⁵³ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 2001) p.330

⁵⁴ Dr. Susan Russell, "Headhunting in Southeast Asia" in www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/headhunting

⁵⁵ *ibid*; B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.330

⁵⁶ A.Wati Longchar, 'Issues in Feminist Theology', in R.L.Hnuni (ed) *Transforming Theology for Empowering Women* (Jorhat, 1999) p.20

of the family and also possess all the leadership roles in the society. It would therefore be important to analyse whether the migration process which took place among people as in the case of the Mizo, can also be attributed to the enforcement of patriarchy and this will be studied in the later chapters.

Migration of people had occurred from prehistoric times and has continued till now. Migration is ordinarily referred to as a relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance⁵⁷. Migration is also known as the movement of people from one permanent residence to another permanent or temporary residence for substantial period of time.⁵⁸ There are various causes for people to migrate such as natural disaster, calamities, scarcity of food and invasion. It is also said that wider economic, political and cultural conditions are potent causes of migration.⁵⁹ The most common theory of migration which is being pointed out is the ‘push and pull’ theory advocated by Bogue.⁶⁰ For the push factor the various causes enumerated are invasion, scarcity of food and being made outcaste by other members of the society. On the other hand, the pull factors could be availability of food, better ecological environment and attraction of labour or jobs. The availability of unused land and freedom from interference are important variables for people to migrate.⁶¹ When people migrate to other region, they try to find a place which is similar to the place they left. If that is not possible, they had to adapt to their new surroundings. In these circumstances, their culture and their socio-economic system would undergo a

⁵⁷ William Peterson, “Migration: Social Aspects” in David L.Sills (ed) *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 10 (U.S., 1968) p.286

⁵⁸ R.B.Mandal (ed), *Frontiers in Migration Analysis* (New Delhi, 1981) p,1

⁵⁹ Ram Nath Singh, *Impact of Out Migration on Socio-Economic Conditions*, (Delhi, 1990) p.10

⁶⁰ Clifford J.Jansen (ed), *Readings in the Sociology of Migration* (London, 1970) p,12

⁶¹ Paul White & Robert Woods(ed), *The Geographical Impact of Migration*, (London, 1980) p,10

change.⁶² Hence they may have to grow different kind of crops and the houses which they built may have to be different also. They could also be influenced by the people who had migrated earlier. It is most probable that they would learn new values and also try to adjust their living conditions according to the environment. So it can be said that migration helps in the diffusion of ideas and information. This brings about social and economic change, and can be regarded as a human adjustment to economic, environmental and social problems. Moreover when people migrate, they may have to fight other people who were already in the region. Hence men who are physically stronger and have traditionally been the warriors were usually looked up to for support and protection. There are various theories and works propounded by anthropologists, sociologists and geographers regarding migration. However the theories and their works did not include how migration process affected gender relations. In earlier times migration was based on assumptions and was done on a trial and error basis. It can be noted that when people shift from place to place which can cover long distances, their food habits, dress and their way of life could undergo a change. As time passed the people also make invent new things and so technology would advance. Moreover if the society is passing through a change in social, economic and technological conditions, gender relations would also be effected. So in a transitory society patriarchy could be reinforced or it may also happen that patriarchy could be weakened. Hence the level of patriarchy would be different according to the periods of time and as a result the level of women's subordination could also vary.

⁶² *ibid.*, p.55

Supporters of patriarchy, like the traditionalists, however often argued that patriarchy is a given constant as they regard it to be biologically determined. Gerda Lerner commented, 'traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a scientific framework, have regarded women's subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable.'⁶³ They put forward the belief that since men are stronger physically, they become hunters and providers and also defend their women against enemies while women being weaker physically stay at home and look after the family. These biological differences assigned them different social roles and tasks. So they propounded that women should be subordinated to men as they were created to have different roles and position. They also argued that because women produce children, their main purpose in life is to become mothers, and so their primary role is to be child-bearers and child-rearers.⁶⁴ In reality, it can be noted that child bearing is sex attributed and cannot be changed. However child rearing is socially constructed. The various duties and functions to be done by men and women are culturally or socially constructed. This division of labour is more a matter of culture and is clearly seen from anthropological and historical studies. Activities which are generally accepted as masculine in male centred societies are also performed by women in some other societies. Margaret Mead wrote that among the Arapesh tribe in New Guinea both the sexes have feminine trait and among the Mundugumor both the sexes have masculine characters.⁶⁵ It was also noted that among the tribes of Nambikwatra tribe and Encounter Bay in South Australia, it was the father who took care of the children while women do the housework but prefer hunting and war

⁶³ Gerda Lerner, *The ...of Patriarchy, op.cit.*, p.16

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.17

⁶⁵ Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, (New York, 1935)

expeditions.⁶⁶ From such researches it has been possible to establish that the roles played by male and female is not because of biology but due to social conditioning.

The cause of women's subordination has also been studied by the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss.⁶⁷ He points out that just as there is an exchange of other objects, there was also an exchange of women. Women are thought of more as commodities than as human beings and were so exchanged and this led to the subordination of women. The idea put forward by this theory that exchange of women took place was that as the people thought endogamy as a taboo, and so they followed exogamy. The exchange of women was established between two groups of men while women were just objects in the process of exchange. The establishment of these extra-familial ties produces social relations which enabled people to extend the field of their activities and even their authorities beyond their own families. It also guaranteed "peaceful co-existence by creating extended family structures among strangers".⁶⁸ Gerda Lerner had postulated as to why women were exchanged and not the men. According to her assumptions the people knew that if they captured women they could reproduce and population would be added to their group which would mean more labour force. She also added that if men were captured, they could not be trusted as they would always wait for a chance to get revenge or go back to their tribe. But if women were taken and given off in marriages and have children, they would be loyal to the tribe.⁶⁹ So women were taken as captives to reproduce children

⁶⁶ Barbara Sinclair Deckard, *The Women's Movement; Political, Socio-economic and Psychological Issues* (New York, 1983) p,188

⁶⁷ Claude Levi Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston, 1969) p.115

⁶⁸ Luce Irigaray "Women in the Market" in Julie Rivkin, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (U.K.,2004) p.799

⁶⁹ Gerda Lerner, *Theof Patriarchy, op.cit.*, p.48-49

and hence viewed women as a reproductive object. Moreover exchange of women could also mean not only women taken as captives, but also of bride stealing, rape or negotiated marriages. In this process Levi-Strauss said that women are reified, become dehumanized and are thought of more as things than as human.⁷⁰ According to him, this exchange of women marks the beginning of women's subordination. This exchange reinforces a sexual division of labour which institutes male dominance.⁷¹ However one can wonder why it was only the women who were captured or given in exchange and not the men. It can be assumed that this may be because women were weaker and so could not resist the things imposed on them. It should also be noted that in foraging groups women play a major role in procuring food and other requirements for the family but men occupy a higher position and that the groups were patriarchal.⁷² If this was so it can be said that it was because of their subordination that women were exchanged.

The radical feminists on the other hand believed that women are a class by themselves, a class whose membership is defined by sex.⁷³ As such they are subordinated in all societies because of biological differences, hierarchical division of labour and sex roles. The radical feminists insisted that male power is not only confined to the public worlds of political and paid employment, but that it extends into private life as in the family and in sexuality.⁷⁴ The radicals also stressed that as men owned and controlled women's reproductive capacities, women have become dependent on men. Radical feminism also view patriarchy as an autonomous, social,

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.47

⁷¹ Meena A.Kelkar, *op. cit.*, p.13

⁷² Michael C.Howard, *Contemporary Cultural Anthropology* (1989) pp.104-105

⁷³ Alison Jagger, *op.cit.*, p.102

⁷⁴ Valerie Bryson, *op. cit.*, p.181

historical and political force.⁷⁵ The radical feminists have shown the 'male bias' in the society and how the various disciplines of study have reinforced patriarchy.⁷⁶ Susan Brownmiller, for instance, argues that women's subordination is due to men's ability to rape them.⁷⁷ Radical feminists like Brownmiller explained that men use their ability to rape, to intimidate and control women and this led to male dominance over women. The Radical Feminists have tended to generalise women of different societies and at different points of time into one homogenous unit. But it should be noted that though women were subordinated, the methods and level of subordination of women of different societies and at different time can vary. As noted by anthropologists, there are some societies in which women share power with their men. So the level of subordination might not be the same and their experiences could differ. Radical Feminists nevertheless have brought valuable insights to feminist theorizing. It identified the ways and means in which male values constructed women to be subordinated and enabled women to find out how to free themselves from it. Alison Jagger has rightly said, 'Radical Feminism has begun to create a "counter-reality" to show us the world not just as it appears to women who are confused by patriarchal ideology but as it appears to those who have a consciousness of their own oppression, who are aware that they inhabit a patriarchy. It has drawn on the experience of feminist women to show us, often, through poetry and literature, that prevailing world views are male-biased and descriptively inadequate.'⁷⁸ The Radical Feminists tries to erode the barrier which separates the

⁷⁵ Nancy Mandell (ed), *Feminist Issues*, (Ontario, 1995) p.14

⁷⁶ Alison M.Jagger, *op.cit.*, p.12

⁷⁷ Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York, 1976)

⁷⁸ Alison M.Jagger, *op.cit.*, p.381

public and private sphere which was earlier demarcated by patriarchy. The Radicals emphasised that there is no distinction between the public and private realm and that both the realms are interconnected. They therefore started the slogan 'the personal is political'.⁷⁹ So every area of life is also the sphere of sexual politics. Thus Radical Feminism provides the conceptual foundation for bringing sexuality, childbearing and childrearing into the domain of politics.⁸⁰

Marxist Feminists on the other hand see women's subordination as originating with the introduction of private property. As Marx was primarily concerned with class antagonism, he concentrated on the exploitation of the workers who sold their labour to the owners of capital and how they got their part back in the form of wages.⁸¹ This could therefore include women who are working outside but did not include their work in the household. Though Marxists were correct in seeing women's relation to production but the crucial ways in which women's subordination is maintained within the family is ignored. According to Rowbotham, Marx takes for 'granted the necessity of women's labour in maintaining and reproducing wage earners, but he does not examine this in any detail or discuss its implications for women's consciousness.'⁸² As a result questions of sex, gender and procreation are not examined by them whereas when the sexual division of labour is examined, it is mainly in connection with economic production.

A very orthodox Marxist theory therefore may not adequately capture the very subtle workings of patriarchy in a society. It was in this context that Socialist

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.101

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.106

⁸¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *op.cit.*, p.vvii

⁸² *ibid.*

Feminism was born in the 1970s. It is the development of a political theory and practice that synthesize the best insights of radical feminism and of the Marxist tradition. Socialist feminism tries to evolve a better theory and makes an attempt to evade the problems that have confronted the earlier feminist theories.⁸³ Socialist feminism also believed that women's inferior status is rooted in private property and class divided society. They also believed that sexual activity, childbearing, and childrearing are social practices that show power relations and are therefore appropriate subjects for political analysis. Moreover, they do not view 'humans as abstract genderless individuals, with women essentially indistinguishable from men. It views women as constituted essentially by the social relations they inhabit. The social relations of society define the particular activity a woman engages in at a given moment.'⁸⁴

The three main trends of feminist thoughts discussed above, i.e, Radical Feminists, Marxist Feminist and Socialist Feminist all tried to understand how women are subordinated and to find a way to end that subordination. Each feminist theory believed that women are subordinated but they perceive that subordination in a different way and the means for ending the subordination is also prescribed differently. Marxists see the existence and origins of patriarchy as bound up with class society and that patriarchy emerged after private property had developed. On the other hand, Radical Feminists see patriarchy as either autonomous or itself the cause of other forms of oppression. They also theorized that patriarchy did not evolve after capitalism but that it occurred in pre - capitalist society. Marxism

⁸³ Alison M.Jagger, *op.cit.*, p,123

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p.130

believed that male dominance is an 'ideology by which capital divides and rules; it must be overcome by a "cultural revolution" based on a socialist transformation of the "economy".'⁸⁵ For radical feminism, male dominance is grounded in men's universal control over women's bodies, meaning their sexual and procreative capacities; it must be overcome by women's achieving sexual and procreative self-determination. The political theory of socialist feminism tries to incorporate the essence of both the above views by conceiving of contemporary male dominance as part of the economic foundation of society. The economics of domination was being understood to include childbearing and sexual activities as well. In the socialist feminist view, therefore, the abolition of male dominance requires a transformation of the economic foundation of society as a whole.'⁸⁶

Though different theories may be presented for the origin of the subordination of women, it can be safely said that various aspects of patriarchy are the main reasons for the women's subordination. It is patriarchal thought that allots a different status, position and function for men and women. Such thought prescribes that men and women are biologically different, their physique and appearances are different and so their body functioning would be different. Therefore the roles they were supposed to play is also different. Men are supposed to be the breadwinner and often go out of the house to earn a living. On the other hand women are supposed to stay in the house and look after the household. Even if they happen to have employment somewhere else, looking after the household is still their responsibility. They are also the ones who have to look after the children, in short the care-givers.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p.147

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

Men are also taught to be aggressive and domineering while women are told to act submissive and gentle. Girls are scolded if they happen to roam around while boys are hardly admonished for it. The roles and implications of such roles based on differences of sex is due to gender which is culturally constructed due to the influence of patriarchy. The word gender seems to have first appeared among American feminists who wanted to insist on the social quality of distinctions based on sex.⁸⁷ Gender is also used as a way of referring to the social organization of the relationship between the two sexes. Gerda Lerner explained gender as the ‘cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time.’⁸⁸ So it can be said that sex is biologically given while gender is culturally created. So sex is unchangeable whereas gender can and does undergo changes over time and is accordance to various social norms.

Thus, gender relations and gendered roles which has influenced the society for a long time had its effect on the writings of history too. Gerda Lerner has written that there is a difference between the unrecorded past and History which is the recorded and interpreted past. Women were always present in the unrecorded past, have participated in all events and have shared the world with men. They were instrumental in creating society. So, in the unrecorded past the contributions and works of women and men were preserved in folklore, art and ritual.⁸⁹ However a glaring feature of the recorded History and in its interpretation is the marginalisation and complete wiping out of the women. Moreover the language which was used in

⁸⁷ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988) p.29

⁸⁸ Gerda Lerner, *The ... of Patriarchy*, *op.cit.*, p.238

⁸⁹ *ibid*

the recorded history was also masculine as if history was a masculine phenomenon.⁹⁰

There were of course some women who were seen in the records, but they are there due to their connection with males and were qualified by male standards. The main reason for women to be obliterated in history is because almost all historians have been male and were influenced by patriarchal thoughts. They have recorded and interpreted only what they have assumed to be important. The importance which they therefore gave was only to the lives and activities of men. Hence the “subject matter of history is always men in the midst of other men – men in collectives and groups”.⁹¹ The contributions of women were not important for them and hence women were rarely given a space in the recordings. It may be argued that there were some men too whose lives and activities were not recognized but here also it can be said that this was because of class and not sex. In a society the dominant groups were also given significance and thereby the minorities were not given importance. Moreover since the early writers were mostly the educated ones from the upper classes so the lives of the people of the lower classes were hardly recognized. However, the lives of these hidden men was because of class whereas women’s contribution was obliterated because of gender,⁹² and this was altogether a different concept. So it can be said that men were not hidden because of sex while women were hidden because of their sex. Thus texts on religion, law, politics, education etc carried different pronouncement for men depending on caste, class, age and religious

⁹⁰ Judith P.Zinsser, *op. cit.*, p,22ff

⁹¹ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York, 1970), p.217

⁹² Sheila Rowbotham, *op .cit.*,p,xxxii

sect. In contrast, women's differences were overshadowed by their biological characteristics and the subordinate roles they were destined to play.⁹³

Even though women were not given a fair share in the recorded history, historians have called this 'History and claimed Universality' for it.⁹⁴ So, all theories about human beings, our society and culture and behaviour have been man-made. Observations and interpretations in each discipline reflect perspective which means that their narratives and interpretations are not as true for women as they are for men. They do not correspond with women's understandings. What women have done and topics that were intertwined with women's lives – household and agricultural technology; religious ceremonies; family relationships and their reproduction were ignored and overlooked. The earlier historians were not concerned with how activities like migration, change of places and economy might have affected women's lives and how they adapted to the changes. It is now understood how technological, economic and political changes which affected men had quite a different impact on women. For instance when capitalism emerged men had to work outside as wage earners of the capitalist owners. On the other hand women began to be more confined to the household. Technological inventions might make things easier for the men who work outside the house but it could make the women more subservient to male domination. This could be because women often lacked access to education of science and technology and rural women especially were bypassed by industrial modernisation.⁹⁵ This resulted in substitution of male workers for female workers and women were assigned the manual work. The impact that changes in the

⁹³ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1998) p.1

⁹⁴ Gerda Lerner, *The of Patriarchy, op.cit.*, p.4

⁹⁵ S.C.Jain, *Women and Technology* (Jaipur, 1985) pp.2-4

society had on women was ignored by the historians. Family's religious ceremonies also affected women as they were the ones who had to overlook all the preparations to be made for offerings and sacrifices and for feeding other people. There were some writers who have put a separate chapter 'on' women or 'of' women⁹⁶ and they regard it as a justice done to women. Hence, studies of family, religion, society and village structure have traditionally been carried out without any regard for gender and gender relations. There has been no critical consideration of what this has meant for women's lives, and what sacrifices women had to make to maintain these relations. History for a very long time has been largely studied without inquiry into how life conditions have differentially changed for persons according to gender. As a result, there are very few sources to know about women in the past and also to know the whole history of humankind. Hence some feminist and other writers began to work on women studies. In the west, there have been three general approaches to women's studies, they are additive history, genderized history and contributory history.⁹⁷ Additive history is history written after a re-examination of the sources to discover the contributions and role of women. Genderized history draws on a feminist perspective to rethink historiography and make gender difference a key to the analysis of social relations. Contributory history privileges women agency while recognizing how patriarchy impedes women's action. In the present study, additive history approach would be used, as Mizoram is an area where sources on gender are scarce and one has to rely on the existing sources and hence a re-interpretation of the existing sources is needed to study gender history.

⁹⁶ R.Indira & Deepak Kumar Behera (ed) *Gender and Society In India*, Vol I. (New Delhi, 1999)

⁹⁷ Geraldine Forbes, *op.cit.*, p.2

Gender studies became more popular as it is important and fruitful to identify gender systems as it helps us to know the place or the position of the sexes in a society. It also demonstrates the essentiality of gender analysis to the field, rather than keeping it away from the mainstream in a women's history category. It would also enable us to have a holistic approach to history. But it is important to realize that the different cultures or societies cannot be generalized as gender relations can be different in different societies. It can also vary in different phases of time. However the values and the principles of patriarchy are the same all over the world.

Thus, patriarchy which seems to be the norm in almost all societies greatly affected and influenced the psychology of both men and women for a very long time. However, women slowly began to realize how it affects their lives and so wanted to break free from its clutches. Feminist consciousness began to develop as they were aware that as a woman they have suffered wrongs and were subordinated. They also realised that their subordination was not natural but was socially determined.⁹⁸ In the early phase, this development took the form of isolated thoughts by individual women. Later on other women also became conscious and formed organizations. They started several movements and this gained prominence in the 1960's. Female authors began to write about how women were marginalized. Alice Clark in her *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*⁹⁹ wrote about the nature of women's productive activity and about the effect of capitalism on the economic position of women. Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Women*¹⁰⁰ wrote how women should try to decide their own fate and not to depend on men. She

⁹⁸ Margaret Mead, *op. cit.*, p.16

⁹⁹ Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, (London, 1968)

¹⁰⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *op. cit.*, (London, 1992)

also demanded a share in enforcing their rights. Mary Beard in her book *Women as a Force in History*¹⁰¹ studied the lives of women from ancient times to Second World War to show that women were members of a subordinated sex throughout history. She also tried to show that women always participated in historic events and they were a force in history. Other female writers were among the pioneer writers since they have also realized that due to the influence of patriarchy, they have always been hidden in history. So, they began the work of writing on women and opened up the “other half of history which would be inclusive, not exclusive, universal, not particular”.¹⁰² The importance of gender studies or the studying of a society from gender perspective came to be realised as this would produce a totally different view on any subject.

To get a total view of history, gender historians collected sources which seem to be important for their work. They have searched for “data which may have been collected but was ignored, and for new and more powerful research techniques to utilize the fragmentary data that are available”.¹⁰³ They have used a lot of oral tradition like folktales, folksongs and proverbs or sayings. These oral traditions are quite important as they often reflect about the social conditions of the time. Women were also interviewed to know their experiences of the past. Gender historians also used symbols and metaphors as Gerda Lerner has done. The social norms, the rules and laws were also used for knowing gender relations. They have also used secondary sources and official papers. Moreover these gender historians have made

¹⁰¹ Mary Beard, *Women as Force in History* (New York, 1962)

¹⁰² Judith P.Zinsser, *op.cit.*, p.27

¹⁰³ J.Krishnamurthy (ed), *Women in Colonial India*. (New Delhi, 1989) p.viii

use of diaries, journals and letters kept by women. These are then all interpreted or re-interpreted from the perspective of the woman.

Gender historians try to see history from a female perspective through the various sources used by them. The way in which a particular incident affected men and women could be different. The sources which they have used could be written by a male writer but in this case they try to relate what it could mean for a woman. Thus the way in which the sources are used is quite different from the normal historian's view. Mary Beard studied medieval history through the history of law, literary evidence, education and organisation of the guilds. Sheila Rowbotham in her work *Hidden from History* studied about the various political movements and how periods of change have affected women. She studied the developments from a feminist perspective which before was studied from a men's point of view. She knew that she had to see from a different light as things could be quite different for the one who experienced it than to just observe it. In the *Creation of Patriarchy* Gerda Lerner tried to trace, 'by means of historical evidence, the development of the leading ideas, symbols, and metaphors by which patriarchal gender relations were incorporated into Western civilization.'¹⁰⁴ As she studied she also tried to re-interpret the meanings from a women's perspective. Some of the sources which she used were the works of men, but she reinterpreted them so as to know the actual gender relations. These gender historians had used different approaches to study gender and see women's role in history. Mary Beard had used the approach of contributory gender study while Sheila Rowbotham had used genderized approach

¹⁰⁴ Gerda Lerner, *op.cit.*, p.10

and Gerda Lerner used additive approach. All these approaches may be different but they reflect women's contribution to the society, the role they played for the development of history and gender relations.

From the discussion above on the various trends of feminism and their impact on gender history, it is possible to conclude that Socialist feminist thought appears to be the best conceptual framework that one can adopt to have an adequate understanding of the subordination of women and women's relation to men and nature. As mentioned earlier, Marxists primarily recognized differences of class and stressed similarities between women and men of the same class. On the other hand, Radical feminism recognized only differences of age and sex and viewed that the experiences of all women were the same. However Socialist feminism sees that an "individual's life experience is shaped by her sex and gender...class, race and nationality."¹⁰⁵ Socialist feminist also view human nature as defined in part by biological characteristics which are subject to change through its conscious and cooperative productive activity. So, the difference between women and men are not pre-social givens, but are socially constructed and is therefore liable to change. By using Socialist feminist thought it would be possible therefore to have an adequate understanding of the real position of women and gender relations from the standpoint of women. The use of the Additive approach to gender history within the socialist feminist thought would thus provide a model within which gender relation in societies could be analysed. It is therefore proposed to use this framework of analysis to understand gender relations and patriarchy in the history of the Mizo.

¹⁰⁵ Alison M.Jagger, *op.cit.*, p,134

Thus the study would be a re-evaluation of the various sources from a women's perspective and would try to find out the exact contributions and role of women in the society.

Our discussion above also shows that history writing is still done very much under the domination of patriarchal values. There is insufficient study of gender for many of the societies. The Mizo society is no exception to this. Mizoram, which is situated in the North East India is inhabited by the Mizo. They are said to have migrated from China to Burma and to present Mizoram. The society is strictly patriarchal. One example to show the male attitude towards women can be known from the sayings like 'Women and crabs have no religion', 'Women and old fence can be easily replaced', 'Women's word is no word just as a crab meat is not a meat'.¹⁰⁶ Women did the maximum work at home and in their jhum. They worked in the jhum along with their husband and all the domestic works were entirely their responsibility. Though women worked a lot for themselves and their families, they could not inherit the family's property except on a very limited account. It is this patriarchal system of society that the present study is to be worked on. There are some works on the history of the Mizo by B.Lalthangliana¹⁰⁷, Liangkhaia¹⁰⁸, K.Zawla¹⁰⁹ and Dr. Vumson¹¹⁰. British administrators A.G.McCall,¹¹¹ J.Shakespeare,¹¹² Alexander Mackenzie¹¹³ and A.S.Reid¹¹⁴ who all have worked in

¹⁰⁶ B.Lalrinhhani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District", Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, NEHU, 1998

¹⁰⁷ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001)

¹⁰⁸ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976)

¹⁰⁹ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pipute leh An Thlahte Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976)

¹¹⁰ Dr. Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl, 1986).

¹¹¹ A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977)

¹¹² J.Shakespeare, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans*, (Aizawl, reprint, 1988)

¹¹³ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi, reprint, 1979)

¹¹⁴ A.S.Reid, *Chin Lushai Land*, (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)

Mizoram have also written about the Mizo. Their works are quite useful to know about the history of the Mizo. However the method used by them is still based on traditional history. They have not given importance to women or to study the gender relations among the Mizo. Some of them have written something about women but that is not sufficient to know exactly how the different phases in migration or the developments which have taken place in Mizoram have effected the gender relations. This study is therefore necessary to see the gender relations among the people as previous studies have always been done by men and according to their perspective. As they migrated from place to place, the change of places, economy, geographical situations and other outside forces such as British administration, education and Christianity would have affected women but how it affected them is not studied as yet. In this framework, the various situations which have affected gender relations would be examined. Moreover, there are still Lai and other tribes of Mizo in Burma (Myanmar) who have not migrated to Mizoram. It is believed that the Mizo had migrated to the present state of Mizoram from Burma (Myanmar) but to assess the changes that took place in the society due to migration, it would be essential to know the socio-economic condition of the people prior to their migration.

CHAPTER II

MIZO BEFORE MIGRATION : A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MIZO

The Mizo are believed to be of Mongoloid origin and this was first described by T.H.Lewin,¹ and this was supported by other Mizo writers.² This was believed to be true as the Mizo have all the features of Mongoloid races and the Mongolian patch: a purplish, triangular area of skin at the base of the spine of babies which disappear later as described by Hoebel.³ According to Grierson, the language spoken by the Mizo was put in Kuki-Chin group and classified it in the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.⁴ Mizo is a generic term used for the people living in present Mizoram. The Mizo society is said to have consisted of the Lusei, Lai, Hmar and Mara who live in Mizoram and all the other Zo tribes who are presently residing in Manipur, Assam and Tripura. Previously the Mizo were known as Kuki, Chin and Lushai by the outsiders. The Kuki, Chin and Lushai were of one homogenous race and this was recognised by J. Shakespear when he wrote, "There is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins and Lushais are all of one race".⁵ The same idea was written by Bertram S. Carey, the Political Officer of Chin Hills as, "...we may reasonably accept the theory that the Kukis of Manipur, the Lushais of Bengal and Assam, and the Chins originally lived in what we know as Tibet and are of one and the same stock."⁶

¹ T.H.Lewis, *Wild Races of South Eastern India*, (Aizawl, reprint, 1978). p.48

² Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1976). p.1

³ E.Adamson Hoebel, *Man in the Primitive World*, (Tokyo, 2nd Edition), p.132

⁴ G.A.Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol iii, Part III, (Delhi, 1967, reprint), pp.3,10

⁵ J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.8. He was the first Superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills and he also served in Manipur among the various Kuki clans. As he studied in great detail about the people, his ideas appeared to be reliable.

⁶ Carey & Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I* (Calcutta, reprint, 1976) p.2

The name Kuki is said to have been coined by the Bengalis which mean 'wild man' and have used it to designate the hill people who cultivated their fields by jhumming.⁷ Hutchinson also pointed out that Kuki was used to designate the hill people other than the Chakmas, Tipperas and Mogh tribes and that Kuki was used to apply to the tribes residing in Mizoram and Chin Hills.⁸ When the British came to the hill areas, they followed the Bengali term and called the hill people of Lushai Hills, Chin Hills and other tribes whom they found to have the same tradition, culture and language, as Kuki. They then have used this term till 1871-72.⁹ Later, the term Kuki was changed to Lushai for the people living in Lushai Hills. This change was first seen in the report of Lister's Expedition in 1850.¹⁰ It was then commonly used by the administrators and other people since the 1871-1872 expedition.

The term Lushai seems to be a corruption of the word *Lusei*. This seems to have happened when the British came in contact with the people of Lushai Hills, they would have thought that all the people living in these hills were Lusei. But after having settled for sometime, they realised their mistake and this was observed by J.Shakespeare, "Lushai is our way of spelling the word; the proper way to spell the word is Lushei".¹¹

Chin is mostly used for the Mizo living in Burma. Though known to outsiders as the Chins, they themselves did not recognised the name. According to Grierson, "Chin denotes all hill tribes living in the bordering region between Burma

⁷ G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*

⁸ R.H.Sneyd Hutchinson, *Eastern Bengal and Assam, District Gazatteers -Chittagong Hill Tracts* (Allahabad, 1909) p.45

⁹ W.W.Hunter, *The Imperial Gazatteer of India, Vol viii* (London, 1889) p.529

¹⁰ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi, reprint, 1979) p.292

¹¹ J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*

and Assam".¹² Carey & Tuck proposed that Chin is a "Burmese corruption of the Chinese "jin" or "Yen," meaning "man"¹³ Prof. G.H.Luce however mentioned that Chin is an old Burmese word for 'ally or comrade'.¹⁴ The people however do not call themselves Chin. F.K.Lehman mentioned that "no single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but all-or nearly all- of the peoples have a special word for themselves...This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which appears as zo, yo, kśau, šəu, and the like."¹⁵

Though the British administrators have called the Mizo by different names by following the Bengalis and the Burmese, yet, it has been claimed by some writers that Mizo or the word Zo only is the name used by the people to call themselves. Some writers have said that the word Zo is frequently used in many of the villages such as Zotlang and Zokhua to name a few.¹⁶ There are also the names of tribes which start with Zo such as Zotung, Zophei and Zo. Most of these tribes are concentrated in Burma. Vanchhunga who had done research on the history of the Mizo in Burma had said that the ancestors used to say *keini Mizo* which means "we the Mizos."¹⁷ K.Zawla, another Mizo historian also wrote that once a man killed a sleeping wild boar with a bamboo spike. He boasted his feat and said, "I, a Mizo can kill any animal with a bamboo spike".¹⁸ The British administrators and foreign writers also commented on the word Mizo. McCabe in his report included that the

¹² G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*, p.2

¹³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.3

¹⁴ G.H.Luce, "Old Kyaukse and the Coming of the Burmans" cited by F.K.Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl, reprint, 1980) p.3

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanhin* (Aizawl, 2001) p.761

¹⁷ Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a vela hnam dangte chanchin* (Aizawl, 1994) p.iii

¹⁸ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1976) p.17

Lushais call themselves Mizo or Mizau.¹⁹ Grierson recorded that the people living in the region between Burma and the then Assam and Bengal provinces called themselves ‘zo’ variantly ‘yo’ or ‘sho’.²⁰ So, it can be accepted that Zo is the generic name of the whole people of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai. It would be therefore right to agree with Mangkhosat Kipgen when he wrote “the problem of affixing “mi” to “Zo” either as a prefix or suffix is no longer great.”²¹ This is because *mi* means people and so whether we call Mizo or Zomi the meaning is just the same. Hence in this study, the Zo people of Mizoram would be called ‘Mizo’ and the Zo of Myanmar as ‘Zo’ simply to easily differentiate the two when studying them together.

As the Mizo did not have a script, they do not have any written records of their origin. So the origin of the Mizo is still in some obscurity. According to oral tradition the Mizo have claimed that they have emerged from a big rock or cave called *Chhinlung*,²² which means having a rock as a lid. In the modern scientific age, it would be difficult to believe that human beings emerged out of a hole. However, some believed that *chhinlung* could be the name of a place where they settled. This can be seen from one of Hmar folksong which tells how the composer missed the times when they lived in *Chhinlung*.

Kan siengna Sinlung ram hmingthang

Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai

Chawngzil ang lokir thei changsien

*Ka nu ram ka pa ram ngai*²³

¹⁹ Foreign Department External Part A, Progs. December 1892, No.43

²⁰ G.A.Grierson, *op. cit.*, p.2

²¹ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture* (Aizawl, 1997) p.21

²² K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.5. The hmar have written it as Sinlung, Kuki (Thado) have called it Chinlung.

²³ Rochunga Pudaite, *The Education of the Hmar People* (Sielmat, 1963) p.21

The English translation would run like this:

Famous land of Sinlung, place where I reside

How I miss my ancestors land

If only I could recall back the times

How I miss my ancestor's land.

So Mizo historians began to question where *Chhinlung* was situated. One idea which was seen in Rochunga Pudaite's work was that Chhinlung would have been the name of a Chinese prince who revolved against his father Shah Huangti of the Ch'in dynasty.²⁴ There are others who have claimed that it is somewhere in Shan State of Burma.²⁵ They have based their theory on one of the folk song of the Hmar which is as follows:

Ka pa lamtlak a tha'n dang

Sinlung lamtlak aw a tha'n dang

Shan khuo-ah thapo in vang

*Tuiochawng'n hran lu a tlunna.*²⁶

Meaning:

My father's sons are the best

Sinlung's sons are the best

Shan doesn't have any good men

So that Tuiochawng could hang their heads

However it could be agreed with some writers like L.K.Liana and the writers of Hualngo literature who believed that Chhinlung could be one of their settlement

²⁴ *ibid.* p.21

²⁵ L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thu Hla*, (Aizawl, 1994). p.4

²⁶ Rochunga Pudaite, *op. cit.*, p.24

sites in the Kale Kabaw Valley in present Myanmar (Burma).²⁷ They pointed out that the earlier historians used to gather the history of the earlier Mizo from the historians of Burma and China.²⁸ So they said that trying to locate Chhinlung in China or very far away would be incorrect. They said that the Mizo did not live in the Shan state but rather they and the Shans lived together in the Kabaw Valley. Moreover this theory could be strengthened if we look at the oral traditions. There were no folk tales, sayings or songs from which it can be inferred that Chhinlung would be in China. The few oral traditions which could be gathered were only from the Kabaw Valley settlement. So L.K.Liana and other writers wrote that Mizo ancestors merely spoke of Kabaw Valley as Chhinlung.

Though the origin of the Mizo is not clear, most of the Mizo historians and other early British writers as well as some Burmese historians have accepted that the original home of the Mizo was in China. They have based their studies on anthropological, traditional and comparative philology. B.Lalthangliana who had done an extensive research in Myanmar and who based his theory on the works of Than Tun and Luce and other Burma historical works believed that the Mizo moved to Hukawng Valley in the 4th century A.D and slowly moved towards the west and settled in Chindwin Valley in the 7th century A.D.²⁹ F.K. Lehman believed that there was sufficient evidence to prove that the influx of the Sino-Tibetan speaking peoples and particularly of the Tibeto-Burman speakers into South Asia must have taken place during the first few centuries.³⁰ He based his reckoning on linguistics, ethnic

²⁷ L.K.Liana, *op. cit.*, p.5

²⁸ H.L.C.A, *Zofate Chanchin* (Tahan Kalemyo, 1995), p.8

²⁹ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.52

³⁰ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.13

population spread and history of Burma. So while the Mizo were beginning to settle in the valley, Lehman believed that the Burmese and the Mizo did not wage any war against each other because he could not find any wars between them in the old chronicles of the Burmese. Citing Luce's work, he continued that the Chins (Mizo/Zo) were considered allies or comrades by the Burmese because they held this flank of the developing Burman state against its enemies such as the Sak or Thet.³¹ B.Lalthangliana also agreed that the Burmese took Mu Valley, Myedu, Khittin, Yaw Valley, Pondaung and Thilin. But they did not trouble the areas of Monywa, Alon and Chindwin Valley which was occupied by the Mizo.³² So it appeared that the Burmese and the Mizo did not have any trouble with each other and in fact it was believed that the Burmese and the Mizo were allies.

Historians all agreed that the Mizo settled in the Chindwin Valley and the Lusei have called the Chindwin River as *Run* which means river while the Paite have called it *Tuikang* meaning white water.³³ Vumson had written that some remains of Zo settlement were found in this place.³⁴ The remnants which he claimed to be of Mizo origin was those of a Zo ritual ground in which a memorial stone was there which was about 13 feet high and the Burmese called it *Chin paya* or Chin god, a village called *Chin Ywa* or Chin Village and a place called *Chin Suh* or Chin meeting place.³⁵ Vumson and B.Lalthangliana citing their evidences from the history of Burma and from old chronicles of Fan-cho, a Tang diplomat, agreed that as time passed the people had to move away from this settlement due to invasion by Nan-

³¹ *ibid.* p.22

³² B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.51

³³ Vumson, *Zo History*, (Aizawl, 1985) p.33

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 34

³⁵ *ibid.* p.35

chao and the Mizo moved to Kale-Kabaw Valley.³⁶ Kabaw Valley is under Sagaing division in Myanmar and is about 1470 sq. mile. Different tribes of Mizo have legends about their settlement in this place. Folk tales of different tribes are quite similar and so it can be assumed that they all must have lived in this area. They also appeared to have three chiefs who ruled over this settlement. Hmar folksong tells us about the three chiefs who ruled over this area-

Sima Lersia, hmarah Zingthlo

Khawma laia Luopui;

Luopuiin lenbuong a phun,

*Thlanga puolrangin tlan e.*³⁷

The English translation would be:

In the south ruled Lersia, north Zingthlo

At the centre was Luopui

Luopui planted a banyan tree

Birds have found shelter on it

This song tells us that Chief Lersia ruled in the south; Zingthlo in the north and Luopuia in the central area. From this song, it can also be seen that all the people did not stay together in one area. It could also be regarded that the different tribes settled together in the earlier phase but when they were about to disperse they would have settled separately according to their tribes but they still had a very close affinity between themselves. The quoted song also stated that the chief Luopui planted a banyan tree. It was believed that they planted this when they were about to leave this

³⁶ *ibid.* p.34-35; B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.54

³⁷ Hranglien Songate, *Hmar Chanchin* (Imphal, 1958) p.22

place. They seem to have said that when the branches reached the ground, the Mizo would return to this place.³⁸ The tree was then blessed with a song:

Ka phun bungpui dawi ai ka sanna

Mi khawih loh sa khawih loh tein

Thangin lian la khuanuleng hualin

I tang zar piallei a zam tikah

*Seifate 'n vangkhua rawn din leh na 'ng e.*³⁹

The English translation would be:

Banyan tree whom I planted

May you be safe from animals and other people

May you grow with the grace of *khuanu*

When your branches reached the ground

Seifa's children will come back to you.

However if we study this song, it could be seen from the language that it was composed much later. It could be assumed that this was composed when the Mizo especially the Lusei were in Lentlang (Len range of present Chin Hills). This could also be seen from the word *seifa* (*Seifa* - *sei*-Seipui; *fa*-children. It was used to denote the people of Seipui settlement) which indicates that it was composed much later as Seipui was one of the early settlement sites in Lentlang. So, it could be believed that the legend of this banyan tree was passed from generations to generations and that this particular song was composed in remembrance of the banyan tree which was planted by their ancestors.

³⁸ V.L.Siama, *Mizo History*, (Aizawl, 1978) pp.8-9

³⁹ H.L.C.A., *op. cit.*, p.10

It is also believed that the different tribes were closed to each other and could understand each other and even their dialects were mixed. This can be seen from one of the earlier songs which were sung.

Thi lovi khua awm maw, fam lovi khua awm maw

Laiah suangpuilung e, fam lote 'n awm na ngai.

A tlung e, thim khawzing a tlung e

Khua tinah thim khawzing a tlung e.⁴⁰

The English translation would be:

Could there be any village or a person that would not die

The great rock however stands forever

The great darkness had descended

The great darkness had arrived / descended upon the earth.

In this song, *suang* is Paite language, *fam* and *awm* is Duhlian or Lusei dialect while *tlung* is now used only by Lai people. So this song which was believed to have been composed during the days of their settlement in the plains of Burma indicated that the languages which were used later on by a particular tribe was mixed and could be understood by all the tribes. Many of the songs or chants which were sung after killing animals were in Lai language but were used by the Lusei also. This would indicate the various Mizo tribes oneness or their similarity in their dialects and tradition. While living in the valley, as mentioned earlier they had contact with the Burmese and lived peacefully with them. It also seems that the Mizo were influenced by the Burmese and derived many things from them. So, many of Mizo words have a

⁴⁰ *ibid.*p.74

suffix with the word *kawl* which means Burmese. (*Kawl* is a term used by the Mizo to call the Burmese). For example, *kawlhnam* (sword), *kawlthei* (guava), *kawlbahra* (sweet potato) are some of the words. Having *kawl* as a suffix would infer that these things were not of Mizo origin but were imported from the Burmese. Liangkhaia and K.Zawla mentioned that according to the old people whom they interviewed, in the earlier days Mizo men used to have tattoo on their forehead, chest and arms.⁴¹ J. Shakespear also mentioned that he saw tattoos on the forearm and the chest. The patterns were circles and representations of a mithun's head which he was told did not have any particular meaning but some were said to be mementoes of love affairs.⁴² The Burmese also used to have tattoo on their body and this is still practiced in some remote areas.⁴³ So it shows very clearly that the Mizo must have been influenced in some ways by the Burmese during this time.

They lived here for many years but could not remain forever due to some reasons. The reasons for people to migrate in bulk to other places could be of different reasons. Some people often migrated due to natural calamities like famine or flood and also due to invasions from other stronger tribes. The main reason for the Mizo to migrate from this fertile valley to the hills which was much less fertile was not clearly known. However, according to oral sources, the people were forced to leave their settlement due to a cruel king who harassed the people. According to this tradition, the cruel king forced the people to construct a fort and fingers were cut off from the ones who did not work. So the people could not bear the tyranny of the king

⁴¹ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p. 69

⁴² J.Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.11

⁴³ F.K.Lehman, *op.cit.*, p.24

and wanted to move away to the hills.⁴⁴ Moreover, they had little time for cultivation and ultimately famine struck the area which killed hundreds of people. However the oral tradition did not identify the name of the king or chief who harrassed the people to work for him. So modern historians tried to identify the reason for the Mizo to migrate to the hills. One of the Hmar folk songs tells us how they left their settlement site:

Khaw sinlungah kot siel ang ka zuang suaka

*Mi le nello tam e, Hriemi hraiah*⁴⁵

The English translation would be

I jumped out of the city of Sinlung like a mithun

Since the opponents were too many of them.

There were some historians like B.Lalthangliana, who mainly got his source from Than Tun and Luce, when the Mizo were in this valley, the Shans also began to settle in the northern part of the Kabaw valley. It appeared that there were fightings between the Mizo and the Shans. As the Shans were more powerful and since they annexed and settled in the area where the Mizo lived, the latter had to flee from their settlement and moved to the Chin Hills. F.K.Lehman also proposed that “by the middle of the 12th century the Shan invasions into Burma had become serious. Whether the Shan irrupted into Burma, as is traditionally supposed, or whether they had, as Leach suggests, “always” been there, makes little difference. Henceforth they became a political force within Burma founding principalities here and there and contending, often successfully, with the Burman kingdoms for hegemony.”⁴⁶ While

⁴⁴ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11

⁴⁵ Hranglien Sonate, *op.cit.*, p.11

⁴⁶ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.23

living in this plain, all the Mizo tribes lived together. However once they migrated from this place, it appeared that they migrated according to their clans and tribes. Hence different tribes lived in different hills. B.Lalthangliana is of the opinion that they left this valley at around 1200 AD⁴⁷ while K.Zawla wrote that it would be around 1170 AD⁴⁸ and some other writers thought that it might be around 1375 AD.⁴⁹ As the exact year of the migration to the hills could not be known, the dates assumed by the different writers are not exactly the same, but the period works out to be between the 12th and 14th centuries A.D.

From Kabaw Valley various tribes began to move to Chin Hills at different times. They established villages but here they lived clan wise and their villages were also known according to the name of the clan which lived there. They might have lived separately because the geographical features made it impossible for all of them to live together as they did in the valley. Initially, the Pawi settled down at Hmunli and then moved to Sunthla, a village between Falam and Halka.⁵⁰ From here they spread in different directions. Pawi is the name given to them as they tie their hair on top of their foreheads. However they call themselves Lai. The Maras moved to Haka subdivision of the Chin Hills and migrated to their present settlement. The Lusei first settled down at Lentlang. As they did not have a chief, each family grouped itself together and each clan settled in separate villages.

As mentioned earlier, Mizo history is shrouded in obscurity and many of the Mizo historians have written what they had heard from the elder people and so oral

⁴⁷ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* p,73

⁴⁸ K.Zawla, *op. cit.* p,11

⁴⁹ H.L.C.A *op. cit.* p,18

⁵⁰ Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nunphung* (Falam, 2001) P,7

sources occupies an important source to know about the earlier history. If the folk tales of the different Mizo tribes are seen, there are many similarities between them. Some of the similar stories were *Ngaiteii*, *Chhura*, *Tlingi leh Ngama*, *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi* and *Liandova te unau*.⁵¹ However the names of the stories differ and some of the locations were also different as the later generations would have tried to adapt the story to their new surroundings. But the theme and the plot of the stories are all the same. Hence it could be agreed with many Mizo historians who had mentioned that these folk tales could have originated during the period when the different Mizo tribes all lived close to each other. *Chhura*'s story was about a man named Chhura who was a simpleton but who had a cunning brother. The different episodes of the Chhura story recount how he was manipulated by his brother and also how he escaped from his enemies. Chhura had a wife who appeared to be more intelligent than him. *Tlingi leh Ngama*'s story was about the love between Tlingi and Ngama. After getting married, Tlingi died which left Ngama heartbroken. But he could go to the place of the dead with the help of some deers and visited Tlingi. In the place of the dead, everything was different and he could not adapt to it. He then went back to earth, killed himself and returned to the place of the dead and lived with his wife again. This story showed the concept of life after death which was believed by the Mizo. *Ngaiteii*'s story⁵² tells us about a little girl called Ngaiteii whose father had drowned in a big river. One day Ngaiteii went to the fields with her grandmother and after working for some time, she felt thirsty and went to the river to

⁵¹ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.12. The title of the story or the names of the characters are different as they took the language of the concerned tribe, but the story remains the same. For instance, Lalruanga's story is also found among the Mara, but the name of the character has been put as Nara.

⁵² Nuchhungi & Ziritiri, *Serkawn Graded Readers, Mizo Thawnthu* (Serkawn, Centenary edition, 2003)

quench her thirst. Her grandmother told her not to say anything as it was believed that Ngaiteii's father's spirit was there in the river. However Ngaiteii forgot what her grandmother told her and exclaimed when she saw the big river. Immediately her father's spirit took her away. Her grandmother followed Ngaiteii into the river. In the evening, Ngaiteii's father who had turned into a big snake returned and soon changed into a human being. Ngaiteii's grandmother requested him to let her take Ngaiteii with the promise that she would be returned soon which was accepted by the father. However Ngaiteii did not return even after many days had passed. The father's spirit caused the river to flood to the village and the sound of the water said "Ngai, Ngai". People understood what the river wanted. But they wanted to save Ngaiteii and so they dropped her cloth, comb and bangles. But the flood could not recede. So, they dropped Ngaiteii into the water and soon the water receded. In the story of *Tualvungi leh Zawlpala*,⁵³ Tualvungi and Zawlpala were a happy married couple. One day as they were sitting in their varandah, a rich man Phuntiha happened to visit their village. As Tualvungi was beautiful, Phuntiha asked Zawlpala about her. Zawlpala instead of saying that she was his wife, said that she was his sister. Phuntiha then asked for her hand. Zawlpala thought that Phuntiha was just joking and so in return he asked a lot of things as her bride price thinking that Phuntiha would not be able to meet those demands. However Phuntiha after a few days returned with all the goods which were demanded by Zawlpala. Zawlpala could not dare say anything and so Tualvungi was obliged to follow Phuntiha to be his wife. But Zawlpala and Tualvungi could not forget each other and Zawlpala went to

⁵³ P.S.Dahrawka, *Mizo Thawnthu* (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1994) pp.137-142

Tualvungi's place. However Phuntiha poisoned him and Zawlpala rushed home just in time to die in his own house. His family members wanted to inform Tualvungi that her former husband had died, but they were afraid of Phuntiha and so they could not find a messenger. At last, a dove was sent who informed Tualvungi while she was weaving. Tualvungi could not visit her former village as Phuntiha did not allow her to go. After some years passed, she found an opportunity to sneak to her village. When she reached the village, she went straight to Zawlpala's grave. She decided that she would not go on living while her beloved was dead. So she asked an old woman to kill her. The old woman agreed with the condition that she would have Tualvungi's ornaments. So they dug the grave and she lay down beside Zawlpala's bones and the old woman killed her. When Phuntiha, who ran after Tualvungi, arrived he saw that Tualvungi had also died and he too killed himself. Tualvungi and Zawlpala's spirits then turned into butterflies and Phuntiha's spirit into a moth.

*Liandova te unau's*⁵⁴ story was about two brothers who were orphans. The elder was Liandova and the younger brother was Tuaisiala. Since they were orphans they were very poor and could not afford to eat properly. They faced many hardships as the people were not sympathetic towards them. Since they did not have proper tools to cultivate, Liandova made a swing on the way to the fields. Villagers while coming from their work stopped to have a rest in Liandova's swing and he took advantage of this and used their tools to clear a small patch of land near the swing. He then sowed some grains of rice. One day as the two of them were walking around, they saw an eagle carrying a snake. They shouted at the bird and it dropped the snake. Soon after this, when they returned from working in other's field, they were very surprised to

⁵⁴ *ibid.* pp.66-82

see that there was always cooked rice and meat which they did not have in the house also. After the same thing happened for some days they guarded their house and soon saw that an old woman was responsible for the cooking. They caught her and she told them that the snake which they had saved earlier was her child and to show her gratitude she used to cook for them. They realised that the old woman was a *khuavang* (a deity which will be discussed later on). Once they went out with a hunting party and caught a huge python. The boys were given the stomach and intestines much to the disappointment of Liandova. But inside the stomach were gongs and necklaces. They later knew that the python had swallowed a Lai (Pawi) trader named Singaia and so all the valuables were his goods which he used to sell around in the villages. They hid all the goods they had found lest the other villagers would take away from them. So secretly they became quite rich. Another incident which was to their advantage was that they befriended Lersia, a chief from another village and who was regarded to be one of the most powerful chiefs at that time. Lersia asked them to visit him and when they did, he told them to take one of his mithun. Liandova then sought the counsel of an old lady and she told him the best mithun which in looks was rather weak. Liandova took the particular mithun as advised by the wise woman. The mithun produced a lot of calfs and Liandova made a pen for them in the forest so that the villagers would not know about it. When it was time for harvest, *khuavang* who had helped them earlier helped them again and they could have a good harvest. So, Liandova and his brother were the possessors of many mithuns, gongs and necklaces but which were unknown to the other people. Tuaichawngi, the chief's daughter however knew all about this from a wise woman who was from their own village. So, Tuaichawngi wanted to marry Liandova but her

father was against it. To make sure that Liandova would not be able to pay the bride price, he demanded many necklaces and mithuns but since Liandova could meet all those demands they got married. They became more and more prosperous that they could even perform the various feasts of merit. However, Liandova had a concubine and when he, his wife and concubine were crossing the river *Run*, Tuaichawngi was said to have slipped and got drowned in the river. In this story we find that two wise women were consulted which proved to be a turning point in their life and that *khuavang* who took the form of an old woman also helped Liandova when he was in need of help.

These folk tales, when interpreted in their social context tells us a lot about the society, polity and economy of the Mizo in the pre-migration period. The next sections make an attempt to reconstruct these histories from the oral traditions.

SOCIETY

ADMINISTRATION: From the oral tradition which had been mentioned, it would be seen that the people had some sort of leader amongst them since the folk song mentioned above told us that there were three chiefs or leaders when they were in the valley. However the system of administration was not exactly known. In the story of *Liandova* we could see that the chief Lersia had elders with him, when he went to Liandova's village. And in the same story, we also find that all the elders were male. So, it could be inferred that the different tribes had chiefs or leaders but the system was not strongly defined. Moreover, since the elders who were seen in the folk tales were all men, hence it could also be regarded that the system of administration was in the hands of the men. This could mean that women were marginalised in the affairs of the village.

Though women were side lined in the administration, yet, in the folk tales of Liandova and Lalruanga, it was seen that there were wise women who were consulted. These wise women had played a very important role for the success of these men. The words of these women were held in high esteem and as Liandova and Lalruanga paid heed to the advices, they became successful in their ventures. So, some women due to their wisdom could mark a place for themselves in the society, and the society at large seems to have respected the intelligence of the women.

During the days of settlement in the valley, the Mizo had established the institution of *bawi*. References to this could be seen in the folk tales. A *bawi* was said to be a person who surrendered himself to the chief for some reasons. *Bawi* was often confused with the English word slave. But it should be noted that the term *bawi* in Mizo and slave as seen in English language was quite different. This was observed by Lewin as, “boi is the term in their dialect which betokens for persons who had lost the right of individual freedom of action, but in all other respects the word ‘slave’ would be inapplicable.”⁵⁵ From the oral tradition it could also be seen that not only the Zo from Myanmar⁵⁶ but the Lai⁵⁷ from Mizoram also had this institution which was almost similar to the Mizo. Among the Mara it was a bit different and according to N.E.Parry, the *bawi* were more similar to the English term for slaves.⁵⁸ Since these three tribes had more or less similar practice of owning *bawi* it could be regarded that the people had practiced *bawi*-ship when they all lived together. However the actual system of *bawi* was not very clearly indicated in the

⁵⁵ T.H.Lewin, *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales*, Calcutta, 1874, p.80

⁵⁶ Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.177

⁵⁷ C.Laitanga, *Pawi Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1988) p.49

⁵⁸ N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p.223-224

early oral sources, so the feature of this institution can be clearly known from the works of the Mizo historians and by the British administrators. Moreover, the system of *bawi* was more or less similar among the various Mizo tribes, so it could be assumed that the system had not changed very much since the days of the Mizo settlement in the Valley and their early settlement in the present Chin Hills. From the works of early researchers and historians we have come to know that there were three different types of *bawis* – *inpuichhung bawi*, *chemsen bawi* and *tukluh bawi*.⁵⁹ There were some people like widows, orphans and others who lived in poverty and could not procure their needs. They were thus compelled to take refuge in the chief's house and they were called *inpuichhung bawi*⁶⁰ which literally means *bawi* of the household. They were treated as members of the chief's household. They did all the works which needed to be done and they were also allowed to acquire private property. The chief also could marry off his *bawis* but they would have to serve him for three years. After that they could live in a separate house. However they still continued to be *bawi* in name and their youngest son would still be a *bawi* whereas the other children would be free.

Chemsen bawis (*chemsen*-long knife, *dao*; *sen*-red) were the ones who after committing a crime took refuge in the chief's house by touching the house pole of the chief.⁶¹ After touching this pole no one could harm him and he himself, by doing this, surrendered himself to the chief to be his *bawi*. This kind of *bawi* could live independently afterwards but he remained a *bawi* during his lifetime.

⁵⁹ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.142

⁶⁰ J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.46

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.47

Tukluh bawis (*tukluh* – surrender, submission) were the people who after a war deserted their own party and joined the victorious side and made a promise to the chief that they and their descendents would be the chief's *bawi* forever.⁶² They also could live independently and also could purchase their freedom by paying a specified price.

There were also some persons called *sal* who were captured in raids⁶³ and they could be equivalent to the English term for slave. They differed from the *bawi* as the latter were found only in a chief's house whereas *sal* were found in other household also. They were the sole properties of their masters and they could be sold off as their master desired. They could buy their freedom by paying a ransom for it.

Thus, this is the description of a system prevalent in the society before the migrations began. We shall see later whether this system persisted among the Mizo in exactly the same form after they settled in present day Mizoram.

FESTIVALS: Mizo used to have festivals from a very long time and this can be known from the folk tale of *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*.⁶⁴ According to this legend in the days of old when all the animals and human beings could communicate with each other, Thlanrawkpa invited all the people and animals of the world for a feast. When the feast was about to start, they requested the sun not to shine as they wanted to dance and have fun to which the sun obliged. So every animals and human beings danced and enjoyed themselves. The sun was curious to see this event and it slowly began to shine and some living beings like the earthworms could not dance anymore. The loris got angry with the sun for shining and to this day, the Mizo believe that a

⁶² A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977) p.122

⁶³ J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.49

⁶⁴ Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Thawnthu*, *op. cit.*, p.4-11

lori would not look at the sun and would always bow down its head. There was also a great feast but the owl did not get any meat and in a bad mood, sat on the bough of a tree. A big rat thought the owl was too full and said “Buka (*buk* – owl) has eaten his fill.” This angered the owl who was already in a foul mood and bit the rat. The Mizo therefore say that to this day, an owl would still be seen biting the rat. In the folk tales, it is seen that in the same feast Thlanrawkpa gave presents to his guests and to the Zo (Chins) he gave a fighting dao, while to the Mizo he gave a cloth which is the reason that the Zo (Chins) are braver than the Mizo (Lusei).⁶⁵ Thlanrawkpa in the legend appeared to be a great man as he could marry the daughter of *khuavang* (deity). This legend was supposed to be very old and scholars have not been able to state clearly when this story started so, it could be regarded that this story was one of the earliest folk tales of the Mizo. Since in this folk tale, the people had a feast and had a time of merriment, Liangkhaia assumed that festivals were celebrated even before they arrived in Burma.⁶⁶ And as they migrated to different places the way of having their festivals could have changed gradually.

WARS: When the Mizo were in the plains of Kabaw Valley, they must have fought with other tribes as we find in one of the folk songs:

Shan fa tlang khua pu tling tleng e

Ka do thlunglu bakin chhaih

Ka mi thah ka lai mi do

*Thal khatin la eih den ning*⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.94

⁶⁶ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p.51

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.11

The English translation:

The people of Shan

The heads of my enemies are pecked by the birds

I have killed my enemies

I have killed them with my arrows.

In this song we find that the Mizo fought against the Shans and that some of the Shans were killed by them. So, it could be inferred that the Mizo did not have a peaceful existence at the end of their stay in the Kabaw Valley as this folk song was regarded to be composed when they were on the verge of departing from the valley. However in the folk songs and folk tales we do not find any mention of wars against each other. After their migration to the Thantlang and settling around Run also there was no mention of any war amongst themselves. It also appeared that they did not have a hereditary chief and that the ablest and bravest man was made the leader. It was only in their settlement as different groups in Lentlang (Len range) that there was mention of wars among themselves and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

FAMILY: From the various folk tales that are already mentioned it could be seen that fathers were the decision makers in the family and that the chiefs or the leaders of the clans were men. For instance, when Liandova wanted to marry Tuaichawngi, it was her father who was the chief who made the final decision. In Zawlpala's story also, we find that Phuntiha asked Zawlpala for Tualvungi's hand. So it could be inferred that the society was patriarchal. During this period, it seems that parents more or less arranged their children's marriage. Parents were very careful in selecting life partners for their children. So marriages were done with the consent of

their parents. From the folk tales we also find that residence was patrilocal since Tualvungi was taken to Phuntiha's house from Zawlpala's house and Tuaichawngi also stayed in Liandova's house after they got married. From the same stories, we find that Liandova had to pay a large number of necklaces, gongs and mithuns for the price of Tuaichawngi. Similarly, Phuntiha had to pay a lot of necklaces and other goods to Zawlpala for the price of Tualvungi. So, from such oral sources, we find that bride price had existed during their stay in present Myanmar. Bride price was also practiced among the Zo, Lai and Mara which they pay to the bride's father or brothers. The origin of bride price and the reason for the men to pay bride price could not be exactly ascertained. However it could be regarded that it was intended to compensate the girl's family for the loss of an economically active member. On the other hand, it could also be deduced that in those earlier times, women's population would be lesser than the men, hence women could be in high demand. So men were willing to pay a heavy price if they wanted to get married and moreover getting a wife was also beneficial for the men in terms of productivity. However, though bride price was beneficial for the parents of the girl, it could also be a bane for women as described by Virginius Xaxa, "Women were treated as mere commodities to be easily procured by men through bride price... Bride price thus became a convenient justification for men to abuse their wives and treat them as disposable commodities."⁶⁸

ECONOMY: In the folktales of *Liandova*, *Mauruangi* and *Tlingi and Ngama*, there are scenes where the characters went out to their fields for cultivation. The stories

⁶⁸ Virginius Xaxa, "Women and Gender in the Study of Tribes in India" in *Indian Journal of Gender studies*, Vol,11, No.3, September – December 2004.p.355

depict that men were responsible for cutting down trees and for burning the fallen trees. Women on the other hand worked in the jhum to sow, weed, harvest and carry those harvested grains to their houses. Hence women during their settlement in the plains and later in Thantlang played an important role in cultivation. In the story of *Ngaiteii*, Ngaiteii and her grandmother were found to have worked in their fields. Similarly, other folk tales also depicted that women worked a lot in cultivating the fields and that they were also responsible for gathering other food stuffs like yam, leaves, berries from the forest. Thus evidence could be had from oral sources that women were engaged in household chores and weaving as seen in the folk tales and also in cultivating the fields. However the division of labour might not have been clearly demarcated as we find in the story of *Chhura* in which Chhura's wife asked him to cook and look after the baby while she went to their fields. So we find that men did not hesitate to help their wives in carrying out the household chores which was a big contrast to the later period which will be discussed in the later chapters. In the folktales which are mentioned it is also seen that women were the ones who fetched firewood from the forest to be used in the houses. It was also their task to pound rice in a mortar, clean the husks and do all the cooking for their family. They also domesticated animals like goats, pigs and dogs while mithuns were generally looked after by men. Men on the other hand were responsible for building houses, defend the village, hunt animals and also go for fishing when they liked. Thus it can be seen that division of labour was present but gender roles were not very distinctly marked out.

The tools to be used for cultivation and other household works were also the responsibility of men. It was assumed that in the earlier stage they used the antler of

deer for clearing and digging the earth and a kind of weapon made of wood for fighting.⁶⁹ One of the folk songs described how the composer saw a deer and wished for its antler for working tools. The song is as follows:

Khi sa chhuk chho chhumpui zing hnuaiah

*A ki riu riau riang lo thlawh nan a tha e.*⁷⁰

The English translation would be:

Up in the hills under the misty sky is a deer

Whose antlers would be perfect for hoeing.

The above song appeared to be composed after the Mizo have migrated to the hills because in this song the composer saw the deer up on a hill or mountain, so apparently this is a post migration folk song.

However in the folktale of *Chemtatrawta*⁷¹ it was found Chemtatrawta was sharpening his dao on a riverbank. As this story was supposed to exist during their stay in Kabaw valley, it could be supposed that the people already used metal for tools as the story tells us about a man sharpening his dao. Thus it could be inferred that metal was used by the people when they were in Kabaw Valley but when they migrated to Thantlang range, metal would be scarce and they could have reverted to using antlers or wood for their tools as the above mentioned song tells us.

Trading appeared to be carried out by the people. However all transactions between goods was done in barter system. In the story of *Chhura*, Chhura was seen on his way to another village to sell some pots. However as he covered some distance he felt tired and tried to shift his goods from his right shoulder to the left,

⁶⁹ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p,22

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p,23

⁷¹ Laltluangliana Khiangte, *Folktales of Mizoram*, Aizawl, 1997, p,57

while doing so he turned himself around and went straight back to his village. When his children saw him, they welcomed him but thinking he had reached another village, he said to himself, "How sweet and polite are other's children that they would call me as their father." So from this story it could be regarded that the Mizo involved themselves in trading. In the story of *Liandova*, Liandova, his brother and some men from the village went on a hunting expedition. They caught a huge python and killed it, distributed the meat but they gave Liandova only its stomach and intestine. However Liandova took it and when his brother cut the stomach, there were gongs and necklaces inside. Later they found out that the python had swallowed a Lai (Pawi) trader named Singaia.⁷² This man Singaia was a trader in gongs, ornaments and necklaces, so Liandova and his brother took all what they had found inside the python's stomach. This story also depicts that the Mizo used to travel from one place to another selling their goods. In the story of *Hrangkhupa*,⁷³ we find that Hrangkhupa went to a certain village to sell some skirts and these skirts were bought by women. So, not only the Mizo but the Zo also involved themselves in trading business. However all the traders who were seen to have sold their wares across the countryside were men. So, it could be assumed that women did not participate in trading but were rather confined to their villages.

Some writers have assumed that Mizo did not know how to weave and that they did not wear proper clothes before their arrival in Lentlang of Burma.⁷⁴ They believed that the people wore coverings which were made of leaves and vines. So

⁷² P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p,72

⁷³ Hrangkhupa is a Zo folk tale. He and his son were said to be one of the brave warriors of the Zo people.

⁷⁴ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, ; K.Zawla, *op. cit.*,

using this material, women used to cover their upper and lower body and their dress were known as *siapsuap* while men covered only their lower body with the same material called *hnawkhal*.⁷⁵ But recent historians have argued that while they were in Chindwin and Kale-Kabaw valley, they must have worn something else.⁷⁶ They had this idea because while they were in the plains, they were near the Burmese who already knew about the art of weaving. Since they lived side by side and did not wage any wars with them they would have been influenced by them and would know how to weave and wear cloth. So they opined that while they were in the plains, their way of living would not be very low. In the folk tales of Zawlpala and Tualvungi and also in Lalruanga's story, we find that Tualvungi was weaving a cloth and Lalruanga courted a girl who was weaving. So it could be inferred that Mizo women had the knowledge of weaving during their settlement in the valley. However once they left the plains, life in the hills would be very hard for them. Their first settlement in Thantlang mountain range was a rugged mountain where cotton could not be grown. This was cited by B.Lalthangliana who had gone to this place and also some people of Myanmar who were interviewed said that Thantlang was a place where cotton and rice could not be properly grown and it was not really suitable for settlement also. Moreover, since they were always on the move, they would not have time to grow cotton and weave it to make it into cloth. So the vine dress must have been worn only when they were in these areas. During those times, both men and women kept their hair long. During their stay in the Khampat region in the valley, it was the men

⁷⁵ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p,22

⁷⁶ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* pp, 169-170

and not the women who wore earrings.⁷⁷ In later period also, we find that men had worn earrings but during the colonial period men had stopped wearing them.

RELIGION:

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of the anthropology of religion had said that religion was born as people “tried to understand conditions and events they could not explain by reference to daily experience”.⁷⁸ He proposed that religion evolved through stages, beginning with animism. From this polytheism (belief in multiple gods) and later monotheism (belief in a single god) developed. Religion was also regarded to be born out of the real tragedies of human life.⁷⁹ So religion was regarded to originate to explain things that people could not understand. Since religion was regarded as having emerged to explain events and circumstances which people could not understand, it helped people to achieve certain goals, offered emotional comfort when they faced some crisis over which human had no control.⁸⁰ The unknown reason for certain things which the people could not comprehend also led the Mizo to develop their own religion. Since the people could not understand the reason for sickness and many crisis which they faced they developed the idea that there were some supernatural beings that caused them difficulties and other misfortunes. On the other hand, they also thought that someone blessed them when they had abundant harvest and when they received some good fortune.

⁷⁷ K.Zawla, *op. cit.* p,10

⁷⁸ Cited in Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Anthropology, The Exploration of Human Diversity* (New York, 1997) p.336

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.338

⁸⁰ *ibid*

When the Mizo fell sick or when they wanted to receive blessings, they wanted to pray or propitiate but did not know whom to call. They then believed that there were some good spirits who blessed them and that there were also some bad spirits which brought them sickness and other maladies. So, one of the first prayer or invocation which they uttered was:

Pi biakin lo chhang ang che,

*Pu biakin lo chhang ang che.*⁸¹

Their prayer in English would mean:

Whom our grandmothers worshipped, answer us

Whom our grandfathers worshipped, answer us.

They believed that whatever their ancestors worshipped would also answer them and hear their prayers. And they soon developed the idea that there were some supernatural beings or some spirits who blessed them and hence they named the good spirits or the ones who blessed them as *khuanu*, *khuavang* and *pathian*. All of these supernatural beings were benevolent and it was under their guidance that they had harvest and other blessings. In the story of *Liandova*, we find that Liandova told his brother Tuaisiala to believe that god who is above would take care of them and that they would not be poor forever. The Mizo also believed that there were some evil spirits called *huai* who resided in the rocks, caves, large trees, water springs, holes in the earth. In fact, they were regarded to be found everywhere.⁸²

As time passed, the Mizo began to develop their religion and this was mainly called as *sakhua*. The English word for religion was often said to be *sakhua* in Mizo

⁸¹ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.23

⁸² K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, pp.45-46. The evil spirits were *huai*, *tau*, *chawm*, *phungkur*, *maimi*, *tulum*, *pheichham*, *khawmu* and *khawhring*.

language. However this needs to be explained in detail. There were two views regarding the word *sakhua*. Lianzika Pachuau who was said to be the last Mizo priest (*sadawt*) when interviewed by Larinawmi said that *sakhua* was inseparable and denoted one word.⁸³ According to him, Mizo ancestors believed that there would be some beings that would help the people in times of trouble and sickness and they named those beings as *pathian* and *khuanu*. The people also tried to understand them better and gain access to them. Thus the word *sakhua* was born. On the other hand according to Rev.Liangkhaia, *sa* meant ownership so it could denote a family or a particular clan's protector⁸⁴, and it could also be worship while *khuanu* meant the protector of the whole village.⁸⁵ Rev. Liangkhaia further commented that the two words were entirely different as the means to worship *sa* and *khua* was different as *sa* was worshipped with a pig while *khua* with a mithun. Eventually the two words were combined and *sakhua* meant the religion or the rituals of a clan. Lalhmuaka too believed that since *sa* was worshipped with pig and *khuanu* worshipped with mithun and the two words were later joined to form a new word *sakhua*.⁸⁶ The views of Rev Liangkhaia and Lalhmuaka would be agreeable as the word *sa* and *khua* are different and worshipped differently. The practice of *sakhua* thus appears to have emerged from the integration of the concepts of *sa* and *khua* as these were very important for the people to protect them and their village.

Pathian whom the Mizo worshipped was viewed as the creator and a

⁸³ Interviewed by Lalrinawmi Ralte for her unpublished D.Min dissertation, "Crab Theology: A Critique of Patriarchy – Cultural Degradation and Empowerment of Mizo Women", Episcopal Divinity School, 1993.

⁸⁴ Rev.Liangkhaia, "Mizo Sakhua" in *Mizo Ziarang* (Aizawl, 1975) p.2

⁸⁵ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.333

⁸⁶ Lalhmuaka, *Pum Titi* (Aizawl, 1985) p.65

benevolent god. But he was in distant heaven and hence was not much concerned with the daily affairs of human. The name denoted a male gender so it can be regarded that *pathian* was a male deity. According to Mangkhosat Kipgen, “the original understanding of Pathian was that he was far removed and unconcerned - God, the onlooker.”⁸⁷ The Zo also had the same kind of *Pathian* and was called *khawzing*. *Khuavang* were regarded to be large in number and they resided in many places on this earth.⁸⁸ The Mizo believed that there were some people who could communicate with *khuavang* and they were called *zawlnei* which means having communication or relationship.⁸⁹ The name *khuavang* does not denote any particular sex so it can be regarded as a neuter gender. *Khuanu*, (*khua*-village; *nu*-mother) the name denotes a female gender and so it could be inferred that this was a female deity. The people called upon *khuanu* when they were in trouble and also when they wanted to receive blessings. From the folk tales and works by writers, it could be said that *pathian* and *khuanu* were at the same level in terms of power and attaining respect from the people. The writers of the book published by Hualngo clan had said that when people get married they were regarded to be united by *pathian* or *khuanu*.⁹⁰ Similarly, to bless someone, Mizo often used to say *pathianin malsawm che rawh se* or *khuanu in malsawm che rawh se* which meant “May you be blessed by *pathian*” or “May you be blessed by *khuanu*”. So it could be regarded that *pathian* and *khuanu* had the same power to bestow blessings upon the people. There are some writers who regarded *pathian* and *khuanu* to be the same and that *khuanu*

⁸⁷ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *op. cit.*, p.116

⁸⁸ Rev. Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua* (Aizawl, 2nd edition, 1994) p.4

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ H.L.C.A *op. cit.*, p.220

was just another form for addressing *pathian*. However this needs to be examined from the various religious practices of the Mizo. When Mizo went to the forest, one of the things which they had to do before eating their food was to set aside or throw some portion of their food and say *khua tlai* (*khua* refers to *khuanu*; *tlai* – full, well fed).⁹¹ This was done so as to give thanks and also receive blessings from *khuanu*. According to Lalhmuaka's version of *sakhua* it could be seen the term was taken from the female deity *khuanu*. From the name itself it could be inferred that *khuanu* was seen to play the role of a mother who protected and took care of her child. So it could be seen that *khuanu* had played a somewhat different role from *pathian* and it also appeared that these two deities are different. It could also be inferred that *khuanu* had played a very important role in the early life of the Mizo.

The Mizo also believed that there were some female deities who looked after the animals in the forest. These deities were called *lasi* and they were regarded to be very beautiful. In a folk tales it was said that the *lasi* wanted a queen and they took Chawngtinleri who was a human being. So Chawngtinleri became their queen and she was in charge of all the animals. Chawngtinleri was found in the folktale of *Lalruanga* and *Keichala*.⁹² In the story, Zauhranga, the father of Lalruanga, killed a wild boar but while he went to the village to fetch his friends, Chawngtinleri revived the wild boar and kept a small boar in its place. Zauhranga then tracked the footprints of the animal and soon he reached Chawngtinleri's house. He then told her that he had killed the wild boar as it had damaged their crops and that it should be returned to him. Chawngtinleri then scolded the wild boar for destroying other

⁹¹ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.44

⁹² P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.* p,34

people's crop and gave it back to Zauhranga. So from this story, it could be seen that Chawngtinleri could revive the dead animals as they were all under her care. Chawngtinleri thus played a very important role in the Mizo society especially among the men. Since hunting was men's game, they tried to please Chawngtinleri so that they would be successful in their hunting expedition. So, it is quite interesting to see that men who followed patriarchal system had to please this female deity. From this it could be inferred that women could have had played a more important role prior to the settlement in the valley and remnants of the material culture were still in practice when they arrived and settled in the valley and still followed that even after their migration to the hills.

Another feature of Mizo religious features was their belief in re-birth. They believed that when human beings die, they can be reborn as animals or some other things. This belief could be seen in the story of *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi*, the story is already mentioned earlier. In that story we have seen that Zawlpala and Tualvungi's spirits had turned into butterflies while Phuntiha's spirit turned into a moth. This belief could also be seen from the folktales of *Mauruangi*,⁹³ in which her mother after being drowned turned into a big fish, and after this fish was caught, it later changed into a tree. In *Ngaiteii*'s story we again find that Ngaiteii's father had turned into a big snake and could change into a human form also. Similar stories of the dead being changed into animals and even as another human being was quite common. They may have this belief from the time of living in the plains. It could be agreed with B.Lalthangliana when he suggested that this belief could have started when the

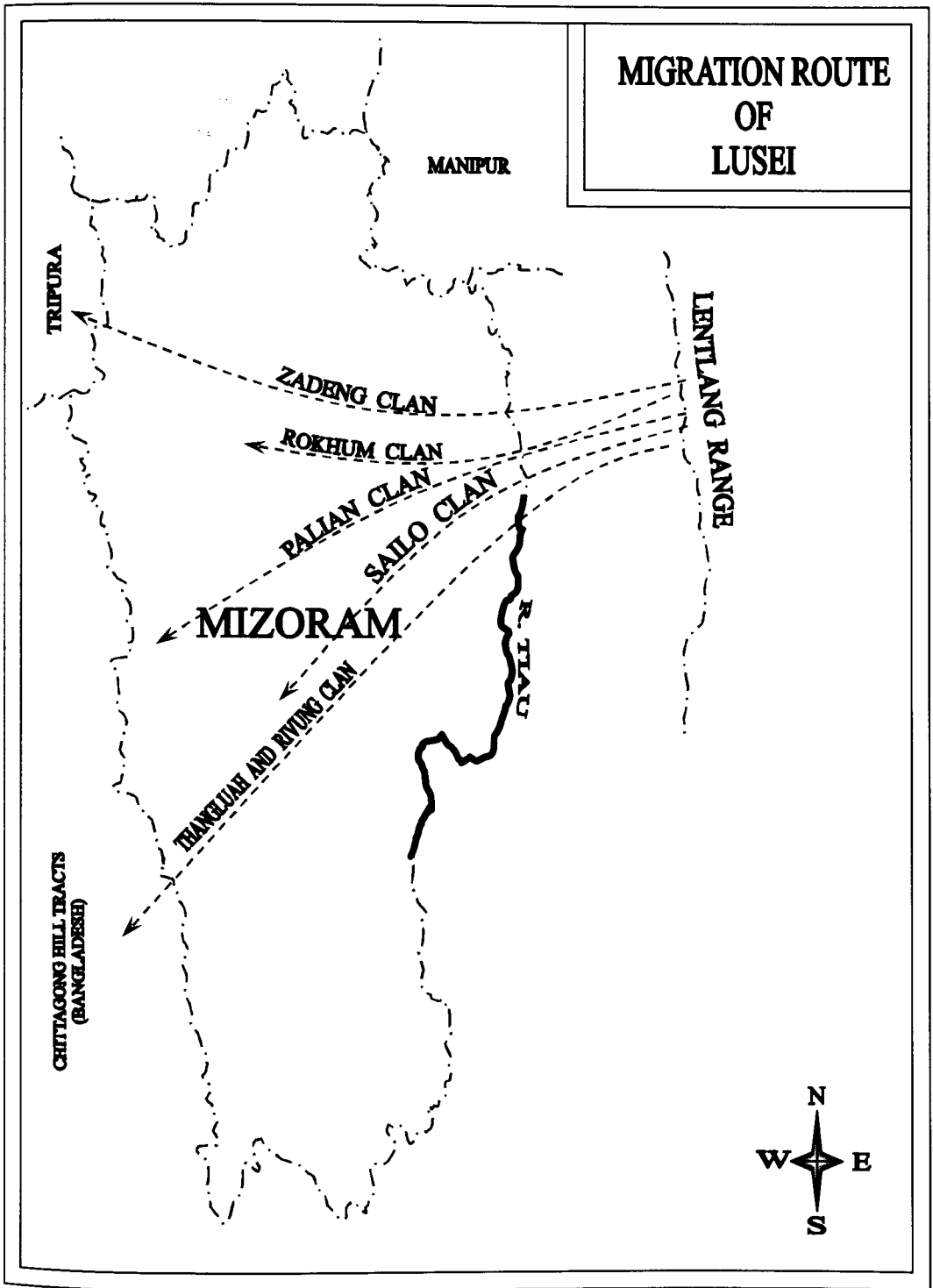
⁹³ *ibid.* p, 165

Zo or Mizo had close contact with the Burmese in the valleys.⁹⁴ So, Buddhist belief in life after death might have influenced the Mizo also. Among the Zo also, we find that in the oral sources, the people believed that dead person often changed into bee while babies were sometimes born again as babies. However it should be noted that Mizo were not converted to Buddhism.

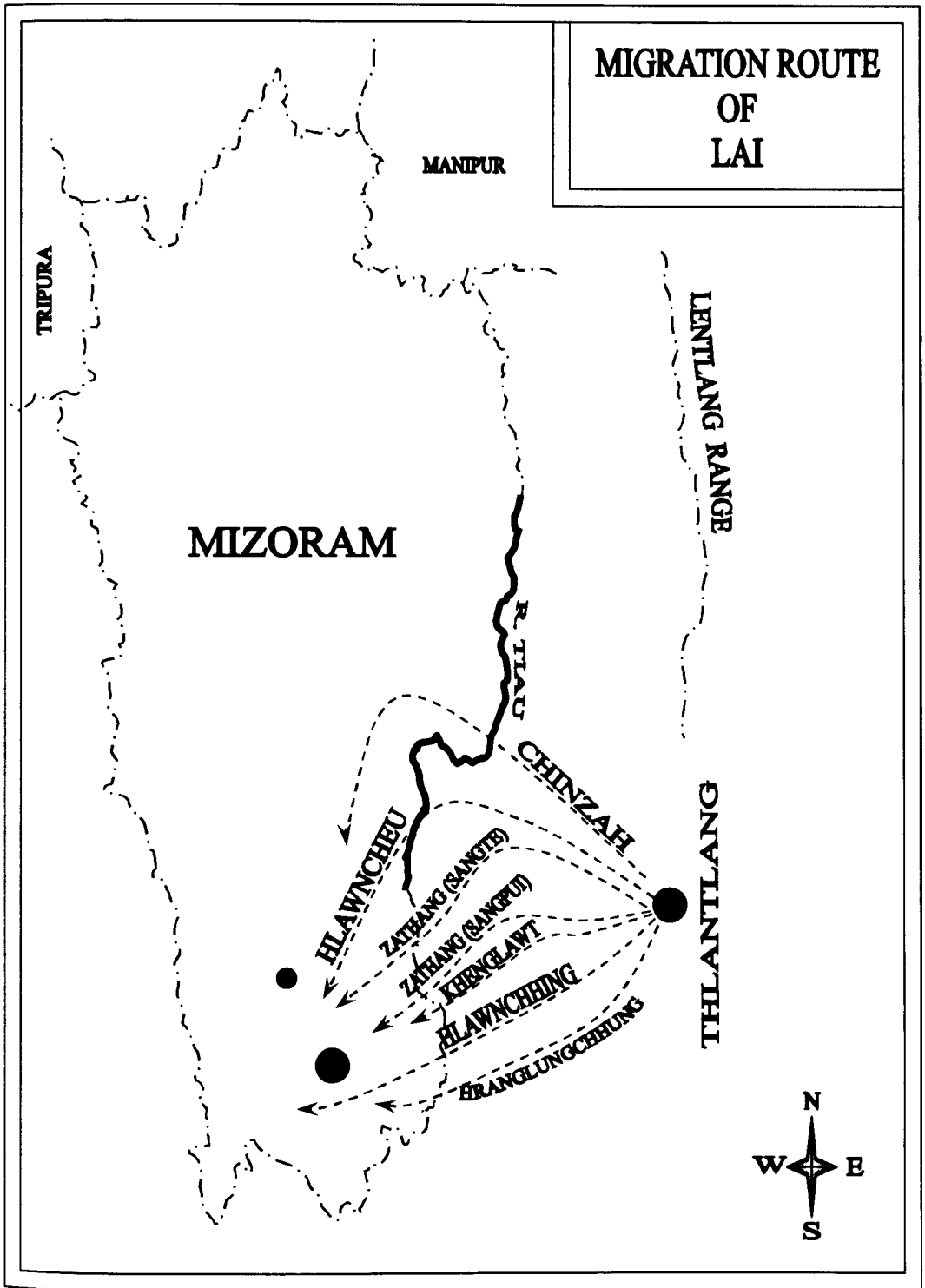
From the studies done in this chapter, we have seen that Mizo settled twice in Chindwin areas in present Myanmar. First, they settled in the Upper Chindwin and moved to the Lower Chindwin areas known as Kale Kabaw Valley. However they could not remain in this place due to the fear of the Shans. Hence they moved to the hills known as Thantlang Range which is in present Chin Hills. From the stories which were already mentioned, it could also be inferred that mother rights had not existed in the society but that patriarchy was already in existence. From the oral traditions it would be regarded that women worked in the household chores including weaving and pottery and also in the fields. They thus played an important role in the family and society. In religious sphere also, *khuanu* had played a very important role in the lives of the people. From the oral traditions, it could be inferred that though *pathian* and *khuanu* had the same power to bless the people but *khuanu* appeared to have a much important role and was regarded to be with the people at all times. Hence *khuanu* could be said to have a more important role in the lives of the people since she was the one whom the people turned for comfort and blessings. The importance of *khuanu* could denote that power relations were not concentrated in the sole hands of the men. There were also wise women who were consulted by the villagers including the men. Thus women had some amount of space and authority in

⁹⁴ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.171

the family and society. The existence of wise women also would reveal that they were the reservoir of traditional knowledge. However since oral traditions of this period were not in abundance, the exact system of administration could not be exactly known. But from the few oral traditions, the leaders of the tribes appeared to be all men. However since the Mizo tribes were migratory due to their method of cultivation, they could not stay in one place for a long time. Hence, from Thantlang they moved to a nearby mountain range known to the Mizo as Lentlang (Len range). The different tribes again moved to this mountain range according to their clans and groups. They soon scattered themselves in this mountain and as communication was difficult, they slowly lost contact with the other groups and clanism and separatism became more profound which led to inter tribe conflict. Thus it would be interesting to see how these developments affected gender relations in the Mizo society.



MAP NO.4



MAP NO.5

CHAPTER III

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

The Mizo lived in Lentlang and other surrounding hills in present Chin Hills of Myanmar for quite some time. When B.C.Allen and his co-workers studied the Mizo for their Gazetteer, they found that Mizo migration occurred mainly in three stages at different times.¹ Those who first migrated were known as 'Old Kuki' and they were the Hrangkhawl, Biate, Pangkhua, Mawk and Langrawng. The second batch was known as 'New Kuki' and they were Changsen, Thado and some other tribes. The last batch was the 'Lushai'. Though the process of migration was not exactly known, the different tribes of Mizo such as the different clans of the Hmars tribe, Hrangkhawl, Pang, Mualthuam, Chhunthang, Chawnhmang and later the Hrangchal, Ngurte, Darngawn, Lungtau, Leiri and Changsen who are now in other states have passed through present Mizoram.² It should be noted that when the Mizo migrated from Lentlang, they did not come straight to present Mizoram but settled on the foothills of Lentlang and also around the Tiau river (river bordering present Mizoram and Myanmar) for some years. (See Map No.4) So the migration of the Mizo was said to be the step migration type which e place for some years.

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

¹ B.C.Allen et al, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*, (Delhi, reprint 1979), p,458

² L.Hranglien Songate, *Hmar Chanchin* (Churachandpur, 1977) p.145

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

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

³ L.Keivom, "Zo Re-Unification Process" in www.zogam.com

Mizo and do not even use their own dialect any more as we shall see in the table below.

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

Source: *Census of India* 1901, 1931, 1961 (Mara's population is not known

in 1901 as the area was still an un-administered area. All the villages of Mara in present Mizoram were administered only in 1924)

In 1901 census it was found that the Ralte and the Paite were distinguished from the other tribes. But in 1961 census, it appears that they did not give their name as Ralte or Paite but have merged as Mizo. The same thing happened with the Lusei. The reason for the sudden usage of the term Mizo can be attributed to the formation of Mizo Union and its popular use of Mizo. The party even asked that the name Lushai Hills District be changed to Mizo District Council and hence the Indian Parliament

changed the name accordingly on April 29th 1954.⁴ The population of Lai had also decreased considerably between 1931 and 1961 and one of the reasons may be attributed to the probability of many Lai tribes using the tribe name Mizo. The researcher is also of the Lai tribe, but in official records such as census reports, under the heading of tribe, she and her family always give their tribe as Mizo. However, many of the Lai and Mara who are now in present Southern Mizoram still use their dialect and the government had also created Autonomous District Council for them. Moreover in the present age, even though Lai and Mara have many similarities with the Lusei, yet, in some points they still follow their own tradition. These is reflected in the various books published by the people themselves on their own culture.⁵ These differences would be studied as we study the society of the Mizo.

The Lai or the Pawi tribes entered Mizoram in four stages. The first batch started from Falam, the place where they settled in Chin Hills. They were under the Sunthla chief Vanhnuaitlira Hlawncheu.⁶ They crossed Chhimpuitui (Boinu river) and moved towards south-west. They were accompanied by some other tribes – Tlanglau, Bawm and Miria. They first settled at Rengtlang. When they reached a favourable place, some sections of them settled there while some even reached Chittagong hill tracts. The second batch started from Chawngthi under the guidance of Phunhnawma Tlangchhan, Bawilawma Tinthe and Zabiaka Famchun. They crossed Chhimtuipui and settled at places called Sangau and Vanlaiphai South which is in present Mizoram. They also went near the Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) and

⁴ R. Vanlawma, *Ka ram leh kei* (Aizawl, 1972) p, 238

⁵ Some of the books are, C. Laitanga, *Pawi Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1988); Z. Hengmanga, *Lai Hnam Tobul* (Lawngtlai, 1992); Chawngkhuma Chawngthu, *Mara Khawtlang Nun* (Aizawl, 2005)

⁶ C. Laitanga, *ibid*, p. 18

settled at its foot called Vawmbuk. The third batch of clans were Chinzah and Khenglawt from Lungzarh in Myanmar; Hniarlum, Famchun, Mualchin and Zinhlawng clans from Khuafu in Myanmar. They crossed the Tiau river near Champhai which is in present Mizoram and went southwards. They settled at Bungzung, Vanlaiphai North, Perilung, Lungrang, Khuanglum and Cherhlun. From Cherhlun they again dispersed to Thingsai, Vanlaiphai South, Sangau and Lungtian.⁷ They also dispersed again from these villages. The fourth batch started from Thlantlang in Myanmar under Hlawnhhing chief Thawngliana. They were the descendents of Nithanga. They also moved southwards and settled at Serkawr which is near the present Saiha in South Mizoram. They were followed by others who settled at and near Saiha. The duration of their migration was said to be between 1750 – 1850.⁸ It should however be noted that all the Lai from the Chin Hills did not migrate to Mizoram. A considerable portion of them remained at and around Halka, Falam and other hill areas. Though earlier Mizo historians did not give direct evidence of the Lai migrating constantly to different places, it would be assumed from the way of the people that they wanted to shift to a place where they could have enough land to cultivate. As the people practiced jhum cultivation, they needed new lands as accessible land became limited. Moreover, inter-village and inter-clan feuds were prevalent, the chiefs found the area congested with little scope for extending their chieftainship.⁹

⁷ For details on these migrations see *Pawi Hnam To Bul*, compiled by Pawi District Council Lawngtlai, (Lunglei, 1982), See Map No.5

⁸ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001) p,215

⁹ Vanlalringa Bawitlung, "Chieftainship and the Processes of State Formation in Mizo Society" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to North Eastern Hill University, 1996

The Mara or Lakher are presently concentrated in the south-eastern corner of Mizoram, south of the Haka sub-division of the Chin Hills and north of the Arakan hill tracts. They are the people whom Lewin called Shendoos.¹⁰ They are a branch of the Lai tribe of Chins. The principal clans under Mara are Tlongsai, Hawthai, Zeuhngang, Sabeu, Lialai and Helma.¹¹ The Tlosai are Saiko and Siaha people who once settled at Leisai in the Chin state began to make their move and first settled at Saro and then at Chakhang in Haka area of Chin Hills. After crossing Kolodyne they entered present Mizoram and settled at different places but not for a long time. They finally occupied Beukhi. It was in Beukhi that the Saiko and Siaha Tlongsai people separated. The latter group occupied the neighbouring areas and finally settled permanently at Siaha. The other group also moved to different sites and finally settled at Saiko. From Saiko they formed the other villages of the Tlongsai group.¹² The Hawthai clan originated from Chhira in Haka and settled at Chhualung, Ngiawtlang and Lungbun in present Mizoram.¹³ The Zeuhngang also originated at Hnarang in Haka and are now settled at Savang. N.E.Parry assumed that when he wrote the book in 1932, the Zeuhngang could have been in their present settlement for about 130 years.¹⁴ The Sabeu originated from Thlantlang in Haka and settled at Tichho in present Mizoram.

When the Lusei were about to migrate to Mizoram, there were other tribes residing in some parts of Mizoram. However it appears that these tribes who were residing in present Mizoram prior to the advent of the Lusei were small communities

¹⁰ T.H.Lewin, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India*, (Aizawl, reprint 1978), pp,148ff

¹¹ N.E.Parry, *The Lakher*, Calcutta, reprint 1976, p.1

¹² *ibid*, pp,2-3

¹³ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* p,216

¹⁴ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p.3

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

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

¹⁵ J.Shakespeare, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.5

¹⁶ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1976) p.48-49

¹⁷ These details have been taken from J. Shakespear, *op, cit.*, p.6 and since there have not been any contradictory findings these are more or less acceptable till date.

¹⁸ *ibid* p.6. He did not give the reference to Stewart's notes.

even though they also were sometimes defeated. It is often said that it was the fear of the Pawi and the need for better jhum land which forced them to migrate to the west crossing the Tiau river to Mizoram.¹⁹ The fear of Lai was also narrated by the writers of Zo history in Myanmar. They wrote that the Tlaisun rose to prominence and used to raid the Lusei villages and sometimes even instigated other tribes to raid the Lusei. Since the Lusei did not have the power to face the Tlaisun it resulted in the shifting or migration of the Lusei from Lentlang.²⁰ This is seen in one of the songs called *Chawino zai*:

Kan lo lian dawn kan sah tur doral mi lo hrilh ru
Hlampui tiam loh khawi nge Tianhrang ral lenna
Tianhrang ral khi ral lova kan siam
*Lawmna kan sawm Hawi-hluan Hniarvung pa.*²¹

The English translation is as follows:

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

Carey and Tuck had written that the Haka (Lai) chief Lianduna with the support of a Burmese chief Myat San of Tilin attacked Lusei villages.²² The Burmese had guns and cannons while the Lusei did not have these firearms as yet. As a result the Lusei deserted their villages and fled away. The Hakas then ravaged the countryside for several months. This finally resulted in the Lusei migration

¹⁹ V.L.Siama, *Mizo History*, Aizawl, 1953, p.17; J.Shakespeare, *ibid.*, p.5

²⁰ H.L.C.A Zofate *Chanchnin* (Tahan Kalemyo, 1995) p.59

²¹ *ibid.* p.60

across the Tiau river (a river which acts as a boundary between Myanmar and Mizoram) to enter present Mizoram. Even after the Lusei have crossed Tiau river the Pawi (Lai) tried to dominate over the Lusei so much so that Lallula one of the Lusei chief had to pay an annual tribute to the Thlantlang (Lai) chief Thanchhuma. Thanchhuma used to send one of his trustees Phunthanga to exact tributes from the Lusei villages. This incident is also corroborated by the oral traditions among Lusei as seen in the songs:

I lal lua e Phunthanga

Khaw tinah chhiah i lawr e

*Sat mai zel a aw e*²³

The English translation would be:

Phunthang, you are an arrogant ruler

You taxed heavily on many villages

And if refused, you just hurt them.

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

Hrum sawm lo lian ka dang zo lo ve

*Kan chang sialin Tiaupui dung a zui*²⁴

The English translation would be:

I cannot stop the people who knot their hair at the forehead (Lai)

Our mithuns are now crossing the *Tiau* river.

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

²² Bertram S.Carey & H.N.Tuck, *The Chin Hills* Vol I (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p.153-154

²³ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.53

²⁴ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an thlahte chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1989) p.16

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

Phunthanga 'n saingho ngen e,

Thanchhuma 'n kawlpui bun e

*Miau muau tak a aw e*²⁵

The English translation would be:

Phunthanga demanded ivory

Thanchhuma is now handcuffed

They would be now tamed and silent. (*miau muau*-cry of a cat)

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

Bangchawm ram leh leng kan hel

Chinzahpui leh Thlantlang ral

*Leido leh vanrang chu kiang leh ngai e.*²⁷

The English translation would be:

We have avoided our enemies region

Our enemies are Chinzah and people of Thlantlang

²⁵ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.53

²⁶ *ibid*, p.52-54; This incident is mentioned by all the Mizo historians.

²⁷ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.311



But earthly foes and clouds in the sky will pass away.

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

Even after crossing to the other side, the Lusei as mentioned were still troubled by the Lai and so they planned to stay together. Hence Thangura's descendents and the group of people led by Chungnunga and Lianlula, sons of Sailova all stayed together at Selesih. In this village there were 7000 houses²⁸ and was ruled by seven chiefs. However the number of houses given as 7000 seems to be an exaggeration because if we assume that in an average there were six members in a family, the total population would be around 42,000. But in 1901 the total population of the Lusei were only 36,382. However though the population mentioned in the oral traditions may be exaggerated yet since almost all the Sailo clans were assembled, it can be regarded that a village would have quite large population and the number 7000 may be indicative of that big population rather than the exact number. The chiefs of Selesih were Lalhluma, Rohnaa, Lalchera and Thangphunga, the descendents of Chungnunga; Pukawlha, Darpuiliana and Darliankuala the descendents of Lianlula.²⁹ When they were in this village they did not face any trouble from the Pawi. In fact, the other tribes which had already settled in Mizoram, when they knew about this village, migrated to other places as they feared an attack from them.³⁰ This made it possible for the Sailo and Lusei to expand their settlement. There were also some other smaller tribes who shifted to this village so that they

²⁸ *ibid.* p.52; B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* p.212

²⁹ B.Lalthangliana, *ibid.*

³⁰ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.16

would be free from raids from other tribes. The grouping of people in this village seemed to have great significance for the Sailo. B.Lalthangliana mentioned some of the significances of this village, the most important being, and which appeared to be true, was that the Sailo realised the importance of unity.³¹ When they were assembled in this village, there was no mention of them being raided by Lai or other tribes in oral tradition. So the lesson they learnt that 'unity is strength' was later used by them to extend their territory and thus unity was one of the reasons that they could subjugate other Lusei tribes.

However all of them could not remain in this village for a long period. This was to happen as there could be shortage of land as they practiced jhumming cultivation. In jhumming cultivation after some years of using the fields, the land had to be left fallow for some years to be useable. Moreover since the population was quite high, fuel also would not be sufficient for all of them. Thus they had to move westwards again. They dispersed in batches at different times. The period for the Lusei migration to Mizoram is said to be around 1650-1700AD.³² However, the Hualngo, a tribe of Lusei did not migrate at this time and remained in Burma but some of them later migrated again³³.

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

³¹ B.Lalthangliana, *op.cit.*, p.213

³² *ibid*, p, 214

³³ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*,

would put a plank across a ditch and two men from the two tribes were selected. These two men with sword had to have a duel. The one who fell from the plank was the loser and the one who stood on the plank was declared to be the winner. This type of fighting was first seen between the *Kawlani* and *Siakeng* tribes.³⁴ Though the reason for the Mizo to indulge in this type of warfare was not exactly known but it could be inferred that the population at that time was quite small and so they could not afford to lose more people in the battle. Moreover, it could also be regarded that the people did not have proper weapons to fight so they could have resorted to this type of duel between two persons only. As a consequence of these fights, clanism and separatism prevailed among them.

The other method of fighting which was carried out was that a tribe would go to another tribes' village and would try to take down the head of a pig which was used for sacrifices. This would be hung at the centre of the village. The villagers would defend it and would do their best to prevent other tribes from taking it down. If the other tribe could take it down, it meant that they were stronger and the villagers would concede defeat.³⁵ They might have fought without everyone taking part in it so as to avoid many people being killed and to save their women and children. However, afterwards the methods of fighting which were mentioned were done away with and all the able men would take part in it. Later on they even used to go out to other villages and raid, leaving their women, children and elders in the village. It so often happened that while they were away, their village itself used to be

³⁴ *ibid*, p,172 . This was also narrated by many old people including my grandmother who used to tell us this type of fighting as a story.

³⁵ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p,28. This was also narrated by my grandmother. It seems it was told to her as a story by her parents.

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

³⁶ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.83

³⁷ P.S.Dahrawka, *Mizo Thawnthu*, (Aizawl, 1994)p.189

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

³⁸ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.88

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.82

⁴⁰ *ibid* p.86

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

As mentioned earlier Mizo migrated from one place to another in search of a safe place and fertile land whereby they had to change their villages frequently. When their villages were about to be shifted, they did not just go out and settle at any place they liked. Whenever they thought that it was time for them to make a move, some of the men went out to search for a suitable site. For this purpose five or three of the village elders and a priest were selected and they set out taking with them a cock and some liquor.⁴¹ When they reached what they thought was good enough, they spent the night at that place. Early in the morning, if the cock crowed at its usual time, then it was thought to be good. But if the cock did not crow or if it crowed late, then that place was thought to be a place where some evil spirits reside.⁴² So they abandoned that site and looked for another place. The sites which the elders looked for were generally places where water would be available and which would be in a good defensive position.⁴³ When the British entered present Mizoram

⁴¹ L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thuhla*, Aizawl, 1994, p,175

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Dr.Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2000) p.199

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

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

⁴⁴ J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p,19

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p,43

⁴⁶ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua* (Aizawl, 1994) p.15

them sickness.⁴⁷ Various tribes also began to have some different rituals. Lusei and Ralte tribes' rituals were known as *hnuaipui* in which a pig was offered.⁴⁸ The ritual of Paite was called *sumchawng* and to receive the blessings they offer a piglet and a chicken. Pawi ritual was known as *nutar* in which a full grown pig was offered. Women continued to play an important role as *zawlnei* (having relation with *khuavang*) which in English would mean prophets or soothsayers. They would predict things due to their relationship with *khuavang*.⁴⁹ In many folk tales there were instances of women and men *zawlnei* but most of them were women.⁵⁰ They were often consulted by the sick as they were regarded to know which animals and which kind of sacrifices were to be offered to cure the sick.⁵¹ However these women did not perform the sacrifices themselves as these were done by the male priest. Prophetess who were famous for their prediction were 'one old lady',⁵² Khuahngaii and Tialberhi.⁵³ Another woman who was famous during the days before the people settled in present Mizoram was Thluaisingi who was said to have started one of the sacrifices offered by the Mizo⁵⁴. The legend goes that in one of the Renthlei tribe village, everyday a child would disappear around dusk. So the adult guarded the entire village and at last they saw a huge snake snatching a child. They then trapped the snake and killed it and the meat was distributed among the whole villagers. One old widow named Thluaisingi was given the head and as she cooked it and pierced it

⁴⁷ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.78

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.78

⁴⁹ Saiaithanga, *op. cit.*, p.14

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ K.Zawla, *op.cit.*, p.102

⁵² *ibid.* p.104. The author mentioned her only as *pitar te* which means an old lady.

⁵³ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.259. The authors based their reference on oral sources. Their life stories were not written by the authors.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*,pp.260-261

with a thong, the dead snake's head spoke to her. With fear, the old widow threw it outside. That night, she had some guests and when the cock crowed it crowed as if it told them to run away. So they ran away and soon the whole village was swept away in a landslide. Out of fear, she then decided to hold a sacrifice to propitiate the spirits to bless the village and called the sacrifice as *ngawncawn*. From then on, other people too decided to do as she did and when a family faced some difficulties or hardships, they performed this sacrifice. So this particular sacrifice was significant for this study because it was started by a woman. Though this particular sacrifice was started by a woman, yet it is important to note that in the later period this sacrifice was performed only by men and woman were not allowed to perform any of the sacrifices. However, women holding the important post of prophetess and soothsayers would support the contention that in this period there was some space for authority for some women which can be interpreted to mean that patriarchal values were not yet so deeply embedded. In the oral tradition there were no instances of a woman priest during their pre-migration period so it could be assumed that men were priests. Though women were marginalised in the religious ceremonies, yet, the contribution they had for the success of these sacrifices could not be ignored. This was because women were the ones to rear chickens, goats and pigs which were sacrificed to different spirits.⁵⁵

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

⁵⁵ This has been discussed in details in my earlier work, B.Lalrinchhani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District." Lunglei. M.Phil dissertation, Deptt of History, NEHU, 1998.

to one of the folk tales which was narrated by K.Zawla,⁵⁶ and which was confirmed by stories told by grandmothers was that *Pawl kut* was believed to have originated when they were in the hills of Burma. It so happened that a severe famine struck the place where they lived. This famine continued for three years in which many died and many of the people had to shift to other places. But at the fourth year they had a very rich harvest and all the villagers harvested much more than they required. As they had huge amount of production, they also had many domesticated animals. At a place called *Suai tlang*, one of the *Kawlni*'s chief urged his people to celebrate the year of blessing and to invite their neighbouring villages. So, everyone joined in the feast. Since they had much more than they could eat, they began to feed their friends and had much fun. They enjoyed so much that they even practiced it the next year. When other tribes knew about this, they also started to celebrate at the same time and thus this became a tradition for the Mizo. This festival was celebrated after every harvest that it can also be said to be a harvest festival. Later this festival assumed the festival for the children but the reason for this change could not be found in the oral tradition.

Another festival which was regarded to be the most enjoyed by the people was *Chapchar kut*. This festival was also regarded to have been begun by the *Kawlni* when they were in *Suai tlang* in the hills of Burma.⁵⁷ According to oral tradition, a raiding party of a *Kawlni* village went to raid some other villages but they returned home empty-handed. When the chief saw his warriors returning dejectedly, he felt sorry for them. He then gathered all the young men and women and gave a feast for

⁵⁶ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, pp.51-53

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.54

them. This was later practiced as a festival at the beginning of jhum cultivation and other villages also began to do the same. This festival was later celebrated after the clearing of forest to celebrate that they had finished the toughest part of the jhum work and as a thanksgiving that they did not harm themselves while felling the trees.

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

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

⁵⁸ *ibid*, pp,55-56

chores.⁵⁹ Women participated in all the jhum cultivation although the clearing of forests was mainly the responsibility of men. They then have to grow other vegetables besides rice. The rearing of domesticated animals was also in the hands of the women. While coming back from the field, women had to carry a lot of things such as the vegetables for the family and food for the pigs. In the story of *Mauruangi*⁶⁰, Mauruangi's mother carried such a heavy load that she could not cross a fragile bridge and her husband knocked her down to the river as he had said earlier that anyone who dare not cross the bridge would be pushed into the river. This story also signified the fact that women were expected only to work and those who were not fit enough to work were regarded as not worth to live. Women were also responsible for fetching firewood from the forest. In the story of *Thangsira leh Thangzaia*⁶¹ their mother was blind, but she still had to fetch firewood from the nearby forest. However the implements or tools used for agriculture, weaving and other things were all made by men. As mentioned earlier, men concentrated themselves on defence of the village, raids, construction of houses and clearing the forest for their jhum. B.Lalthangliana had particularly emphasised that the division of labour between men and women was clearly balanced and in fact it was the men who did all the hard labour while women did the things which were easier.⁶² Moreover he also said that as all the dangerous tasks were done by men, this showed how the Mizo men had protected their women. However the writings of B.Lalthangliana need to be examined from a more gender - friendly perspective. It

⁵⁹ Some of the folk tales are *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi, Chalthanga*,

⁶⁰ Nuchhungi & Zirtiri, *Serkawn Graded Readers* (Serkawn, Centenary edition, 2003) pp.69-76

⁶¹ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p,174

⁶² B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* pp,384-387

was true that the various men's responsibilities seemed to be harder and involved greater risks but it should also be noted that women's works required sustained effort and endurance. From the various oral traditions which were gathered it can be also seen that women did not have any leisure time. They had to work right from dawn till it was time to sleep. Unmarried girls especially could not just sleep whenever they wanted. They had to wait for the boys who court them to go back. Even while boys courted them, they still had to involve themselves in spinning or some other things. Girls also cooked the pigs' food while boys were courting them. During the lean season men spent their leisure time as they found it suitable. But women had to store firewood for the rainy season and weaving were also done during this season. So, women's works were not easier than the work of the men and also they continued with their work during day and night and all throughout the season. Moreover it could also be deduced that since men went out for hunting or to raid other villages, they had to leave their womenfolk behind. This would always be a big responsibility for the women. Sometimes only women and children were left in the villages. Taking advantage of this, their enemies often tried to raid the village. So women's lives were in danger and they would be very insecure. It could also be assumed that though the folk tales did not mention about women defending their village, it would be obvious that if only the women were left in the village, they would definitely defend themselves and their children from their enemies and would even fight against them. They might be defeated and taken as captives or killed but it can be fairly said that any mother would try to defend her children from being killed. So, women being left alone in the village very often had to fight and defend themselves. This was seen in the case of *khuangleng run* (*run* – raid, *khawnglung* -

name of a village). This incident occurred in the early stage of migration in which the Sukte raided khuangleng village of a Sailo chief Thanhraha while the chief and his men were out raiding other villages. According to the Sukte, they took about 200 captives from this village.⁶³ Moreover when their men were out of station, it was the women's responsibility to manage the household and also do the men's work as necessary. So this would bring more burdens to them. Moreover it can be clearly seen that since they always migrated from one place to another, women would have a hard time. The time and energy used for cultivating, rearing cattle and setting up a household would always have to be started all over again. This constant migration was seen by the British administrators as to the reason why the Mizo did not own lots of property and the reason for their houses to be built so as not to last very long. So, since they did not have the time to concentrate or to develop themselves on new things, they had to rely on the natural resources which were available to them and make the best use of them and this was usually left to the women. Thus we have seen that women worked a lot for the family and for the society but they never received any recognition for their work and did not receive any special respect and honour which were bestowed upon the men. We have also seen that women worked in the jhum and participated in the back breaking work of weeding and other things but for the various festivals which were related to agriculture like the *pawl kut* and *chapchar kut*, they were never the decision makers in deciding the time to hold the festivals. They participated in the dance and in collecting firewood and brewing the drinks.

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

⁶³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.12

Nuchhungi, who was one of the first students in the school opened by the missionaries, narrated how they used to make pots, the art of which was handed down the generations.⁶⁴ She was told by her mother that pottery was done by women from a very long time. She further explained that women dug a special kind of clay called *tlaklei*, mixed with water and pounded it in a mortar till the clay became soft and malleable. They then molded it with hand. To make it smooth and even, they hit the pot lightly with a small stone or pallet. The finished pot was kept till it became almost dry and then heated it over a slow fire. Nuchhungi told how this art needed patience and time. Thus women were skilled potters and provided the family with pots which were used for cooking and for brewing rice beer and other liquors. Thus the labour they did in pottery was remarkable.

In the various folk tales we also find that women were responsible for growing cotton, spinning and weaving. According to stories handed down the generations, the dress of the women in the days during their stay at Lentlang was called *dawlrem kawr* which was striped with black colour.⁶⁵ This would indicate that they also knew the art of dyeing clothes. However the process of dyeing could not be found in the various folk tales of the studied period yet it is clear that women knew the art of dyeing as the colour of their cloth was striped with black. In the later period, J. Shakespear said that women obtained dye by boiling the leaves of the Assam indigo⁶⁶ and during this period the same plant might also have been used. The reason for the absence of the process of dyeing in the folk tales could be because the people were migratory, they could not have the time to carry out the actual process

⁶⁴ B. Lalrinchhani, *op.cit*

⁶⁵ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.22

⁶⁶ J.Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p.30

of dyeing. But as they settled down the older generations could have passed on their knowledge to the younger generations and so a revival of old knowledge took place. As the people settled, the dyeing procedure was again started. And as time passed, women developed the designs and by the time they settled in Mizoram they had a large number of different kinds of *puan* (traditional cloth which was wrapped around the waist like a sarong).

Trade was also carried out by the people that existed even before their migration. As mentioned earlier all business transactions were done by barter system. In the folktale of *Darhiangi leh Chertuala*,⁶⁷ Darhiangi and Chertuala were married couple but as they could not have children, they were separated by mutual consent. In course of time, Darhiangi married a man from another village. Chertuala also re-married and he was later found to travel to Darhiangi's village to sell pots. In other folk tales also there were many instances of men who went to other villages selling their wares. But there were no instances of women selling things. So it can be deduced that women hardly went out for trading purposes. This might be because they were busy managing the household affairs and did not have the time to go. It could also be that men did not approve of women going to other places without their husbands which would mean that men controlled the mobility of women. This story also reflects that women had a choice as they were separated by mutual consent and soon after she got remarried again. So, prior to the Mizo migration to the present habitat, women perhaps had more freedom in marriage and separation when compared to the later period.

⁶⁷ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p,143-147

Women still played an important role in the social life of the people. The role which they played was as consultants when other people wanted an advice for something. This role which was found in the earlier life in the plains was still followed. One of the wise women who was remembered in Mizo history was Manga Nu (Manga's mother). She was the mother of Manga, one of the chiefs of Ngente tribe⁶⁸. The chief in those days could use the labour of the villagers and as was the practice when the chief needed the villagers to work in his field, his mother would call them on the longest day of the year. In the legend about her, we find that Manga nu used to put her hairpin on the varandah and observing the shadow of the sun on it, she knew which day was the longest day of the year.⁶⁹ Other people did not know that this was the longest day of the year but as Manga Nu knew it, she used the labour of the villagers on this particular day. Till today 21st June is known among the Mizo as *Manga Nu lawm rawih ni* which means Day of Manga mother's labour. So we find that women were the reservoir of traditional knowledge and that they were capable of using their knowledge to their advantage.

Before the Mizo's migration to present Mizoram, another woman who was famous was Pi Hmuaki. She was famous due to her talent to compose songs. In the stories it was said that Pi Hmuaki was one of the earliest known composer among the Mizo.⁷⁰ There were songs composed during their stay in Kale Kabaw valley and in Lentlang also, but there were no mention of the person who composed it. Thus it was not exactly known whether those old folk songs were composed by women or men. However the first composer who was famous and who is remembered till today was

⁶⁸ L.K.Liana, *op. cit.*, p.31

⁶⁹ Lalthanliana, *op. cit.*, p.161

⁷⁰ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.251

Pi Hmuaki. She was from Ngente clan and this could be known from one of her songs:

Kan Ngente khua, khua nun nuama kha

*Thla ki fam hman ki nghilh rua lo ve*⁷¹

The English translation would be:

How nice and pleasant is our Ngente village

I would always remember it even if I die.

As she composed songs, she won the favour of the chiefs and she used to entertain them while the chiefs and his elders were drinking *zu*. As she went on composing songs, the people thought that later generations would have nothing to compose if she continued with her talent. So, they dug a grave for her and buried her alive.⁷² As she was kept in the grave she was still said to compose songs for the men who covered her with earth:

Nauvate u, nau haiate u

*Tha te te khan mi haichhilh rawh u.*⁷³

The English translation would be:

Young men, you ignorant young men

Cover me up as nicely as you could.

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

⁷¹ *ibid.*p.252

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

her.⁷⁴ Even though the real reason for her being buried may not be known, burying a person alive is dehumanizing and a question could be raised whether men were buried alive when they were too old to migrate. Nevertheless it can be said that Pi Hmuaki was a woman who during her prime time earned the respect and favour of the villagers.

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

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

⁷⁴ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.191; Lalthanliana, *op. cit.*, p.162

land as possible. They knew that they have to fight many of the other tribes and clans who had settled first in present Mizoram. They first defeated the Ralte tribe. They had already learnt that one of the most important things for them to defeat other tribes was to be united. So they developed the idea of crushing all other ruling families by concluding an agreement between themselves.⁷⁵ They then devised a well developed action programme in which Lallula's descendents were to subdue the Zadeng; Rolura's descendents would fight against the Palian and the Thangluah's would be subjugated by Lianlula's descendents.⁷⁶ The plan which they carried out was met with success at the end even though at the initial stage they were also sometimes defeated. The defeated Lusei chiefs had to accept the suzerainty of the Sailo. Hence at around 1805 they defeated all the other Lusei clans⁷⁷ and their next aim was to defeat the other tribes. They then started a campaign back to the east and in the north. They soon defeated the Hualngo. They again concentrated on the Thado as this tribe had killed some of the Sailo.⁷⁸ The Thado were a tribe which had settled in Mizoram before the Lusei migrated. It was this tribe who had expelled the Halams, Hrangkhawl, Darlong etc forcing them to migrate to Tripura, Sylhet and Cachar districts. The Thados were in turn defeated by the Sailo and were forced to migrate to Cachar and South Manipur and were called New Kukis.⁷⁹ However some of them accepted the Sailo chiefs and stayed behind. Thus the Sailo were the masters of the new land but it should be noted that there still existed some Lai and Mara

⁷⁵ F.Lalremsiama, "The Traditional Political Institutions of the Luseis" Unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to Department of History, NEHU. 1984. p.36

⁷⁶ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.*, p.59

⁷⁷ *ibid*, pp,59-61

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ J. Shakespeare, *op.cit.* p,6

chiefs in southern Mizoram who had never fallen under the influence of the Sailo chiefs.⁸⁰ However Sailo excelled themselves among the Lusei chiefs and established their suzerainty in the present Mizoram.⁸¹ The reasons for the Sailo to establish their paramountcy in present Mizoram could be due to their unity as mentioned earlier. Their unity was further strengthened by the marriage alliances which they made with the other ruling houses. The sons of the Sailo chiefs normally married the daughters of the other Sailo chiefs and vice versa. Lalpuiliana, the heir son of the Sailo chief, Lallula also married the daughter of the Pawi chief.⁸² Hence the Sailo chiefs through matrimonial alliances strengthened their position. They also had certain privileges which gave them wealth and power. They received paddy dues which gave them power over land; privileges of salts, meat and bees wax – control of resources; mithun sales tax which provided them power over properties and control of labour and control of man power which was ‘real wealth’ in the pre-modern period.⁸³ Since they were also large in number they were no match for the small tribes who had ruled earlier. Moreover many villagers from other tribes such as Zadeng and Rokhum left their chiefs due to ‘the cruel and arbitrary rulers’,⁸⁴ and embraced the Sailo chiefs which improved their position and population. The Sailo ruled the villages efficiently. The Sailo therefore due to their well developed action programme and astute administration ruled between the Tiau river in the east and the Jampui hills in the west except for the southern portion where the Pawi, Lakher and

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p.41

⁸¹ Vanlalringa Bawitlung, “Origin and Development of Chieftainship in Mizoram”. Unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to Deptt of History, NEHU, 1991. p.60

⁸² B.Lalthangliana (ed), *Mizo Lal Ropuite* Vol I (Aizawl, 1989) p.81

⁸³ Vanlalringa Bawitlung, *op.cit.* p.59

⁸⁴ J.Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p,9

Fanai chiefs maintained their villages. However as time passed, the Sailo chiefs could not remain united forever. As they ruled over different villages there started some ill-feelings between them. The conflict erupted when Vuta of the north and Lalpuithanga of the south wanted to acquire more land. This culminated in a war between them and this was believed to have occurred between 1849-1856.⁸⁵ Not long after this war, there broke out another war among the Sailo chiefs of the east and west, namely the descendents of Lalsavunga and Manga. They were also aided by other chiefs. This war however ceased due to the breakout of a famine. These two wars greatly weakened the might of the Sailo chiefs. The other tribes knowing their condition had the courage to fight against them. Hence they now had to fight against the Pawi, Fanai and Hmar in which they were sometimes defeated. However the Sailo chiefs remained the largest ruling clan among the Mizo. Even when the British administered the land they found that there were more than three hundred Sailo chiefs ruling in different villages in present Mizoram.⁸⁶

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

⁸⁵ Liangkhaia, *op.cit.* p,66

⁸⁶ Vanlalringa Bawitlung, *op. cit.*, p.61

different groups could not understand the other tribes' language. However, when the Sailo dominated the other smaller tribes, they popularised their own dialect which was known as *duhlian* or *lusei* language.⁸⁷ So by their administrative ability and foresight the Sailo unified the various Mizo tribes under their rule, "introduced a uniform code of administration and social and moral codes of conduct and mobilized the disparate tribes into one linguistic and cultural community conscious of themselves as a force with historical destiny".⁸⁸ Thus it could also be said that all the Mizo tribes more or less followed the Sailo tradition and culture and even religion. It would be thus interesting to see whether the transition of the Sailo from a clan which had power only within its village to being the masters of many clans and tribes would affect the gender relations in the society.

⁸⁷ Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a Vela Hnam Dangte Chanchin.*, (Aizawl, 1994) p.34

⁸⁸ L.Keivom, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER IV

BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE IN MIZORAM :

ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND GENDER RELATIONS

The Sailo dominance over the major part of present Mizoram as stated in the earlier chapter brought a common culture, tradition, language and religion. Many of the smaller clans or tribes surrendered to the Sailo and performed a ritual known as *saphun* to indicate that they could follow all the Sailo tradition and religion. Saiaithanga, who was one of the early Christian converts and who actually saw and knew the pre-Christian culture wrote that *Saphun* was performed by killing the biggest pig owned by the family and this was killed by the Sailo *sadawt* (priest).¹ After killing this pig, they again had to perform *hnuaipui* (*hnuai*-under; *pui* – great) in which the animal was killed under the house. After performing *saphun* these tribes were admitted into the Sailo clan and could even eat the meat offered in the rituals which was to be eaten exclusively by the Sailo. Thus the Sailo became the paramount ruler of Mizoram and they proclaimed themselves as “those who glide between the sun and the moon.”² When the Sailo became the ruling clans of the Mizo, they started a uniform system of administration in all the villages. Since all the Sailo chiefs were related they started a new tradition that chiefs would not be killed if wars broke out between them. So even though chiefs were sometimes captured they were never killed. In the case of *Khawnglung Run*, we find that the northern Sailo chief Vuta and his sons had asked the Zo from Burma to help them. So they

¹ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua* (Aizawl, 1994) pp.20-21

² Zikpui Pa, “Tun Kum Za Chhunga Mizo Fate (1872-1972)” in *Meichher*, Kum IIIIna, Bu 30, November 1977, p.17

raided the village of Khawnglung and the Zo tried to take away the chief's wife and his son. But Vuta's sons could not bear to see their distant relatives taken away as captives and so they objected Thuama's (Khawnglung chief) wife and son to be taken away as captives to the Chin Hills. A dispute then arose between the Zo and Vuta's men. They somehow could come to an agreement and the chief's son was taken away by Vuta's sons while his wife was taken away by the Zo.³

The chief was the secular head of a village but not the ritual head.⁴ He enjoyed absolute power and decided all cases which were brought before him. However the chief was assisted by his elders known as *upas* who were selected from the men of his village. The chief's youngest son inherited his father's title and village while the other sons set up a new village of their own. So, it was seen that even though the other sons did not inherit from their father yet they became chiefs and had their own subjects. There were principal taxes which the chiefs collected from their subjects and they were *fathang* and *sachhiah*. *Fathang* was the due payable to the chief by the villagers from their harvest. B.Lalthangliana basing himself on oral sources said that this system was started when the Mizo were still in the hills of Myanmar.⁵ According to Mizo legend, when the Hnamte chief Chhanpiala died, the villagers wanted to have a chief who would be able to lead the people. So they went to Seipui village and invited Zahmuaka to be their chief which the latter declined. But after persistent pleas and with a promise that the village would give a part of their harvest to him, and with the consent of his wife, Zahmuaka

³ This information has been collected from Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1976) p.68

⁴ C.Nunthara, *Mizoram – Society and Polity* (New Delhi, 1996) p.66

⁵ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001) pp.285-286

accepted to be their chief. So it was regarded that giving a part of their harvest to the chief started after this incident and was soon followed by the other chiefs also. The amount varies between different villages and when the British administered the land, N.E.Parry fixed “six snowflake kerosine oil tins”⁶ of paddy to be paid as *fathang*. The other tax imposed on the people was *sachhiah* in which when a hunter killed some wild animals, he had to give the foreleg of the animal killed as tax.⁷ The other taxes which were also imposed were *chikhurchhiah* or salt tax, *khuaichhiah* or honey tax and *thachhiah* or labour tax whereby the people of the village were obliged to construct the house of their chiefs. This practice of labour tax was however absent in Rolura’s descendents which ruled in southern Mizoram.⁸ Rolura was the great grandson of Sailova, the progenitor of the Sailo clan. He was one of the important chiefs of the Sailo in Southern Mizoram.

The Sailo chiefs therefore by their might and astute administration ruled almost the whole of present Mizoram. But as mentioned earlier, there were some tribes of Zo who did not migrate to present Mizoram but had stayed back in the Chin Hills, but in this chapter the life and gender relations of the Mizo who had settled in present Mizoram would be studied. This would cover the period from around the year 1700 to more or less after Christianity was embraced by all the Mizo. To understand the gender relations in the society the economy, social life and religious life of the people needs to be examined.

ECONOMY: From the various oral folk tales which are already mentioned, it can be established that the Mizo were agriculturists. They still continued to follow their

⁶ N.E.Parry, *A Monograph of Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.12

⁷ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.286

⁸ R.Vanlawma, “Mizo Lalte leh an Khua leh Tui” in *Mizo Ziarang*, (Aizawl, 1975) p.60

ancestors agricultural pattern even when they settled in present Mizoram. The methods used for cultivation and the processes were practiced till the advent of the British and some of them are still used till today. The method which they used was known as *jhumming* and this method is still practiced till date by the major agriculturists. To know about the process of selecting the jhum sites and the various works involved in the fields, information was also gathered from Nguni who was born around 1928 and B.Lalawia who was born around 1932.⁹ Their narrations would be corroborated by the writings of British administrators and other Mizo historians.

Every village had their own region for cultivation. All the household in the village were to get a share of the land. The chief and his elders would sit together and check the area. As soon as the area for cultivation was announced, the chief's brothers would first choose their land followed by the chief's elders. After the elders, the able or some of the wealthy families whom the chief could depend upon would be given preference.¹⁰ Wealth for the Mizo was mainly decided in the number of mithun a person owned and so the value of property was judged in terms of mithun.¹¹ Even bride prices were determined in terms of mithun. A person who owned a large number of mithuns was considered to be rich as they also could afford to feast the whole village in the various feasts of merit. A family who had many children who could work in the fields and whose harvest was good was also

⁹ Nguni and B.Lalawia were interviewed in the tradition of oral history as they actually had practiced jhum cultivation in their village Bualpui (H) themselves and the process of the cultivation had not changed through the years. Separate footnotes would not be given for their further narration of working in the fields.

¹⁰ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.295

¹¹ Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl, 1985) p.12

considered to have wealth as they would not face shortage of food. It should be noted that men were the owners of these mithuns and lands as women could not hold any property in their names. So women would be considered to be rich only if their husbands or fathers owned a large number of mithuns. If a woman happened to marry a man who did not own a large number of mithuns then she was considered to have married a poor man. So, these wealthy men were given the privilege of selecting their *jhum* sites as the chief considered them to be able to provide food to others in need of food. The other population could choose their own *jhum* site only after the mentioned people have selected the sites for themselves.

The day for selecting their land would be announced by the village crier. On the fixed day, everyone would try to choose the best for themselves. If however two or three persons reached the same site, they would give preference to the one who had first reached the site or to the eldest one among them.¹² Selecting a site for their *jhum* was considered to be a very important task as their produce for the year depended on the fertility of their land. It should be however noted that selection of the *jhum* was the work of the men.

After selecting the sites, it was time to clear the forest. Clearing of the forest was considered to be the work of the men.¹³ After the trees were felled, they had to be burnt. The next morning, it was the task of the women to sow the seeds. Usually they sow the seeds of pumpkin, maize, mustard, barley and some yams and after some weeks or months paddy was sown. After this, they construct a small house to stay during their lunch and also to sleep if they happen to spend their night. As the

¹² Tribal Research Institute, *Tunhma Mizo Nunphung*, (Aizawl, 1992), p,86, hereafter cited as TRI, *Tunhma...*

¹³ *ibid.*, p, 167

seeds began to sprout, weeding was again the responsibility of the women and this was a hard and back aching work. This was usually during the hot summer and also during the monsoon. Even though the weather may not be good, they had to weed their fields so as to get a good produce. During this time, many of them also used to get sick probably from malaria. In the month of the November or early December, it was time to harvest their paddy. Nguni recollected how the work was tough but as it was the time to reap their hard labour, it was a time of joy for them. This work was done both by men and women. So, almost all the families in the village would go to their fields and spend their time till they finished harvesting. Many of them would also take their domestic animals with them. On the last day of the harvest, they would collect their friends and it would be a time of merriment. Nguni's father used to kill one of their domestic animals and give it to his children so that they could share it with their friends. This account can be corroborated from information available in B. Lalthangliana's work.¹⁴

After harvesting, the work of the women still continued. The harvested paddy had to be collected from the fields and stored in their storage bins constructed at some convenient place between the fields and the homes on the hill-tops.¹⁵ From these storing bins, they again had to carry up paddy to their hill top homes through the year load after load to meet the needs of the family's daily consumption in the homes.

Since the Mizo were non-vegetarian, they consumed the meat of their domesticated animals. The domesticated animals included dogs, pigs, goat, mithun and chicken. However meat of dogs and goats were not eaten by women though the

¹⁴ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.10

reason for this could not be ascertained. They also hunted animals and sometimes used traps to catch them. However though they were non-vegetarian, it should be noted that they domesticated animals mainly for religious purposes and for their festivals and sometimes also as payment for bride price. The meat which was offered for sacrifices was eaten later on. These domesticated animals were looked after by the women. Bringing food for the pigs from the forest and feeding the animals were the responsibilities of the females. Though women also eat meat, they were not supposed to eat in abundance. Fishing was also practiced by them. Men usually went to fish in the rivers and streams. Women also went along with the men and this was mainly to accompany their men. Crabs were regarded to be inferior to other meat and were set aside for women. Men did not regard crab as meat. Lalrinawmi for her dissertation interviewed some elderly persons and one interviewee named Upa Malsawma said that before hunting, hunters used to pray to Chawngtinleri, the deity who looked after the animals, but when they set out to catch crabs, they never prayed to Chawngtinleri to grant them success.¹⁶ This was because crabs were regarded to be insignificant and so they were not under the care of Chawngtinleri. So crabs which were regarded to be inferior among the animals and fishes were set aside for women. The most insignificant and inferior crabs set aside for women would infer that women were also considered to be inferior.

Cotton was grown in the fields. Picking the cotton and all the process for making it into cloth such as ginning, spinning and weaving was the works of women. They did this work during the period when they have finished weeding their fields

¹⁵ A.G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977) p,172

¹⁶ Lalrinawmi, "Crab Theology: A Critique of Patriarchy – Cultural Degradation and Empowerment of Mizo Women" D.Min dissertation, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, 1993.

and have not harvested as yet or during the dry season. So it was regarded to be a free time. Thus women did not have any leisure time at all. Even when they did not have to go to their fields they had to work making clothes for the family. They would weave during daytime and unmarried men would go and sit near them. In the folk tale of *Lalruanga*, Lalruanga went to a girl's house to court her while she was weaving and that he just sat beside her while she worked. In the evening also boys would go to the girl's house to court them.¹⁷ Sometimes a girl who was quite popular with the boys would have so many visitors that some of them did not have a proper seat inside the house. This is seen in one of the ballads composed during this time:

Thapui, i run kei ka chan tawk

Ka hawi vela vawkchaw fianin ka biang a chhun e

Ka han thluang a, uikawngkaah kel nghawng ka khan e.¹⁸

The English translation would be:

When I visit you in your house

I turn around and the ladle of your pot touched my cheek

And as I stretch my legs, I had to rest them on the goat's neck.

While sitting with the boys, girls would not just sit idly. She sometimes cooked food for the pigs. After cooking this, she would take out her loom and work on it. Lalhmuaka who was one of the early educated man wrote in his book *Pum Titi* that when he and his friends went to court a girl in the evening, she sat with her spindle doing some work.¹⁹ So, even when men visited them, women had to work and could

¹⁷ V.L.Siama, *Mizo History*, (Aizawl, 1978), p,28

¹⁸ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an thlahte chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1976) p.137

¹⁹ Lalhmuaka, *Pum Titi* (Aizawl, 1985) p.29

not just sit and spend the time as they liked. But it should be noted that the weaving implements and other tools for working were made by men.

Fuel was mainly from the forest. Females both young and old used to go to the forest and fetch firewood for the family. The actual cutting down of the tree was mainly done by men. However the cutting off the branches and chopping of the wood was done by women. In the story of *Chalkunga leh Thanghniangi*,²⁰ Thanghniangi and her friend were seen to gather firewood while the men, Chalkunga and his friend roamed around looking for some birds to shoot. Seeing the girls, the boys helped them in splitting the wood. It was not the boy's responsibility to split those woods, but since the girls were their girlfriends they helped them. Moreover helping the girls was one of their tactics to win the favour of the girl they fancied. Girls had to carry it home in the baskets which they put on their back. They usually did this work during the time before harvest and before starting new fields. They had to stock the firewood during this time as they would not be able to do it during the monsoon season.

Pottery was also made by women.²¹ They were moulded by hands. These potteries were mostly used for cooking and for making fermented drinks.

Tobacco was also grown by the people for their own consumption. The leaves were dried in the sun or over the fire. Both male and female smoke freely. Sometimes they rolled the tobacco with dry leaves. However men usually smoke with their pipe known as *vaibel* while women smoke their *tuibur*.²² Women always have a *tuibur* in her mouth and this was not only to satisfy herself but to supply the

²⁰ P.S.Dahrawka, *Mizo Thawnthu* (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1994) pp,193-219

²¹ J.Shakespeare, *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, (Aizawl, 1988)(reprint), p,27

²² C.Hermana, *Zofate Zin Kawng*, (Aizawl, 1995), p,103-104

men with the nicotine water called *tuibur*. My grandmother used to tell me how she used to smoke continuously so that her father and later her husband and in-laws would have sufficient *tuibur*.²³ If a woman could supply *tuibur* to her family at all times, she was praised as a hard working woman. So my grandmother had to smoke continuously as she wanted to please her family even though she used to get fed up of it. So women had to smoke not as a voluntary or willing pastime but were forced to do it which reveals how women were controlled in their actions.

SOCIETY:

The Mizo society was a stratified society because a hierarchy of groups existed.²⁴ The upper group being the chief, his Council of Elders and the prominent men who distinguished themselves as hunters and wealthy family who were called the *thangchhuah*. The second layer consisted of the common people and the third strata comprised the *bawi* and the slaves.

The elders were the ones who advised the chief in all his decisions and had the first choice for their *jhum*. The *thangchhuah* were the ones who made their village famous and so they were given importance in all the societal events.

The *bawi* existed as they had done before they settled in present Mizoram.²⁵ *Bawis* were the ones who were owned by the chiefs and as mentioned earlier could be due to different reasons. It could be due to poverty or some wrongdoings. The common people and even the elders could not own a *bawi*. It was only the chiefs

²³ My grandmother Hramthluaii who was born around 1895 used to tell me about the works done by women and their place in the society. Her narration would be reliable because she knew many things which were practiced before they embraced Christianity. In her narration she also used to refer to her mother.

²⁴ Dr. Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 2000), p.173ff

²⁵ See Chapter II

who could have a *bawi*. They remained in the chief's house and even if they have built a separate house for themselves, all that they possess and their products were still the property of their owner. They could buy their freedom with mithun. P.S.Dahrawka, the author of *Mizo Thawnthu* was a *bawi* during his childhood days. In the introduction of his book,²⁶ he wrote that after his father died, he and his mother migrated to Ngopa village. After staying in the village for sometime they were taken by the chief Hrangchhuana of their village to be his *bawi*. Two of his aunts who lived in a different village Kawnzar were also taken as *bawi* by their village chief Hrankima as they had no male relatives to depend on.²⁷ He further wrote that his aunts refused to be taken as *bawi* and they tried to resist it but could not as the chief's elders forcibly took them inside the chief's house. He then narrated that women who had no men to depend on were easy targets for the chiefs to keep them as slaves.²⁸ For the chiefs having a *bawi* meant freely owning a free labourer who could do many of the household chores and for cultivation also. P.S.Dahrawka further mentioned that the chiefs were kind to them but for the *bawi* it was not a very pleasant experience as they had lost all their personal freedom and had always to be under the control of the chiefs.²⁹ There were also slaves or *sal* who were captives from war. The elders and the common people also could have slaves. These slaves could buy their liberty at a price. It is noteworthy (to note) that children and marriageable women were mostly *sal* while men were killed and were hardly taken to be slaves.³⁰ This was mainly because in the shifting cultivation practiced by the

²⁶ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p.ix

²⁷ *ibid.* p.x

²⁸ *ibid.* p.vii

²⁹ *ibid.* p.xiii

³⁰ J.Shakespeare, *op.cit.*,p,49

Mizo, women played a vital role in cultivation. So people wanted women who could do the many works required in cultivation.

In the Mizo society, the term *tlawmngaihna* played a very important role. According to J.H.Lorrain, *tlawmngai* means to be self-sacrificing, unselfishness, self denying or persevering.³¹ A person who has this quality was regarded in high esteem. It has all the good moral qualities of life. This can be possessed by all the people irrespective of sexes. The qualities which a *tlawmngai* person had to possess has been written about by many Mizo authors,³² and the main points which they emphasised would be generalised as follows: A man who had this quality should be the first to set out in times of danger and also work harder than his friends when they were out cultivating or hunting. He should be the one to serve his friends. A girl or woman who had this quality should also work hard and always be courteous or polite to her suitors and other people even if she was not feeling well or feeling sleepy. A *tlawmngai* person would always show respect to his elders and would not disobey them. Thus we find that the qualities for men and women to be *tlawmngai* was different. For men it meant bravery and being strong while for women it signified submission to the men. Thus the concept of *tlawmngai* reveals that after the settlement of the Mizo in present Mizoram patriarchy became to be firmly entrenched in the society and also in the societal values so much so that even *tlawmngaihna* which was believed to be of good virtue was also gender biased. The elder men would always see who was the most *tlawmngai* among the young men. Sometimes on special occasion or during their festivals they would give a special

³¹ J.H.Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta, reprint, 1997), pp.513,514

³² Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p.45-46; Challiana, *Pi Pu Nun*, (Aizawl, 1986) p.6-7

cup of wine to the most *tlawmngai* man. This concept of *tlawmngai* however appeared to be strong among the people after the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram. If we look at the history of men who were famous for possessing this quality, it could be seen that they were all dated to the period after their settlement in present Mizoram especially after the Sailo consolidated their power. This concept could have grown stronger when the Mizo had to face a lot of wars in order to consolidate themselves and hence *tlawmngaihna* would be instilled in the minds of the people so that they would be brave. In trying to be the best in the village, men would then compete to be brave and would be useful for the security and safety of the village. It could also be significant to add that the *tlawmngai* values became to be more developed after Christianity entered Mizoram as it was in many ways parallel to the Christian teachings. It should also be noted that in the traditional period due to *tlawmngaihna* men received honour by receiving a special cup of *zu* (liquor) from the elders and chiefs and were regarded in high esteem by the villagers. But for the women even if they were *tlawmngai*, there was no special honour for them inspite of all the hardships and sufferings which they underwent to be *tlawmngai*.

Zu or fermented drink occupied a significant place in all the Mizo society. There were different types of *zu*. Every household had their own pot of *zu* at all times.³³ They drank when they feel tired and not feeling well. Some of the drinks were even given to children and infants. They were considered a must in all the festivals. Women also drink but they were not supposed to get drunk. However

³³ Challiana, *ibid* p,6-7

unmarried men and women hardly drink together except during festivals.³⁴ If they were seen to be drinking and getting drunk it was considered a very shameful act.

Marriage and Family: In Mizo society, the family was patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. The eldest male was the head of the family and all decisions were taken by him. Monogamy was mainly practiced by the Mizo. However McCall wrote that polygamy was practiced by the people, but this declined as the wives quarrelled a lot and it posed a problem for the husband.³⁵ However looking at various anthropological studies of different tribes, the reason for polygamy to decline among the Mizo as written by McCall seems to be doubtful. Men usually wanted to have several wives as it gave them control over many people and so the quarrels among the wives could not be the only reason for its decline. Even though the common people may be monogamous, the chiefs often kept concubines or practiced polygamy.³⁶ P.S.Dahrawka mentioned that when he was a *bawi* during his boyhood days, he stayed with the concubine of their chief.³⁷ This reveals that the concubines or the other wives of the chief did not reside with their husbands but that they stayed in a different household.

Men courted women freely and it very often happened that men and women took a fancy to each other. If the girl happened to be pregnant and if he refused to marry her, he had to pay a fine of one mithun. If they did not get married but had another child, then the boy did not have to pay a fine any more. If they happened to have a third child, then he had to pay a fine again.³⁸ J.Shakespear did not mention

³⁴ V.L.Siama, *op.cit.*, p,69

³⁵ A.G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p.105

³⁶ J. Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p,50

³⁷ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p,xii

³⁸ J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p,53

why the boy was not fined for the second child. Elderly people were also asked as to why the boy was not fined for the second time, but they could not give any definite reason but answered that it was practiced in the society. However, it could be assumed that the society had the feeling that the woman gave her consent to get pregnant for the second time and so the boy was not to be fined. But for the same boy to impregnate the same girl for the third time, the boy could have promised to marry but when he did not keep his promise, he was again fined. On the other hand, it could also be assumed that the laws did not fine the boy for the second time because the society blamed the girl for being careless and frivolous and so wanted to free the boy from any punishment. Though the exact reason for the boy not to be fined for the second time was not exactly know, yet, it could be argued that the society was lenient with the actions of the boys and so they were not fined when they did something wrong. When the child was still a baby, the mother had to look after it. However, after two or three years, after the weaning was over, the father of the child was entitled to keep the child.³⁹ A single mother was not condemned by the society and she could marry a man who liked her but her bride price was sometimes reduced.

In general when marriage was to take place, there should be no resentment from the family members. Men were allowed to marry except his immediate family members as they preferred marriage outside the family. This was mainly because her family wanted the bride price to increase the wealth of the family, and not to merely transfer it from one brother to another.⁴⁰ However Sailo chiefs often married their

³⁹ A.G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p,99

⁴⁰ J.Shakespeare, *op.cit* p,49

first cousins as they wanted to consolidate their position as a ruling family.⁴¹ Among the Lusei, girls often got married after they attained puberty and after they were regarded as adults. But among the Lai, this was not always the case. There were many instances of adults getting married but there were also cases of child marriage. Even if they were not legally married, children were engaged with the consent of both the parents.⁴² Some of them were married off, and the girl stayed at the boy's house, but they did not sleep together. When they were of age, they also had to follow the custom of sending intermediaries to the girl's house and a ceremony was again conducted.⁴³ If the engaged girl somehow married another boy, she was regarded to be committing adultery and had to be fined. If the boy also got married to other girl, he had to pay a fine. Child marriage among the Lai would indicate that women were sexually controlled and that they did not have any freedom of choice. Though the boy also was married off at an early age, he could marry a girl whom he fancied later on and would not be regarded as committing adultery. However if the girl married another boy, she was regarded to have committed adultery and would be shunned by other people. Thus child marriage was another way of controlling women's sexuality.

Among the Mizo, when arrangements were finalised, bride price was fixed. This did not change as was described in the earlier chapter. However it should be noted that bride price was seldom paid fully at the time of marriage. This happened because the boy could not afford to pay all of it. Marriage was a civil contract which could be dissolved at the will of both the partners. The Sailo chiefs were very

⁴¹ Dr. Sangkima, *Mizos-Society and Social Change*, (Guwahati, 1992), p, 27

⁴² C.Laitanga, *Pawi Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1988), p,140

⁴³ *ibid*, p, 141

particular in selecting their brides. The bride to be was brought to the man's house, she had to pose herself naked before the man and he would check whether she had any disability or some abnormality in her figure. If the man was satisfied with her body, the marriage plans would be carried forward.⁴⁴ This shows that women were regarded as something of a commodity to be bought and had to be examined fully before buying her. This kind of examining her body would be quite derogatory and an insult for women. There was a system of engagement which was known as *dawn puan phah*⁴⁵ which means the spreading of a cloth. By this custom, the girl's mother would spread a sheet for them to sleep together. A particular cloth called *puandum* (black cloth) is then laid out on the floor and they sleep together. If after this, the boy refused to marry the girl, he had to pay a fine of one mithun.

The Mizo did not have a grand wedding ceremony. On the fixed day, the bride price would be paid to the girl's family. The bride was brought to the bridegroom's house accompanied by her friends and relatives. On the way she would be pelted with rice, earth, stones and mud.⁴⁶ She had to be guarded from all these and a man called *lawichal*⁴⁷ was responsible that she be brought to the bridegroom's house safe and sound. It was also considered to be unlucky if she slipped and fell on the way. If she did fall, she had to return to her parent's house and start to proceed to the bridegroom's house again.⁴⁸ On reaching her husband's house, the *sadawt* (priest) would make them drink *zu* from the same pot and would take some strands

⁴⁴ Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p,186. This was also mentioned by V.Thangchuanga, who wrote about the marriage of Lalbiaki, one of the Sailo chiefs.

⁴⁵ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p, 33

⁴⁶ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p,102

⁴⁷ Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p, 189

⁴⁸ TRI, *Tunhma...* p,74

of the bride and bridegroom's hair and tie it together. He then chanted some invocation and released their hair. A chicken was then killed to show that they were now married. The chicken which was killed was called *remar* which literally means peace chicken. But this was practiced only by some people who were selective in doing a particular thing. The bride would then return to her father's house that night and would leave for her husband's house the next day to stay permanently. On the second night she would take all her belongings and things which she would need in her matrimonial house. The newly bride had to face many difficulties. My grandmother said that women especially the young bride dare not eat to her heart's content. This was because if they ate a lot of food, they were regarded as greedy. So, they used to eat very little and very often had to stay hungry. My grandmother also said that she used to sneak to her parent's house to eat some leftovers and sometimes her mother used to cook some extra food for her so that when my grandmother went to their house, she would have something to eat. She also said that this was the case for other women also. So the attitude towards women was that they were expected to do many of the works but had to limit their food consumption which could result in poor health.

There were often cases of separation of married couple. The main reasons for their separation were infertility, adultery, impotence etc. Men also could easily divorce their wife. If he simply said, *ka ma che*, 'I divorce you,'⁴⁹ the wife had to leave with her belongings which she had before marriage. If the bride price was not fully paid, he had to pay it to her parents. The wife also could leave her husband if

⁴⁹ A.G.McCall, op. cit., p,108

she desired and this was known as *sumchhuah*. If the wife left her husband she had to return the bride price which was given to her parents. She could take out her possessions which she had before she got married. The other reason for separation was adultery. The Mizo also had the notion that men were free to have any relationship with other women and they were not looked down upon and hence they were not even regarded to have committed adultery.⁵⁰ Even if a husband had a child by another woman, the wife had no redress for his adultery.⁵¹ However if a wife had extra marital affairs with another man, she was regarded to have committed the worst sin, i.e. adultery. This was one of the reasons that McCall had written that 'this was a society which is very definitely fashioned for men'.⁵² There were two kinds of adultery, the one which was committed during the lifetime of her husband and the one which was committed after his death. In the first case, the whole of the bride price must be returned to the husband and the wife could not take out her belongings except the clothes which she wore at the moment. Among the Lusei, the man with whom she committed adultery was free of liability. This shows that the society being patriarchal did not mind men having affairs with other married women but that it restricted women. But among the Lai and Zo, he had to pay a pig or a mithun. This would signify that the society felt that the wrong committed by the man should also be punished. After the death of her husband a wife was still regarded to be able to commit adultery. When the husband died, the wife had to perform *thlaichhiah* ceremony in which animals were killed and relatives were invited to eat. Moreover for three months she had to put aside a portion of the rice she eats at each meal for

⁵⁰ Dr. Sangkima, *op.cit.*, p,28

⁵¹ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.* p,99

⁵² *ibid*

her dead husband.⁵³ This is known as *mitthi chaw pek*. During these months, she was also not to comb her hair. After the three months had passed, she would then perform another ceremony called *thlahual*. To perform *thlahual* ceremony, a pig or some other animals were killed and eaten by the family members. If during these three months, she was caught sleeping with another man, she would be regarded as adulteress, and would have to be punished in the same way as if her husband was alive. This shows that the society controlled women's sexuality and that they were restricted by the societal attitude and customary laws even after their husband died. If she did not have any affairs during the three months and after performing the required rites, she would go back to her parent's house and could remarry. However widows remove their earrings.⁵⁴

After the death of her husband, women could not inherit any immovable property. In Lusei society the youngest son was the heir to inherit property. However among the Lai (except the Fanai tribe) the heir was the eldest son.⁵⁵ The things which women would inherit were their mother's ornaments like necklaces, beads, earring, clothes and baskets. The house which she and her husband had built could not be owned by her but only by her husband. Only in very exceptional cases could a woman, for whom marriage price had been paid by the husband's family to the wife's family, inherit property in her own right. She may administer a property on behalf of her sons, but if it was established that she was frittering away the land, they may claim to inherit the property.⁵⁶ Moreover, if a man died with no male connections, his property could be inherited by his daughter or if he did not have a

⁵³ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p,48

⁵⁴ J.Shakespeare, *op.cit.*, p,14

⁵⁵ Tribal Research Institute, *The Tribes of Mizoram, A Dissertation*, (Aizawl, 1994), p,17

daughter, his widow. The right for them to inherit certain specific things and not other properties as they desire highlight their limited right to ownership and inheritance. In Mara society, if a man died, his property would be inherited by his son but if he did not have any sons, his brothers were to inherit it. If he did not have any brothers, his uncle could inherit and in the absence of this, any male relatives were supposed to inherit. The wife could inherit only if the husband did not have any male relatives who could claim it.⁵⁷ This reveals that in the Mizo society, women were not regarded worthy to be the family's heir and that they were not thought to be worthy of looking after the family's heritage. On the other hand, men were supposed to be able to look after the household property regardless of their personality.

The inheritance law which prevailed in the Mizo society clearly reveal the position of women. As mentioned above, women did not have any proper rights for their security if their husbands were dead. They had to rely on the goodwill of their relatives.

Social Life:

When the Mizo settled in the present Mizoram, they were quite skilled in making their own dresses. The most popular were *hmaram puanfen* and *kawppuizikzial*⁵⁸. The former served as a petticoat which was dark blue in colour and reached till the knee. This was mostly worn as a working dress. The latter was also a like a petticoat which was indigo in colour and designed with white thread.

⁵⁶ A.G. McCall, p, 114

⁵⁷ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p,286

⁵⁸ C.Hermana, *op.cit.*, p,94

In the society men and women played important roles. Both of them had to participate in all the societal events. When festivals were to be held unmarried men and women busied themselves in preparation. They had to fetch firewood and draw water from the streams. In the festivals, both of them took part in the feast. They also sang and danced all night long. In these festivals, they were allowed to drink beer. But getting drunk was regarded to be shameful. So they would not get drunk except old men.

Men and women were free to mix with each other and there were no restrictions imposed upon them. It was mainly because of this that men would try to have sexual relationship with a girl while many girls would try to retain their virginity. This was practiced because it was believed that when they died, on the way to the place of the dead, a certain man *Pawla* would be there on the roadside. He would shoot with his catapult the men who had no sexual relationship and girls who had lost their virginity. This belief could be seen in one of the folksongs which was probably composed by a man:

Di nei lo Pawlan a sai an ti

Fam mah ila min sai tawh bil lawng e

*Ka nemrang ka di chawina.*⁵⁹

The English translation would be:

They say Pawla would shoot who did not have a lover

Even if I die, I would not be shot

For I have lain with my lover.

⁵⁹ Challiana, *op.cit.*, p.34

This belief clearly reveals the biasness or the unfairness of the society. Men would always try to seduce the women and would even try to forcibly take a woman to achieve their aim while women would have a hard time trying to remain chaste. This belief also reflect the patriarchal attitude of the society and how the beliefs of the people were also given a religious legitimacy.

When someone died in the village, it was again the responsibility of the young men and women to help the bereaved family. Men would dig graves while women would stay in the house and help in fetching firewood and water for them. It was their responsibility to help the family in any way as they could. Men would then sleep with the family at night time for about a week. This was supposed to console the family so that they might not get lonely.

Another feature of the Mizo during their settlement in present Mizoram was their practice of having *zawlbuk*. This was the bachelor's house or dormitory. The exact time of establishing *zawlbuk* was not exactly known. There are some writers who assumed that its origin might be traced from the time when the Mizo lived in China. A Mizo historian Sangkima basing his study on the works of Edwin M.Loeb and Jan M.M.Broek said that “‘Long houses’ or ‘Communal Houses’ could be traced back to China as this practice was brought down to Yunnan and to other places in the South-East Asia by the patrilineal Tibeto-Burman people and others.”⁶⁰ However oral traditions do not tell us of the existence of *zawlbuk* during the time of living in the plains. It can be assumed that after migrating to the hills, the Mizo might have started having *zawlbuk*. When they lived in the hills, they began to have inter-clan

⁶⁰ Sangkima, *op.cit.*, p,39

fights and so all the men's duty was to protect their village and they had to be alert at all times. Since most of the raids were done during night time, they needed to be together to defend themselves. So they thought they must stay together so that they would not have to awake others house to house and also would be able to fight together against the intruders. So having *zawlbuk* was necessary for the protection of the village. Even though the Mizo might have *zawlbuk* even when the Mizo were in the hills of Myanmar, yet, this institution would be studied in this chapter as it is clear from oral tradition that this institution was firmly established by the time the Mizo had settled in present Mizoram. *Zawlbuk* can be said to be the nerve center of the Mizo society. It was responsible for shaping the youth into responsible adult members of the society.⁶¹ The *zawlbuk* was the place where young men were trained by the elders and discipline was taught. All the male members of the village after attaining puberty had to sleep here. Women were not allowed to enter this house. The Lai and Mara did not have this institution at all.⁶² It appeared that the Lai and Mara did not have *zawlbuk* because they indulged in less war amongst themselves. In the oral traditions it is found that Lai used to raid Lusei villages which created a lot of problems for the Lusei. But there were few instances of Lusei raiding Lai villages. Moreover Lusei waged war not only against other tribes but they often went to war against the other Lusei clans. So, it appeared that the Lusei had to be constantly on alert and be always ready to defend their villages. Hence the establishment of *zawlbuk* was necessary even for security reason. On the other hand, though there were some instances of Lai raiding other Lai villages, but it was not

⁶¹ N.Chatterji, *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society*, Aizawl, 1975, p,3

⁶² C.Laitanga, *op.cit*, p,32; and, N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers*, (Calcutta, reprint, 1978), p,18

very frequent and this would be dealt with later in the work. The boys of these tribes used to sleep together at a particular girl's house where they used to go at night. If there was only one boy sleeping in a girl's house, the girl was supposed to sleep with him. She had to act as his blanket to keep himself warm. However they were not supposed to have sexual relationship. Among the Lai if the boy tried to seduce her and if the girl did not like him, she could hit him. In this case, it can be known how women were treated as a household property. Girls sleeping with boys could lead to unwanted relationship. The penalty for the boy's behaviour was also quite lenient. Boys would not care much about girls hitting him and would not be very much bothered about it. Among the Maras also, boys and girls used to sleep together in the girl's house. According to R.A.Lorrain, though they slept together there were little instances of illegitimate children being born.⁶³ However if a boy tried to seduce a girl while they slept together and if the girl complained about his behaviour, the boy could be penalised with a mithun.

All the household chores had to be done by the women while men concentrated themselves on building houses. Right from childhood, girls and boys were treated quite differently. Small girls would have their own little loom and would weave small *puan*. They had to do the cooking, fetching of water and looking after the animals when their mothers were away to their jhum. If they happened to have younger siblings, they also had to look after them. So at a young age, females were taught all about the domestic chores.⁶⁴ Meanwhile their counterpart male would roam about as they liked. Sometimes they would hunt for birds and even lay traps.⁶⁵

⁶³ R.A.Lorrain, *Five Years in Unknown Jungle* (Guwahati, reprint, 1988) p.156

⁶⁴ Challiana, *op.cit.*, p,2

⁶⁵ Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p,178

They were allowed to do things as they desired and no restrictions were laid on them. Women had to rise very early, fetch water from the spring which was quite far and steep and this was a tremendous strain for them. She then had to pound the rice in a mortar and sieve it. She then cooked food for the family. By this time, the man would have risen up. Even if he sits by the fire and something overflows from the cooking vessel, he would not do anything but call his wife to attend to it.⁶⁶ Doing household chores was regarded to be a shameful thing for a man. If such a man existed, he was often called a *thaibawih* (hen-pecked husband). Hence men would always try to avoid doing such things. After having their food, they then would go to the fields and work whole day. While returning from the field women would carry vegetables and other things on their back. On reaching the house, they still had to cook and do other chores while men would just rest and sit near the fireplace. As mentioned earlier, Lusei women still had to do things at night while men courted them. But among the Lai, the unmarried girls did not do any work at night time but would rather gossip freely with the boys and sometimes even sang songs⁶⁷. Though women worked very hard, they were not supposed to eat lots of food. If they were seen to be eating heartily, they were regarded as greedy.

At night, an unmarried girl would have many boys visiting her or to court her. Even if her boyfriend was among the boys, she was not supposed to show her favour or look at him so that others may know. If she seemed to favour a particular men, she was talked and shunned by the others. If the boys who visited her were displeased with her or her family, they would go to the *zawlbuk* and discuss about it

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p,180

⁶⁷ C.Laitanga, *op. cit.*, p,51

with the others. They then returned to her house and broke their steps or varandah of her house. The girl's parents could not retaliate but rather they have to give them a pot of beer to appease their anger.⁶⁸ The chiefs never interfered in these incidents as they knew that they had to rely on those men in times of danger.

Though women were not generally seen in the political sphere, instances had been found that there were some female chiefs after the Mizo had settled in Mizoram. One was Mangchini Nu, chief of the Thahdo tribe.⁶⁹ Her village was however subjugated by Ngura, one of the Sailo chiefs. Another woman chief was Dari, chief of Kawrthah.⁷⁰ She was from Zadeng tribe and she was later conquered by the Palian tribe and some Pawi. It is not exactly known how these women became chiefs.

Another woman chief was Darbilhi who was the chief of Muallianpui, a Fanai tribe village which still exists in southern Mizoram. A.S.Reid mentioned that in 1889 she had helped Gen. Tregear in showing the way to Hawsata's (Lai chief) village in the Chin Hills.⁷¹ The same author had mentioned that in 1890 she and J. Shakespear had made a peace pact between her and the British.⁷² She was said to be a widow, whose husband had been dead for seven years (in 1890) and ruled the village efficiently. From the brief accounts given by the administrators it can be seen that Darbilhi was a woman who knew the might of the British and wanted to have a peace relations with them so that she and her people would not suffer. She proved herself to be a faithful ally to the new government.

⁶⁸ Challiana, *op.cit.*, p,17

⁶⁹ Liangkhaia, *op. cit.* p,62. Liangkhaia knew about her through the legends about her.

⁷⁰ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.* p,229. B.Lalthangliana based his source on oral sources.

⁷¹ A.S.Reid, *Chin Lushai Land* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p.53

⁷² *ibid.*, p.196

Another famous woman chief was Ropuiliani who was the daughter of Lalsavunga and the wife of Vandula. She and her husband were both Sailo and they ruled over Denlung, a village in South Mizoram. After her husband died she ruled over the village as her son had already a separate village. He however came and lived with her later on but she still ruled the village and in fact influenced her son so much that he acted according to her wishes. She was against the British and would not submit to them at all costs. Her son Lalthuama was arrested three times as he refused to attend a meeting of the chiefs which was called by J. Shakespeare. The government later on realised that he was stubborn and was against the British due to his mother's influence. The government therefore wanted to arrest both the mother and son. They wanted to arrest the woman chief partly because her brothers were powerful Sailo chiefs in northern Mizoram and were allies to the government. So, they wanted to check her influence over her other family members. She collected arms and men from Lai tribes in her village to fight the Britishers. However the government came to know about her plans and suddenly attacked her village on August 8th 1893.⁷³ She was arrested and sent to Lunglei and was kept in a guard room. She was asked to submit to the government and retain her title and the village but she refused. Even while she was arrested she still tried to influence the other chiefs who visited her to fight against the British. So, seeing her as a threat to the stability of the government, she was sent to Chittagong jail on April 18, 1894.⁷⁴ During her stay in the jail she was treated as a state prisoner and was kept in the European ward and she was sometimes allowed to see the sights.⁷⁵ She however

⁷³ Lalsangzuali Sailo, *Tlawm ve lo lalnu Ropuiliani* (Aizawl, 1999) p.135

⁷⁴ *ibid* p.157

⁷⁵ W.B.Oldham, February 21, 1894 Chittagong Jail Visitors Book in *ibid*, p.156

suffered from dysentery and later died in the jail on January 5, 1895.⁷⁶ Ropuiliani therefore died in a jail due to her refusal to submit to the British government. She therefore could be called a martyr for fighting against the British. However in the histories written by the earlier Mizo historians, the authors hardly had written about her and some of them did it only briefly. It was Lalsangzuali Sailo, a woman who had done a research about Ropuiliani. In fact, Ropuiliani was not even listed in a book entitled *Mizo Lal Ropuite*⁷⁷ which was about the great chiefs of the Mizo. A martyr who died so that her people would be free from a foreign government but could not even find a place among the great chiefs of Mizo is quite revealing.

The mentioned women chiefs could hold this position because their husbands who were chiefs had died and so their relations to a man enabled them to become chiefs. Moreover in Mizo chieftainship, as soon as they were capable, the sons used to leave their father's village and start a village of their own. Among the Lusei it was generally the youngest son who inherit the property and the chieftainship also. Sometimes the youngest son also wanted to have a village of his own while his father was still alive. So when the father died, there were no sons to inherit the chieftainship. In that case, the widow could look after the village. If the youngest son was still a minor, his mother could look after the administration on his behalf. So it could be seen that the status of a woman could differ according to the stratification of the society.

⁷⁶ Letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong from the Superintendent of the Chittagong Jail. Dated Chittagong, the 5th January, 1895 in *ibid.*, p.167

⁷⁷ Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Lal Ropuite* (Aizawl, 2nd edition, 1996)

It was this society that McCall had said that “it was a country for men before it is one for women”.⁷⁸ This was reflected in the various sayings which were prevalent at this time. The sayings like ‘A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be’; crab’s meat is not counted as meat as women’s word is not counted as word’, bad wife and bad fence can be changed easily’, ‘A women’s wisdom does not cross the village spring’⁷⁹ clearly indicate the attitude towards women. These sayings seem to have taken shape after the Mizo have settled in the present land. This can be inferred because the sayings were not heard of in the folktales or stories which were told before they migrated to the present land. In the family and in the society also, as have been discussed above, women did not have a prominent place at all. They were never the decision makers, neither in the village affairs nor in the family. Though they spent all their energy and time for their family, they were regarded as inferiors. They could not even eat as they desired. Even if they happened to fall sick, they had to hide it. A woman who was not healthy was shunned by others. So instead of being well-cared for they were regarded to be troublesome for the family. Hence, it was mainly the men who held all authority and power. Women worked hard and they played an important role in the economy but they were not given their proper share. What they worked for and earned was not considered to be theirs. It can be said that they worked for the men. Thus strong patriarchal gender relations appear to have become established by the time the major migration process was over and Mizo settled in their present homeland.

⁷⁸ A.G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p.26

⁷⁹ These have been taken from the compilation made by the Tribal Research Institute. See, Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Women Today* (Aizawl, 1991)p.24

Thus the society remained patriarchal and the Mizo remained unknown to other people of India till Bengal was annexed. The local authorities began to have trouble with the Lushai since the Lushai were in the habit of raiding the plains adjacent to the hills. The earliest record of raid by the Lushai, then known as the Kukis to the Bengalis, on the British territory took place in 1826 when some Sylhet wood cutters were attacked and killed near Simla river.⁸⁰ The raid was carried out as wood cutters failed to pay the price of safety to the chief Bengkhuaia. They also began to raid some tea planters as the Lushai felt that the plain people were encroaching upon their land. Thus the Lushai were a constant trouble to the British. Since the lives of the British subjects were in danger it was felt that the government had to subjugate the Lushai people.⁸¹ Hence several expeditions were carried out at different times and the Lushai Hills was formally brought into British India in 1890. In 1921, the British administration also took control over the un-administered area of the Lakher hills. Though the British administered the land, they did not interfere much in the social systems and followed the policy of non-interference.⁸² They also allowed the chiefs to continue their rule over their respective villages. They were mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and stopped the frequent raids on the plains and also the inter-tribe and inter-village feuds. However things began to change when the Christian missionaries also slowly entered the land.

The first Christian missionary who arrived in Mizoram was William Williams of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists Foreign Mission who worked in the

⁸⁰ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, (Delhi, reprint, 1979) pp, 279-280

⁸¹ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p,43

⁸² No.165L, Collection No III. General Administration. File No.22

Khasi Hills.⁸³ This was in the year 1891. However he did not stay for long as his main purpose was to explore the prospect of religious work in the Lushai hills. In 1894, the Arthington Foreign Mission founded by Robert Arthington, a Baptist sent two missionary J.H.Lorrain and F.W.Savidge to the Lushai hills. They reached Sairang on 11th January, 1894.⁸⁴ They then set their camp in Aizawl. They soon started learning the language and realized that the tribe had no written language.⁸⁵ The missionaries therefore worked hard and reduced the *duhlian* dialect to writing, using the Roman script with slight modifications. They also translated the Gospels of Luke, John and the Acts of Apostles and also compiled a Lushai Grammar and Dictionary which was later printed by the Assam government.⁸⁶

Though the two pioneer missionaries were eager to stay in Lushai hills and work for a long time this was not possible. This was because Robert Arthington wanted them to move to other places as his idea was to spread the gospel rapidly and not to reside in one place for a long time. In the meantime, the Welsh Mission intended to enter the Lushai hills. So the first two missionaries moved aside and allowed the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists to stay in the hills.⁸⁷ In 1897 Rev.D.E.Jones worked with the two pioneer missionaries for a few months before the latter left for other places. He was then joined by Edwin Rowlands. The missionaries as soon as they settled in the hills began to preach the gospel. Rev.D.E.Jones baptized Khuma and Khara on 25th June, 1899 and they were the first

⁸³ C.L.Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, 1987) p.45

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p.48

⁸⁵ J.H.Lorrain, *op.cit.*, p.v

⁸⁶ BMS Report for 1903

⁸⁷ *ibid*

native converts in the Mizo hills.⁸⁸ They used to visit other villages to preach. They also used to make a tour of the southern part of the land but could not do so as often as they desired.

In 1901 George Hughes of the Baptist Missionary Society in Chittagong went on a tour to Mizoram and saw the prospect of evangelization. He then appealed to his mission to evangelize the people. They then requested the Welsh Mission to transfer the southern portion of the Mizo field to their care. Arrangements were then made that the north of the land was under the Welsh Mission and the southern part under the Baptist Mission. The Baptist then asked Lorrain and Savidge to work among the Mizo as they were already acquainted with the language.⁸⁹ The invitation was readily accepted and they left the Abhors and re-entered Mizoram and settled at Serkawn near Lunglei, the southern part of Mizoram. When these two missionaries arrived in Lunglei they were amazed to find that there were already 125 Christians baptised by the Welsh missionaries.⁹⁰

When the missionaries settled and preached the gospel there was no positive response in the initial stage. But they later knew how to touch the hearts of the people as Lorrain wrote how they presented the gospel to the people as:

‘Our first message as soon as we could speak the language was of a Saviour from sin. But the people had no sense of sin and felt no need for such a saviour. Then we found a point of contact. We proclaimed

⁸⁸ J.M.Lloyd, *On Every High Hill* (Aizawl, 1984)

⁸⁹ *BMS Report for 1903*

⁹⁰ H.W.Carter, *Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Chanchin (History of Mizoram Baptist Church)* (Serkawn, 1981) p.50

Jesus as the vanquisher of the Devil... This, to the Lushais was 'Good News' indeed and exactly met their great need.⁹¹

Many of them became Christians and were baptized. According to C.L.Hminga, the early motives for becoming Christians were freedom from fear of evil spirits and hells; freedom from frequent costly sacrifices; desire for eternal life in heaven and healing from sickness.⁹² However as the missionaries started opening schools and people began to receive education and job, many people became attracted to the religion because of the job prospects. According to McCall, the salaried jobs gave them 'a relief from the wearisome toil of cultivating a hard land.'⁹³ Thus it can be seen that Christianity was also embraced by some people because of education and job potentiality.

The missionaries also began various other activities which the Mizo had not known before. These activities in fact proved to be beneficial for the people and for the propagation of the gospel. The mission's aim and plan had been evangelization. But in order to communicate the gospel properly, they knew that the people must be able to read the Bible so that they would be able to understand it better. Hence arose the necessity of giving education to the people. The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in their constitution also recognized education as one of the means to be adopted for the introduction of Christianity.⁹⁴

Earlier there was no formal education among the tribe. The only system was oral education whereby information was passed orally. The main centre of education

⁹¹ BMS Annual Report for 1913

⁹² C.L.Hminga, *op. cit.*, pp.62,63

⁹³ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p,205

⁹⁴ Ferdaus A.Quarishi, *Christianity in the North East Hills of Asia* (Dhaka, 1987) p.24

was the *zawlbuk* run by the elders or leaders of the village.⁹⁵ Since *zawlbuk* was only for the boys it can be noted that girls did not have this privilege. The other sort of education which they received was in their house in which the father used to advise the children. When the missionaries saw that there was no formal education, they knew that they had to concentrate more on education than on other activities. The first Welsh missionary Rev.D.E.Jones started a school in 1898. Prior to the establishment of schools by the missionaries, there were some government schools established which were meant mainly for the sons of the village chiefs. Thus the missionaries began their religious work along with education. In order to work efficient they divided the works among themselves. In the north Edwin Rowlands, a teacher who joined Jones was kept in charge of education. In the south Lorrain took up the responsibilities of pastoral and evangelization tasks and also the work of translating the Bible into Mizo language. Savidge on the other hand took up the responsibilities of spreading education and medical works.⁹⁶ The Baptist missionaries also started a school at Serkawn in 1903 and had 24 students.⁹⁷ All of them were boys. They used a small Primer and the gospels as text books.

With the spread of the gospel every new convert's aim was to be able to read the Bible and hymns prepared by the missionaries. Reading and writing was a new and fascinating experience for the people and when they went to other villages they brought the value of education to people who had never seen a book. The youths were eager to learn and they passed their knowledge to their friends. Moreover the Missions were not satisfied with just teaching a few students and they therefore

⁹⁵ Sangkima, *op. cit.*, p.84

⁹⁶ H.W.Carter, *op. cit.*, p.47

⁹⁷ BMS Annual Report for 1903

emphasized on grass root education. They opened schools in the interior places and they sent their old students as teachers. These teachers acted not only as teachers but also as evangelists.

After the Welsh Mission and Baptist Missionary Society had settled and made their place among the people, the Lakher (Mara) people were still untouched by Christianity or education. Lorrain wanted to preach among these people but could not do so as he had very little time. He then asked his brother Reginald A. Lorrain to work among the Lakhers. Since R.A. Lorrain could not find any church to support him, he founded a mission known as 'The Lakher Pioneer Mission'. He then gave up his business career and entered Livingstone College for a year's course of medical training.⁹⁸ On January 18th, 1907, Reginald A. Lorrain and his wife left England on their journey to Lakherland. By means of his medical knowledge, Lorrain gained the confidence of many of the people but the confidence of all the people could not be gained. The missionaries achieved the confidence of the people after the birth of their daughter. The Lakher from different villages came to see the baby and it was the first time that they had seen a white baby. They were so pleased to see the baby that they conferred upon her the name of *Tlosai Zua No* which means 'princess of the Lakhers' and insisted upon her bearing that name forever. The acknowledgement of these missionaries in accepting the name *Tlosai* in addition to her English name in commemoration of the people and county was much appreciated by the people and this was instrumental in sealing the friendship of the Lakhers with that of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Reginald A. Lorrain, *The Wonderful Story of the Lakher Pioneer Mission* (London, revised, 1913) p.4

⁹⁹ R. A.Lorrain, *Five ... Jungles, op. cit.*, pp.240-245

As soon as Lorrain has learnt to speak the Lakher language he reduced the language to writing. He also tried to get a few Lakhers together to learn to read and write but this was not an easy task and was disappointed. When he was about to give up, two men from a distant village came to him and requested him to teach them to read and write in their own language¹⁰⁰. After learning the alphabet they went back to their village and returned back with their friends. In this way the students of the first Mission School was gathered together. By 1912 there were about fifty Lakhers who could read and write in their own language. By 1913, Lorrain had published English-Lakher and Lakher-English Dictionary; Grammar of the Lakher Language; some portions of the Bible; Hymn Book and a Primer in the Lakher language which was printed by the Assam government free of charge.¹⁰¹ Thus R.A.Lorrain used the same method of literacy, medical work and schools that were being used among the other Mizo in the north and southern region but it was only in 1910 that the first Lakher named Thytu who was only twelve years old decided to be converted.¹⁰² However by the time of the Jubilee Celebration of the Lakher Church in 1957 the entire Lakher tribe had become Christian.¹⁰³

Thus the administration of the government in the land and especially the works of the Christian missionaries had significant changes in the social and cultural life of the people. Since it was mainly the missionaries who brought education to the masses of the people it can be said that Christianity and education went hand in hand among the Mizo people.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* pp.225-26

¹⁰¹ *ibid* p.251

¹⁰² *ibid.* p.236

¹⁰³ Donna Strom, *Wind Through the Bamboo*, (Madras, 1983) p.35

The relation between the spread of Christianity and education in Mizoram can be seen from the table below:¹⁰⁴

Year	Population	No.of Christians	Percentage	No. of Literates	Percentage
1901	82,434	45	0.05	771	0.93
1911	91,204	2461	2.77	3635	4.41
1921	98,406	27,720	28.17	6183	6.28
1931	1,24,404	59,123	47.52	13320	10.54
1941	1,52,786	98,108	64.21	29765	19.50
1951	1,96,202	1,57,575	80.31	61093	31.13
1961	2,66,063	2,30,509	86.64	117094	44.00
1971	3,32,390	2,86,141	86.09	178793	53.79

Source: BMS Reports and Government Census Report 1901 - 1971

From the table it can be seen that education was more appreciated by the people than Christianity in the earlier stage and that many of the students were non-Christians.

In the earlier years of the missionaries work in Mizoram, girls did not benefit much from education since they were not allowed by their parents to attend the classes. There were very few girls students in the earlier stage. The names which were seen in the records are Nui, Saii, Pawngi and Ziki who received their education in 1903. Apart from these girls, there was hardly any mention of girls being educated. Thus it was mainly the boys who received education and this resulted in a wide gap between men and women.¹⁰⁵ This was realized by the missionaries and

¹⁰⁴ BMS Reports and Government Census Report 1901 to 1971

¹⁰⁵ Chapman & Clark, *Mizo Miracle* (Madras, 1968) p.5

they therefore opened a school for girls. The first school for girls was opened by Mrs. Jones in 1904 at Aizawl. In South Mizoram in the later part of 1907¹⁰⁶ an Experimental Girls Boarding School was opened by the wives of the missionaries. They also looked after some orphan babies and taught the mothers how to look after their children. But the society did not see the value of it and did not even appreciate it. Since the social values in traditional Mizo society were so patriarchal, women were just regarded as useful appendages to men. So when the missionaries talked of sending girls to school, it was immediately seen as a threat to male domination and word began to spread that only girls of bad reputation would go to school. This attitude can be seen from the lines quoted which was composed at that time.

'Zia em fengin sikul kai a mawi nem maw

Lehkha zia tial an chawi e,

*Nun dang lengleri, lengleri'*¹⁰⁷

The English translation would run like this:

Wearing skirts they go to school

Carrying books with them

They learn nothing but to flirt.

Sensing the need for women to be educated properly so as to be at par with the men, the missionaries felt the need for full time lady missionaries to work among the women so that the social welfare activities of the missionaries and the church would develop and grow on sound lines. Thus the BMS sent Edith M.Chapman, an

¹⁰⁶ H.W.Carter (ed), *op. cit.*, p.86

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

educationist and O.E.Dicks, a nurse to South Mizoram to work especially among the Mizo women.¹⁰⁸

When Chapman and Dicks arrived, they were initially not appreciated by the society. Since the society was patriarchal, the Lushai men did not want these ladies to teach their girls or women or be under their control. The men also did not want the white women to interfere with their womenfolk. Moreover the male dominated society did not see the need for girls' school. There still existed the belief that women could not possess any knowledge and that their wisdom does not cross the village spring. It was also believed that girls were supposed to stay at home and do the household chores and other works but they were not supposed to study.

The problems faced by the missionaries in all parts of Mizoram was that the people thought that boys sometimes get jobs under the government or the mission but girls were not expected to be able to do that. Since the society did not approve of girls being educated, so, boys would not marry a girl who had been to school.¹⁰⁹ This also made the girls reluctant to go to school since most of the girls wanted to marry and settle down. There was also the notion that a literate girl would just use her knowledge to send love-letters to her boyfriend.¹¹⁰ The missionaries sometimes used to come across a bright and intelligent girl and requested the parents to send her to school. But the answer they usually received was that the girl was much too useful at home and hence could not be spared.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ BMS Annual Report for 1919

¹⁰⁹ Lalhmuaka, *Zoram Zirna lam Chhinchhiahma* (The Records of Zoram Education) (Aizawl, 1981)

p.5

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹¹ Chapman & Clark, *op. cit.*, p.39

In order to overcome these difficulties the missionaries had to break down the prejudice against girls' education if the girls' school was to be a success. The missionaries then spread the message that by being educated, the students would turn out to be better housewives and better mothers and serve the men better so that men could realise the value of education. This would also solve the problem which the men had regarding their attitude to girls' education as mentioned earlier. They also made a plan that girls' education would not spoil them for village life. The things which are to be taught in the school should be appreciated by and helpful to the whole community.¹¹²

All the things which the girls studied at school made them more useful wives and mothers when they went back to their village and it also helped in their character training. In their own villages, the girls would read aloud from their note books what they had studied at school. This included how to look after babies, animals, best diet, gardening, home nursing, first-aid, how to clean and look after the house. As what they had heard from the girls had a practical association with their day to day activities, the audiences quickly experimented with what they had heard. When they found that what they had heard and seen was good, they were more open to the education of the girls.¹¹³ Schools were also opened in the villages and in these schools the old students used to act as teachers. In order to have efficient teachers in the villages, the schools in the headquarters tried to train up teachers who would spread around what they had studied. Hence a teacher training course was given to prepare the future teachers for the village services.

¹¹² *ibid.* p.64

¹¹³ *ibid*

Though girls' education had progressed yet it was a very slow process. This is apparent from the report of the Presbyterian mission of 1928-29 in which Miss Davies wrote:

“There is a good proportion of boys attending the schools in every village but few girls, excepting little girls say under seven years of age. What is the explanation? Much work is expected of the girls immediately they become old enough to look after their younger brothers and sisters, or to carry water and firewood. The men, on the whole have an easy and lazy life. It is true that it is the father who goes out every year to select a place for the family rice field; it is he who clears the jungle. But it is the women who plant the rice, and it is they who do the weeding during the raining months; and they gather the rice and winnow it in addition to carrying the water and firewood day by day, and preparing food and clothes for the family. The hardest work all falls on the women, and the girls are far too useful to be spared to attend school. The consequence is that most of the women are totally uneducated. Very few of them can read or write. Our first need is to educate the parents to believe in the education of their girls. It is to be feared that some send their girls to school simply in order that they may fetch a higher marriage price when they are asked for as wives.”¹¹⁴

Even though the progress of women's education may be slow yet the missionaries

¹¹⁴ The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1928-29

did all they could for the development of the Mizo women. As a result many of them received higher education and the first woman to finish matric was in 1911 and Lalsangpuii was the first woman to finish her BA in 1942.¹¹⁵ Education also opened up more avenues for Mizo women.

From the above discussion we see that Christianity and education greatly affected the lives of the women. These agencies of change affected not only women but the lives and customs of the people. Though the missionaries maintained that they 'are here not to make them Eastern duplicates of Western Baptist, but to bring them to Christ and to so guide them that they shall develop along their own national lives into a strong Lushai Church of God'¹¹⁶ yet the very act of becoming a church member meant a definite break with old traditions, customs and habits.¹¹⁷ Thus the new life styles posed a challenge to the traditional cultures and this resulted in doing away with some institutions and ways of living of the people. Some of the important things that were abolished were warfare, *zawlbuk* (bachelors' dormitory), communal drinking of *zu* (liquor), *bawi* and the various sacrifices. There were also changes that took place among the people and the important changes were hygiene, dress and hair style and employment.

Thus from the various accounts described it can be seen how Christianity and education influenced the people and brought about many changes in the customs and ways of life of the people. As discussed many of the changes were under the influence of the missionaries so that it could be in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. One can also say that it ruined the culture of the people and that the

¹¹⁵ John Vanlalhluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram* (Aizawl, 1985), p.56

¹¹⁶ BMS Annual Report for 1913

¹¹⁷ M.Eleanor Bowser, *Light on the Lushai Hills*, (Serkawn, 1993) p.17

traditional norms of the people were diluted. But one must understand that because of the changes in the economy, polity and even the society many of the things which were done away with like warfare and *zawlbuk* were now no longer needed. The people also realised that they do not need institutions or practices which has no immediate utility. Hence they were bound to decline sooner or later. However one needs to see how these changes and the things which were abolished affected gender relations and whether these changes were women friendly or not.

Thus the Mizo in Mizoram were greatly affected by the British government, Christianity and education. These were instrumental in bringing about the development of the people in various fields. After the independence of India, Lushai Hills was also brought under the Indian Union and it received the status of Union Territory in 1972 and State in 1987. On the other hand, the other tribes of Zo in Chin areas who did not migrate to present Mizoram but were left behind were brought under Burma and how they would also have been affected by different agencies like education, Christianity and western influence would be studied in the next chapter. In order to study their changes, their traditional society would also be looked into.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ZO SOCIETY IN BURMA?

An enquiry into the economy, society and gender relations among the Lai Zo

The Mizo tribes who had settled in Burma are called Chins and this is said to be a Burmese word which is used to describe all the various hill tribes, living in the region between Burma and the provinces of Assam and Bengal.¹ However as mentioned in the Introduction, all the Chin tribes would be not studied but a general study of the major Chin tribes like the Lai-Zo, would be carried out. They are the ones who are presently living in Falam and Halkha areas. It would be interesting to study them as they did not migrate to other areas but have settled directly from Kale-Kabaw Valley. They have stayed here and other tribe hardly settled with them and so they were not much influenced by other culture and hence they still practice a lot of their traditional ways of life even though there are some changes due to modernisation as will be studied in this chapter.

Social Stratification

The Zo society is often said to be egalitarian but in reality we find there were levels of stratification and there were differences between the chiefs, the wealthy families, the commoners and the slaves. This stratification can be seen in the various customs and practices of the people as studied in this chapter.

Chiefs and the people:

Most of the traditional Zo societies in Burma had a chief in their own villages. In Halkha and Falam districts the position of the chief is hereditary.² However if the

¹ G.A.Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III* (Calcutta, 1904) p.1-2

² B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 2001) p.368

chief happened to die without any issue, the Council of Elders would decide on the person who would be their chief. According to Carey and Tuck, the chiefs were the lord within their territories because if any person wished to stay or work in a particular village, the consent of that village chief had to be taken. Further, a chief received tithes from his villagers and if he had conquered any tribe or villages, those villages also had to pay tribute to him. When a chief received tithes and tributes, it reflected that he was responsible for their protection and well being.³ The tithes which a chief received from his subjects were grains, a portion of their live-stock, a hind leg of the animal killed at a feast and a front leg of every wild animal shot or trapped.⁴ Apart from the chiefs the other persons who played a vital role in the well being of the village and who also received tithes from the villagers were the priest and the blacksmith. They served the villagers and sometimes did not have time to work in their own fields. The priests were therefore always given a portion of the meat whenever animals were killed. The blacksmith was the one who had to make and repair all the implements or tools used by the villagers. Every family therefore had to give him a portion of the grain after harvesting and a portion of the animals killed at a feast or at a hunting expedition.

Economy

The Zo in Burma practiced jhum cultivation or agriculture. All cultivation was done on the hillside as the terrain is steep and are in a high altitude. Their staple crop was maize but they also grew different types of other crops like millet, rice and jowar. The other important field crops were pulses or legumes such as beans, peas of

³ Carey & Tuck, *The Chin Hills* Vol. 1. (Calcutta, reprint, 1976) p.201

⁴ *ibid.*

different kinds and runner beans. Subsidiary field crops included melons, mustard greens and pumpkins. Yams and taros were also cultivated but they were usually consumed only during shortage of grain. They grew eatables not only in the fields but also in the house gardens and here they grew different types of spices and other vegetables. The people had two types of fields for cultivation – *lopil* and *lo*.⁵ *Lopil* are large divisions of land which was divided by the chiefs and his council. *Lo* means a field or land for cultivation. The boundaries between these *lopils* were usually natural features such as ridges or streams. *Lo* were the smaller divisions of land and its boundaries were marked by lines of small stones or shrubs. *Lopil* were further divided into two types based on altitude called *lai lo* and *zo lo*.⁶ *Lai lo* are known as the field which are lower in altitude and are sometimes called warm field.* This type of field can be used for several years in a row but the fallow period was quite long which could extend up to even thirty years. Millets, rice and other grains were cultivated in *lai lo*. *Zo lo* on the other hand were found high on the hill sides, so high that some of the villages did not have any *zo lo*. This type of fields were farmed only in one year and then left fallow for seven to nine years.⁷ Since the fields were situated at a high region, it was windblown whereby the soil was loosened and there was poor natural vegetation which resulted in it being less productive. The people therefore planted mainly maize which the people found to be suitable and this type of corn also required little clearing.

⁵ H.N.C.Stevenson, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes* (Aizawl, reprint, 1986) p.31

⁶ F.K.Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl, reprint, 1980) p.53

* Terming *lailo* as warm field does not mean that *lai* means warm. Warm in the language is *shim*. *Lai* means middle while *zo* denotes a hill.

⁷ *ibid* pp.55-56

Before cultivation was carried out, the Zo people had to perform certain rites called *lopil nam*, *siapil nam*, *lo vun* and *lo ar ah* to the guardian spirits.⁸ *Lopil nam* and *siapil nam* ceremonies were carried out when new fields were to be used and it was to appease the guardian spirits of the fields. *Faang tsi diil* was an annual communal sacrifice to appease the guardian spirits. *Lo vun* and *lo ar ah* were personal annual inaugural sacrifices to inaugurate the plot.⁹ They were carried out at special small altars in each plot, two at the top and bottom and one at the cultivation hut.

After the sacrificial rites were held people started to work in their fields. They built a hut for them to rest and to sleep during planting and gathering.¹⁰ The implements used by them were only small axes, damahs, and a little hoe.¹¹ The axe and damah were used for felling the jungle, and the hoe for clearing the weeds and grass. The fields were felled during the winter season. Felling trees and clearing of jungles was regarded to be the work of men though women also used to help them. The felled trees were then piled and burnt in March and April. Setting fire was done by the women and men. Grains were then planted by women. Crops were sown by dibbling holes at regular intervals and dropping several seeds into each hole. The holes were rarely covered up. Weeding was regarded to be the work of women alone and had to be done quite regularly. Weeding and cultivation which took place more than once in a season were considered to be the most 'onerous and back breaking

⁸ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.34

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.211.

¹¹ Foreign, External A. September 1890, Nos.64-66

tasks in Chin agriculture,¹² and these are the works of the women. Harvesting and reaping of the crops or grains was done by both women and men. So it can be seen that the people especially women almost did not have any respite in the field work.

Pottery which was made of clay was the work of women.¹³ Pots were used for holding water and liquor and also for cooking. Weaving was also done entirely by women on looms. All the processes for making cloth – right from picking cottons, ginning and others to weaving were the responsibilities of women.¹⁴ They had to make cloths not only for themselves but for the whole family. Besides making clothes they also had to weave all the bed sheets and blankets. They weave and make clothes during the lean season when they do not have to go their fields. Thus it can be seen that women did not have any time for leisure or rest.

Besides cultivation, the Zo people also reared animals. The main animals reared by them were mithun, pigs, dogs and chicken. Among the animals domesticated, the most important animal was the mithun. The people held the mithun to be in high regard so much so that the wealth of a man was judged by the numbers of his mithun.¹⁵ At the birth of a mithun calf, a sacrifice was offered and a rest day was also observed.¹⁶ The mithun was used as bride payment, tribute and sacrificial offerings. In the Feasts of Merit, they had to kill at least three mithuns. These animals were taken out to the forest to graze during the day and were kept in a pen in the evening. Pigs were found in abundance in any village and almost all the

¹² F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.55. The method of cultivation is still practiced by the people and this is known from the interviews with the people of Chin District, Myanmar carried out during the present work.

¹³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.214

¹⁴ Interview with Mr.L.Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21st Feb.2001 in Lunglei.

¹⁵ Vumson, *Zo History*, (Aizawl, 1985) p.12

¹⁶ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.46

families in a village would rear a pig. They were the scavengers of the village. They were kept under the house during night time and as the people merely relieved themselves from a hole in their house, it was the pigs who cleared and cleaned up all the waste. The domesticated animals were used mainly for sacrificial purposes and they were not eaten if there was no specific purpose. However the animals to be slaughtered for sacrifices were to be free from blemishes. But it should be noted that milk of the animals was not consumed by the people as it was considered to be a taboo and they believed that drinking the milk of the animals would make them adopt the manners of the animals.¹⁷ The authors did not give the reason for the taboo of drinking milk but it could be assumed that the people did not rear big milk producing animals like cows as the domesticated animals were not big milk producing animals and people were not familiar with them and did not approve of drinking their milk..

The Zo people were fond of hunting during the lean season of cultivation. The animals were killed either by beating the jungle, shooting or trapping them. Hunters were to abstain themselves from women before a hunting expedition.¹⁸ They also believed that menstruating women were dangerous as they would displease the animals of the jungle. In other societies also we often find that menstruating women were kept separate and were considered to be dirty. Similarly in the Zo society, hunters would not touch a menstruating woman before they went for hunting as they considered that they would be unlucky in their venture. This was the result of patriarchal thoughts which assumed that menstruating women were dirty and should

¹⁷ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.* p.180

¹⁸ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.* p.173

not pollute other people. This is a restriction of sexuality. Hunting was necessary for them not only to procure meat for the family but also to gain social status and prestige. According to their belief, some animals were to be killed in order for the hunter and the wife to enter paradise after their death. They also believed that the animals which they killed during their lifetime would follow them in paradise and that they would be regarded as a great person. When animals were killed it was considered to be a time for rejoicing. They celebrated when a hunter was successful in shooting big games and also some other animals like deer. So hunting for the people helped them to procure meat for their daily food. It also offered them a social and economic status and helped them in spiritual fulfillment. However hunters avoided shooting black monkey and the loris as they were considered to be “ill-omened animals”.¹⁹ They also used to display the antlers and heads of the animals which they have killed, at the varandah of their house but the head of the tiger was never displayed.

Besides hunting, the Zo people were also fond of fishing. Villagers did not claim water rights to the streams running through their boundaries. To catch fish, the people shot them with gun and bow; caught them in bamboo traps and with cast nets; poisoned them; tickled them and also by draining off the stream into other channels and then baling out the deep pools.²⁰ However the most common way to catch fish was by poisoning the water by using the sap of certain creepers.

Trade: Although the Zo people were involved in agriculture and could procure their supply of meat from the forest yet trade was an important part of the social life of the

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.183

²⁰ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.217

Zo people. Trade amongst them may be divided into two heads – internal and external. In the pre-British period, prior to monetised economy, trade was done by barter system. However in the post-British period, as money began to be circulated, cash was slowly used. But it should be noted that barter system was used for a very long time. The internal trade as mentioned was confined to barter system.²¹ There were some villages that specialised in a particular craft such as the Khuahrang villagers who were skilled in making pots.²² These pots were made by women which signified that women were highly skilled and they could make the pots not only for their family use but also for selling to other villages. Though there were some people who made these pots at all seasons of the year but they were mostly produced during the lean period of agriculture. This was so because they had the time to work without taking time off from farming and also because the men of the village could travel about selling their pottery. It was also seen that the Laizo villages used to sell their finished products such as blankets.²³ These blankets were casually sold by travellers who were actually on other business. Thus in the Chin Hills, there were villages specializing in production of certain artisan wares but as seen in the earlier chapter, in Mizoram there were no villages specializing in specific crafts.

The various industries were purely domestic industries and goods were manufactured by women. Men did not weave blankets nor did they make pottery. However selling these manufactured goods were done by men. It could be said that women did not go around the countryside selling their wares mostly because women were confined to their villages and were supposed to look after the household and

²¹ Foreign, External A, September 1890, Nos. 64-66

²² F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.161

²³ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.104

had many chores in their hands. Thus women were confined to their village and they did not have control over the things which they themselves made through hard labour. The goods which they made were sold by men and so they had no decision making role. Moreover since they hardly went to other places, their mobility was also restricted.

The Zo people also had external trade relations with the plain people of Burma and India. The most important articles imported were salt and iron. Salt trade was carried out by the Falam chiefs with the Sawbwa of Kale.²⁴ Iron was imported in the form of raw ingots, knives, and other tools which the Zo smiths forged or re-forged them into tools for their various needs.²⁵ According to Lehman, brass, bell metal, aluminium and silver was also brought from Burma or India. These metals and the products made out of them constituted the people's heirloom goods and were used in all formal exchange transactions. Carey and Tuck also mentioned that round bell metal gongs which were regarded in high esteem by the Zo were also imported from the plains of Burma. In a later period, the brass and metal pots which were also highly valued and which constituted as important in paying bride price were brought from India through the Lusei people. These metals which were imported were used for different purposes and some of them were even melted for women's jewellery. Other items of import were silk thread, coloured cotton yarn, yaw plaids, beads and in times of scarcity rice.

As there was no money economy, commodities which were imported were exchanged for some other goods. The Zo people who grew maize used to save the

²⁴ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.214

²⁵ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.* p.166

husks and sell them to Burma, where it was used to wrap the large cheroots smoked by Burman women. They also gathered beeswax and sticky lac and similar jungle products to sell in Burma. They even used to raid the Burmans and hold them to ransom in order to get the things that they needed. The horns of deer and other animals were also exported. The most valuable were tusks of elephants and the horns of the rhinoceros.

Various Customs of the Zo

Marriage: The youth of the Laizo or the Zo in general in the Chin Hills were quite free to mix with each other. They often worked together in the fields and also in collecting firewood and other things. Boys used to visit a girl in her house in the evening. The girl had to always make the boys happy. Even though she may be tired and was in need of rest, she had to serve the boys and the boys would often ask her to light their pipes for them. Boys were also free to sleep in the house of a girl they fancied.²⁶ Sometimes boys of around 10 to 15 were often seen to sleep at a particular girl's house. This was because boys did not have a *zawlbuk* or bachelor's dormitory as was seen among the Mizo and there were no restrictions of their movement in their village. On the other hand, girls were not supposed to roam around and especially in the evening they were all supposed to stay at home.²⁷

From F.K.Lehman's work we learn that the different tribes of the people are patriarchal and patrilineal. Most of the people follow monogamous marriage while the chiefs and some aristocrats often have more than one wife. If a man had more than one wife, the first wife is regarded to be the true wife and she was also superior

²⁶ Information of these aspects of Laizo society has been collected from, besides other sources, interviews with some persons from their society, eg in an interview with Renlopari of Taisun Village, Chin Hills on 7th May 2005 in Lunglei

²⁷ Interview with Mr. L.Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21.2.2001 in Lunglei.

to the other wives and could even take part in the family religious rites. The men could marry their mother's brother's daughter but they were completely forbidden to marry a father's sister's daughter.²⁸ Though the youths especially the girls may have a secret love for someone, finding a life partner for them was usually in the hands of the parents.²⁹ Hence marriages were usually arranged by the parents of the young man, who searched for a good girl for their son. The essence of being a good match did not consist in face and form but the girl's character which was judged by the character of her work in the fields and in the house.³⁰ When looking for a prospective daughter-in-law, they also preferred 'one who did not have a reputation as a lover of fine food'.³¹ They also looked whether the girl's family had many sons as they wanted a wife who would produce sons for them.³² Preference of sons over daughters reveals that men were regarded to be superior to women. If a girl was a good tiller of the soil and good in household chores she was regarded to be a good match. If she was found to be suitable, ambassadors or intermediaries were sent to the parents of the girl with some pots of beer and they proposed marriage to the parents. The price of the girl was discussed over the beer. Discussion of the price was very important for them because the girl was an important asset in her father's house who performed all the household duties and in the fields, and if anyone else wanted to take her away, compensation must be paid to the parents. This highlights the fact that a girl was considered to be something like a owned property or just an

²⁸ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.123. This particular information was gathered and this is corroborated by Renlopari from Taisun Village, Chin Hills who came to Lunglei and was interviewed on 7th May 2005.

²⁹ Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nunphung*, (Falam, 2001) p.23

³⁰ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.189

³¹ Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.134.

³² Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.23

important asset to be used for working only. So parents practically sold their daughters to be wives and love was not taken into consideration at all.³³ On the other hand, Lehman says that ‘marriage payments are not a simple return for a wife and or rights over the offspring she will bear. Rather, they are earnest money, indicative of further payments to come. Bride wealth pays, in a sense, not for the marriage as such but for the right to an alliance with the wife-giver and his agnates.’³⁴ This comment of Lehman will be discussed later. If the parents refuse to accept the proposal, they return the pots of beer which they had received from the boy’s parents.

The value of the marriage price demanded varied according to the girl’s own physical perfection, character and the social status of her parents. Social status was determined by the fame of the paternal line and the number of Feasts of Merit the girl’s father had given. The marriage price was divided into two parts – the *manpi* or main price and the *mante* or lesser price. The *manpi* varied from one small mithun for a poor man’s child to seven full grown mithun in the case of a beautiful and hardworking daughter of the Chief.³⁵ The recipient of the *manpi* was usually the bride’s mother’s brother or the brother of the bride called *pu*. The units of the *manpi* were *siate* (young mithun), *siapi* (cow mithun) and *nufa* (a cow mithun and its calf). The *mante* consisted of a number of other payments to the bride’s family which were distributed among the girl’s relatives. They in turn had to bring something for the bride such as some animals to be killed or ornaments for her.³⁶ They also were responsible for her well-being later on. The *mante* was calculated according to the

³³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*

³⁴ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.125

³⁵ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p.123

³⁶ Mithun and such other animals are not paid in kind anymore but is paid more or less in cash and distributed among the girl’s relatives.

manpi. Wife's families were also obliged to provide assistance in the form of grain beer and food when their wife-givers performed one of the major feasts.

If the parents accepted the proposal of the young man, a day was fixed, and his parents gave a feast to the whole village, to which the girl's families were also invited. The bride was then brought to the boy's house, and on the way a number of clothes were laid along the path. These clothes were a gift to the bride. The priest then killed a fowl and examined the liver, and announced whether the spirits have approved or disapproved the marriage. If the first fowl which was killed was not found to be favourable, a second fowl was again killed which, more often than not was found to be favourable. The girl was then to enter the house and the women watched her entering the house and note which foot enters first and what she first said and did, and they prophesied good and bad according to her behaviour. The marriage ceremony was then over and the people were more concerned with their drinking spree and continue till late at night. The feast could even last for many days according to the wealth of the family. The couple did not sleep together on the first night. The bride slept with her friends and the bridegroom also with his friends.³⁷ From the second night, the couple would sleep together. A bride must take with her a number of ornaments which were considered to be valuable at that time. She also had to take her personal belongings, tools for working in the fields and other things which were considered to be required by her. She also must take as gift to the grooms sisters at least ten *taiawk* cord belts and a number of *tirdawh* metal pipe-

³⁷ Interview with Renlopari from Taisun, Myanmar on 7th May, 2005 in Lunglei. Also Duh Cung Nung, *op.cit.*, p. 33

cleaners.³⁸ These were distributed among the real sisters and cousins of the groom. The number of these gifts varied directly with the value of the *manpi*.

The people who received *manpi* and *mante* as mentioned were obliged to support and help the couple whenever the need arose. At the birth of the first child, the recipient of the *manpi* had to give a feast in the baby's honour when he first went to see the baby.³⁹ He may take a fowl or a pig according to the amount of the *manpi* he had received. The pig also had to be at least three fists in girth. The bride's family also had to give gifts of grain to the groom or to his father as these were known as *rual han* (grain basket).⁴⁰ The *pu* also should aid and protect the child (*tu*). He must at all times offer his *tu* food, lodging and economic assistance in times of distress.

Since residence is both virilocal and neolocal,⁴¹ a married man may at first live with his parents, but if he was not the youngest, they build their own house soon after their marriage or after the first child had been born. This was also because the youngest son inherits the house site of his father. After a married man established a house for him and his family, he would not built a full house but rather almost a wattle house. Over the years, he would accumulate things for the family and if he could afford he may perform a series of sacrifices whereby he could establish his house as a ceremonial entity.⁴²

After getting married, if the man gets tired of his wife or wanted to marry another girl he could easily get rid of his wife by telling her to go away. If a man divorced his wife, he could not recover the price he paid as a bride price. On the

³⁸ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.122

³⁹ *ibid.* p.128

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.126

⁴¹ F.K.Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.121

⁴² *ibid.*, p.178. Also mentioned by Renlopari from Taisun, Myanmar on 7th May, 2005 in Lunglei.

other hand, if the woman was the one to divorce her husband and left him at her free will, the bride price had to be returned back to the husband. However it can be noted that this law was there in theory but in reality it could be assumed that women hardly left their husband at her free will because women did not return back the bride price. So even if the wife wanted to divorce her husband, she could not do so, as she could not afford to return back all the things such as mithuns, gongs etc which was paid to her father as her bride price. But if the wife was mal-treated by the husband, she may leave him and he could not claim the price he paid for her. Children born to them during their married life belonged to the father in case of separation or divorce and the mother had no claim to her children.⁴³ If a woman committed adultery, the husband could forgive or divorce her. The husband had such a claim over her that if he desired, the wife could be made to leave the house without any of her personal properties such as her clothes, earrings and necklaces.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Carey & Tuck have mentioned that though a husband can divorce his wife for adultery, he loses the price that he paid for her. Hence he instead tried to make the seducer pay him compensation, but this was rarely paid as they were averse to the shedding of blood over the virtue of women.⁴⁵ At feasts, when men and women drink and get drunk, adultery was considered to be no offence and was regarded as a mistake which anyone could commit.

In the family, men were the head of the house and all decisions were taken by him. He was supposed to protect the family from danger and construction of house was entirely his responsibility. On the other hand, women were solely responsible

⁴³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.210

⁴⁴ Khup Za Go, *op. cit.*, p.18

⁴⁵ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.207

for all the household chores. Cooking was always done by women. They also had to bring the firewood from the forest. While coming back from the jhum they never went empty-handed but bring back food for the pigs and firewood while men often go empty handed behind the women.⁴⁶ They rose very early and pounded the rice and start cooking. While cooking, they very often went to the wells or springs to fetch water. All the works which were done in the house, except some repairs of the house, were done by women. Men hardly looked after the children and if the mother had to go out to the jhum, the younger child was looked after by an elder sister who was still too young to work in the jhum or grandparents who were too old to go out. The women were also supposed to smoke continually not only for the sake of smoke but mainly to supply the men with nicotine.⁴⁷

The Zo people in these hills had a saying that “a man should drink, fight and hunt, and the portion for women and slaves is work.”⁴⁸ Accordingly, they were quite fond of assembling together and drinking. They also had many occasions for feasts in which animals were killed and pots of beer or liquor were consumed. When a man was successful in his hunting and brought home the animals, that was an occasion for a celebration which was incomplete without a feast and liquor. Relatives visiting from other villages also called for a celebration. When a person died, the relatives had to give a feast and provide liquor as a remembrance to the departed soul. They also had a series of feasts which a person had to give to the whole village so that he could attain a status of honour. The most important feast which a person could give to attain social prestige was the *khuangcawi* feast. The *khuangcawi* feast needed a lot

⁴⁶ Interview with Renlopari on 7th May 2005 in Lunglei and Thawng on 21st Feb.2001 in Lunglei

⁴⁷ G.A.Grierson, *op.cit.*, 57

⁴⁸ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.186

of preparation and took several days to perform. In the initial stage of the feast, smaller animals such as pigs, chickens, goats were sacrificed to all the *khuachia* spirits and to the house spirits. However in the major sacrifices one or more mithuns were needed to be offered. The meat was eaten by the people of the village and guests from other villages. Any meat that was left over from the feast was distributed to all the houses in the village.⁴⁹ In these festivities women had to prepare the liquor being consumed and if there was a dance, women were expected to take part in it. However, they were never the ones who would decide that a celebration or a feast would be given. They merely followed the dictates of their menfolk and take part in the various celebrations and festivals.

Burial custom: Amongst the Zo people it was their custom to bury their dead. However the way a corpse was treated is different for the chiefs or wealthy persons and a commoner. The custom of burial could also differ among those who died a natural death and those who died by accident and those who died during child birth. Infants who died before they attained their first birthday were called *hlamzuih* and they were kept inside a pot and buried under the house. They also kept a boiled egg with the corpse so that the egg would guide the baby to the abode of the dead.⁵⁰ Women who died during child birth had to be buried on the same day that she died. An axe was buried alongwith her so that she would clear the way to the place of the dead as her way was considered to be strewn with branches and obstacles would be there. In the evening after her burial, unmarried girls would go to the riverside and perform a dance called *Cherawkan* as a farewell to the departed soul. Other persons

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.188

⁵⁰ H.L.C.A, *op. cit*, p.275

who died after attaining one year were all bathed as they believed that the corpse would smell of living beings and would not be able to enter the place of the dead.⁵¹ They were then dressed in their best clothes and decorated with whatever they possessed and the corpse was kept in a sitting position inside the house. Those who died a natural death were buried near the house as they did not have a separate cemetery. However some persons who died of some other causes were buried outside the village. If the dead person had killed an enemy, he was made to wear a turban. If he had sexual relationship with a married woman, he was made to wear the black feather of a cock.⁵² If he had slept with two sisters, he was made to wear two white feathers of a cock.⁵³ They did this to show that the person had performed something great or unusual. If the dead person was a chief, the corpse was kept in a coffin and a fire was lit under it. A pipe was inserted in the coffin and the waste or the liquid from the body was drained off. This was done to dry the body and after a month the bones were taken and buried. While the corpse was still in the house the family had to feed the whole village. If the dead person was someone who was prominent and had given feasts of merit, the relatives had to kill several animals and many pots of liquor to feed the people who had come to pay their respect and console the family. The feast sometimes lasted for several days and so the family had to spend a lot of their resources on it.

Inheritance: In the family, the youngest son who looked after the parents and the household was the one to inherit the house, lands, cattle and all the properties of

⁵¹ Duh Cung Nung, *op.cit.*, p.115

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ *ibid*

the father.⁵⁴ The heir had to support the other members of the family if they were still unmarried and living under the same roof. A leper (a later identification), or one who was dumb, deaf and blind or had other physical deformities also could not inherit the property as they were regarded to be incapable of carrying out the normal duties of life. If a widower who had two wives and had children by both the wives should die, the property was divided between the youngest son of each wife, that of the first wife taking all the property which the father was supposed to have possessed until he married the second time, and that of the second wife taking all the property which the father acquired during the second marriage.⁵⁵ If there was only one son by both the wives, he could possess everything. If a man was childless he could choose his own heir. However he had to first consult his paternally related males to give him a son to adopt and help him in his house and if the request was refused, he could select anyone he liked, even a slave and install him as his rightful heir. In adopting a heir, a Zo man would always look for a boy as girls could not inherit anything so boys were always preferred.

In case of chiefs, the elder sons were expected to build their own villages, from which they received tithes but they had to pay taxes to their father during his lifetime and after his death to their younger brother since he became the head of the family and tribe.⁵⁶ Properties of women were the ornaments and clothes she brought with her as a bride, her other clothes, hoe, pipe and spinning and weaving apparatus. In general women could not inherit any of the properties of her father while she could inherit her mother's personal properties. After being married, if her husband

⁵⁴ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.209

⁵⁵ *ibid* p.209-210

⁵⁶ *ibid*

died before they had a child, she returned to her father's home and she could take only half of her property and the remaining half went to her husband's heir.⁵⁷ If the husband died after they had a child, the wife could remain in her husband's house and do all the necessary works in the house and in the field and look after the children. However, the man next in line of inheritance after the deceased's children was usually appointed as *ro veng* which means guardian of inheritance. If the widow was thought to misuse the deceased husband's property, she was often challenged in the village courts. If she happened to have a lover, the *ro veng* could turn her out of the house and take over both the property and the children.⁵⁸ If she happened to be divorced by her husband without any fault of hers, she could take all her personal properties, half the cotton and two-thirds of the cotton thread and one-third of the total grain in the house and in the field.⁵⁹ If a married woman died before having a child, her personal properties were equally divided between her husband and her closest male relative. An elder brother could also claim the widow of his brother for his wife whether he was married or not. The widow however had the option to accept or refuse the proposal. Since she would then be an inferior wife (second wife) so the proposal was usually refused. If the proposal was rejected, she had to return to her father's or nearest male relatives.

Slavery: Among the Zo tribes in Burma, there were two types of slaves – those who had been captured by force in the wars and they were known as *sal*. There were other slaves and they were those who had submitted because of poverty or crimes they have committed, to the chiefs or other wealthy persons or those born of

⁵⁷ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.166

⁵⁸ *ibid* p.173

⁵⁹ *ibid* p.166

slavery and these section of slaves were called *bawifa*.⁶⁰ However slaves in this region were not treated like slaves are generally expected to be. Although slaves could be killed by their masters and that female slaves could be taken as concubines by the chiefs if they so wished, bad treatment of the slaves was rare and they usually were taken to be a member of the family. Slaves had to work like any other men for their living, but their work was neither long nor arduous.⁶¹ All that they earned belonged to the master but the food of the slaves and their masters were the same except in times of scarcity. He also slept in the house but he did not marry. He could have an affair or a child by other slaves but they were not married. Moreover slaves could free themselves by paying a certain price or if they could repay the debt which they owed to their masters.

Submission of slavery could be due to accumulated debts which the person could not pay and therefore agreed to become the slave of the lender until he repaid the debt, which could not often be paid. If a man was caught stealing he often gave his daughter or son to slavery until he paid some 20 times the amount of whatever he stole.⁶² A man fleeing from his enemy, or from debt, or from punishment would ask to be accepted as a slave in return for protection and food.

Women slaves as mentioned earlier could be taken as concubines by the chiefs and their children were also regarded as slaves. They could not marry and had to do everything to please their masters. Thus they had no freedom and sometimes they were even forcibly taken as slaves if they were very poor. Hence women who had no one to depend on were in danger of being taken as slaves.

⁶⁰ Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.177

⁶¹ Carey & Tuck, *op.cit.*, pp.203-204

⁶² *ibid*

Religion:

The Zo in Burma believed in the existence of supernatural beings who controlled their lives and production and could even bring disaster or illness upon them. The beliefs and the names of the spirits differed among the various tribes but the general beliefs and practices of the Zo is studied. The Zo believed that there was a Supreme God called *Kozin* who lived in the heavens.⁶³ However they did not worship the *Kozin* but was believed to rule over everything. *Kozin* does not denote any specific gender and so it can be said to be a neuter gender. *Khuachia* were the bad spirits and resided in large rocks, springs and other significant places. They could cause illnesses. Some *khuachia* were also found near the village site and were supposed to be the village guardians. They therefore had to be propitiated with sacrifices at regular intervals and when the people thought that misfortune fell on them due to the wrath of the *khuachia*. The Zo also believed that there were certain gods who inhabited the village sacrificial places and some who protect houses, families and individuals. They also had the belief that all these spirits could be placated with food and liquor. Communication could be established by means of various sacrifices offered by the priests or by the head of the household for which mithun, pigs, fowls, goats and dogs were killed as per the occasion. The meat offered to the spirits was only a small portion of the animal such as the liver, the head or the legs with some cups of liquor (*zu*).⁶⁴ The other portions of meat were eaten by the family members and the priest.

⁶³ *ibid.* p.197

⁶⁴ Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.16

The sacrifices or the religious ceremonies could be classified into three groups – personal, household and communal. Personal sacrifices were offered to the guardian spirit so that a newborn child may be safe. Some of the sacrifices were for appeasement of ancestor's spirits, to protect against sorcery, to cure sickness and to avert death by accident.⁶⁵ The household sacrifice took place in a definite series and it was often for general prosperity in the household and after the Feasts of Merit. The personal and household sacrifices were not very expensive as animals which were to be killed were usually fowls, cock and pigs. The communal sacrifices were made when the village had to take up a new land for agriculture which was often after three or six years. There were also sacrifices to make the village, resting place and the village spring clean. Another sacrifice was also made communally after the harvest of the grains after the first year of a new field. The communal sacrifices were to be conducted by the village priest and all the expenses for the sacrifices in which a mithun and some pigs that were killed were borne by the whole villagers. When household and personal sacrifices were held, the family should not be disturbed. To show that the sacrifice was being held, a bunch of green leaves were hung at the entrance of the house.⁶⁶ During the day they were also not supposed to talk to anyone nor could they do any work. When communal sacrifices were held, the village gates were closed and a green branch would be hung at the gate, so that anyone trying to come to the village would know that it was a taboo to enter and would rather go to some other village.⁶⁷ In most of these sacrifices, women did not take part in the sacrifices nor did they eat the meat of the animals killed. Though

⁶⁵ H.N.C. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp.157-158

⁶⁶ Foreign External A. September 1890, Nos.64-66

⁶⁷ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.199

none of the writers or the people interviewed knew the reason for the exclusion of women in the sacrifices, yet it could be said that this was done as women did not have any space in the proper religious sphere. They were relegated to the background and since they were regarded as inferiors, they were not given the chance to take part in the sacrifices. Women were also regarded to be so low that the meat of the animals sacrificed were not eaten by them.

The Zo people believed in life after death. They had the belief that after a person died, its spirit went to *pial rang* or *mitthi khua*. A person could enter *pial rang* which was in heaven only by great effort through the Feast of Merit and Celebration. Women could not enter *pial rang* by her efforts alone, she could enter the place only through her husband. If the husband had performed the Feast of Merit, then she could enter *pial rang*. *Mitthi khua* on the other hand was below the earth and was placed for the commoners and women also could easily enter it. They believed that the spirits retains in death the rank attained in life. All spirits passed through a certain pass and there the spirits were examined whereby their earthly status was established and the place to which they would go was determined. Apart from performing the great feasts, good deeds and bad deeds did not seem to affect them after their death. They believed that when a person is murdered, the spirit cannot enter the place of the dead but remains restless and hovers near the earth until the death is avenged.⁶⁸ After the blood has been avenged, the spirit can happily go to the allotted place. However the spirit of the slain becomes the slave or the servant of the slayer even if the death is avenged. They also believed that all the spirits of the animals which are killed by a person and the animals slaughtered at the various

⁶⁸ *ibid* p.196

feasts of merits would be theirs in the place of the dead. They also believed that the enemies they have killed would be their slaves if they perform a certain ritual for it. The Zo also had the belief a person can be born again as an animal, insect or even as another human being.

Thus the Zo people in the Chin Hills remained isolated and lived according to their beliefs and traditions for a long time. However in 1886, the British annexed Upper Burma and captured Thibaw, the King of Burma and later extended the British empire to the Burmese western borders and occupied the Kale and Yaw valleys. In the initial stage the British had no intention of colonizing the Zo country as the land was barren and had no commercial usefulness. However in 1887, British administrative officer Captain Raikes sent messengers to the chiefs of Sukte, Kamhaw, Sizang, Falam and Halkha asking them for a meeting.⁶⁹ A meeting was then held in which there were some topics of discussion in which the most important was to stop raids within the territory. This was one of the reasons why the British wanted to subdue the Zo chiefs. The British put forward the excuse that they had to provide security for their enterprises in the plains and as the Zo often used to raid and plunder the plains, the British wanted to put a stop to it. However the Zo chiefs and the people were not ready to readily submit to the British and several incidents occurred between them. Expeditions were then sent to the hills and as a result the Zo people submitted to the British authority in 1896⁷⁰ and the area became known as indirect administered areas.⁷¹ The entire hill of the Zo people of Burma was divided into three parts – Paletwa was in th north Arakan Hills district; Matupi, Mindat and

⁶⁹ Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.113

⁷⁰ W.S.Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, (Calcutta, 1961) p.246

⁷¹ F.S.V.Donnison, *Burma*, London, 1970) p.82

Kanpetlet in the Pakokku district and Tedim, Falam and Halkha were in the Chin Hills District. The British did not interfere much in the social and economic system of the people. They also preserved most of the customary laws. However the entry of foreigners and being administered by another government which brought new laws and other measures was bound to make some changes in the society.

The British government then appointed Administrative Officers to look after the hills and there was not much interference and other people rarely visited the hills. The people who came into contact with them were the Zo from Lushai hills and the Chins from the plains or the Burmese who came mostly for trade. However after the British administered the hills for some years, Rev. Arthur Carson who was a member of the American Baptist Mission came to evangelize the Zo. He arrived in 1899 and settled at Halkha.⁷² The Carsons dedicated themselves for education, evangelism, literature, agriculture and other kinds of development programs.⁷³ He then used his economic and medical knowledge to win the people. He also created a written language for the Zo people and translated the New Testament of the Bible. He opened a school in Halkha with the help of some Karen teachers. In the initial stage, the medium of instruction used in the schools were Burmese. The Carsons were later joined by Dr East in 1902 but he had to go back home for medical reasons. He later returned with his new bride in 1904. His wife Emily worked especially among the Zo women and children.⁷⁴ Rev.Cope and his wife also came to Halkha in 1910 but later moved to Tedim. Cope was dedicated to education and literature of the Zo people. In fact, the government appointed him as an Honorary Inspector of Schools

⁷² Rev.Dr.Chum Awi "In Search of the Lost Souls of the Chins" in

www.burmalibrary.org/rg.burma/archives

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ www.temple-baptist.com/history/east

in 1922.⁷⁵ He also wrote text books to be taught in the schools. As the Zo people in Chin hills used different dialects, he wrote the text books in three languages – Halkha, Laizo and Kamhau languages respectively. In 1911, Dr Woodin and his wife came to Hakha as physicians of Hakha Mission hospital. They were again joined by Rev. Chester U Strait and his wife and Rev. Johnson and his wife. The last missionaries left the hills in 1947 when they were evicted by the Revolutionary Military government of the Union of Burma.⁷⁶

Christianity was not readily accepted by the Zo in the Chin hills. The first converts were Thuam Hang and Pau Suan and they were baptized in 1905 by Dr. East. In 1907 there were only 12 Chin Christians gathering together for a meeting and it was called First Chin Baptist Association. After twenty five years, in 1926 only 450 men and 376 women were registered as Christians.⁷⁷ One of the reasons for the people to be reluctant to be converted into Christianity as mentioned by Stevenson was because the missionaries prohibited them from drinking *zu*.⁷⁸ *Zu* as mentioned before was an integral part of the Zo life. They believed that their function or occasion for celebration or mourning would be incomplete if they did not drink *zu*. So when the missionaries advocated that Christians should abstain from the various feasts of merit and *zu*, the people had the belief that they enjoyed life in their traditional religion and had the idea that Christianity would be a bore without *zu*.

Moreover the Zo said that their own god *khuazing* had blessed them and even after their death they would be in *pial rang* with all the best food and so they need

⁷⁵ Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicle* (Rangoon, 1963) p.389

⁷⁶ Rev.Dr. Chum Awi, *op. cit.*,

⁷⁷ Dr. Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.144

⁷⁸ H.N.C.Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.

not look for other gods.⁷⁹ They were content with their life as the chiefs and other prominent persons had all the things to enjoy themselves during their lifetime. Even in their funeral customs they feasted and drank for many days. So in the initial stage, the prominent persons did not want to convert to Christianity and those who were converted were the commoners especially the poor and the destitutes.⁸⁰

It was also stated by B.Lalthangliana that one of the reasons for the people to remain loyal to their old religion was because they saw no difference between the missionaries and the British administrators who were all white skinned.⁸¹ They were not happy with the government as they regarded the British as a power which dominated over them and who took the local powers from the natives. So when the missionaries came to the hills they were viewed with suspicion.

Another reason for the slow growth of Christianity was the spread of Pau Cin Hau's teachings. Pau Cin Hau was born in 1859 at Tedim.⁸² He was said to have founded a new religion called *lawki*.⁸³ His teachings were quite similar to the old traditional beliefs. However he was against the elaborate and expensive sacrifices and funeral rites. As he had been to Lushai hills, he also had heard about the teachings of Christianity and so some Christian beliefs were also incorporated in his teachings. But he was in favour of drinking *zu* and this was much appreciated by the people. He also developed a script and it was the first time that the Zo people had their own script. His script had around 1050 alphabets and using the script he even

⁷⁹ Pu Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.275

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.276

⁸¹ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.682

⁸² Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.267

⁸³ Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.148

wrote six books.⁸⁴ He was also regarded to be able to cure the sick thereby influencing a lot of people that many became his followers. But slowly his teachings died down and by 1975 he had few followers who were still faithful to him and that was especially in Tiddim areas.

The missionaries especially the pioneer missionaries of the American Baptist Mission were involved in trying to develop the people and were responsible for introducing education. As mentioned earlier, Carson opened the first school. After he died his wife Laura continued the work. She wrote a book for the other missionaries, taught in the school and continued medical works also. She tried her best to work for the Zo women by teaching the women about hygiene and other things that were beneficial for them. She translated some portions of the Bible and also translated 126 hymns to the Halkha Lai dialect and published an English-Halkha Dictionary.⁸⁵ Besides these, she wrote the *Lairam Htawk Tsaok* (A Primer of the Lai Dialect of the Chin Language) and *Jesuha nun chung bia* (A life of Jesus).⁸⁶ Dr. East opened the first dispensary in Halkha which proved to be beneficial for the people. Rev. Cope with his interests in language was quite fast in learning the language. He studied the various dialects in the hills and reduced the Tiddim-Kamhau and Falam-Laizo language into writing in 1924.⁸⁷ With his knowledge of the language, he too translated some portions of the Bible in Laizo dialect. He wrote several text books which were taught in the schools. The books were *A Chin Primer in the Sizang Dialect*, No.1, *Nate Thu Bu* (General Science) for Class I – IV, *Cindamna Thu Bu* (Hygiene) for Class II – IV, *Ganan Bu* (Arithmetic) for Class I – IV and *Zolai Sim*

⁸⁴ Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.269

⁸⁵ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.683-684

⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁸⁷ Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.253

Bu (A Primer of Tiddim-Kamhau) for Class I – IV.⁸⁸ He translated the New Testament into the Kamhau language.

Education was therefore started by the missionaries but the government also tried to help the workings of the missionaries. The government in 1905 gave an annual grant of Rs. 107/- for education in Chin hills. The first Government Primary School was also opened at Falam in 1906. By 1910 there were about 10 schools opened by the missionaries and all of them received a grant of Rs. 70/-. The first Middle School was opened at Halkha in 1913 and had about 30 students.⁸⁹ In these schools which were opened, girls did not benefit from them as they were not allowed by their parents to enter schools and this would be discussed later.

From the inception of education in the hills, the medium of instruction was in Burmese and this continued till 1925. This was because the Administrative Officers in Chin Hills thought it better to impart Burmese language to the people as there were a lot of different dialects. It has also been said that the Zo people had even taken lessons from Burman Interpreters as almost their entire trade was with the plains and as Burmese was the language of the market, they had the desire to learn Burmese.⁹⁰ However in 1923 there was a discussion of the future of education in the hills. In this meeting, it was decided that all the teachings and writings should be done in Roman script and the medium of instruction would be in the local or vernacular language. The second language would be English and medium of instruction in Burmese was to be stopped.⁹¹ This created a lot of controversy among

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁹⁰ Confidential, No.B/2127, No.24 of 1902. E.O.Fowler, Offg.Superintendent, Chin Hills, 14th June 1902

⁹¹ 161-62, Old Annual Reports, 1920-30, Falam, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Chin Hills, p.66

the people. In spite of this, the number of schools and students increased and in 1931 there were 31 schools. The first person from the Chin Hills to finish matriculation was Hau Za Cin Paua in 1931 and the first person to graduate from Laizo was Siah Luai in 1938.⁹²

Besides the American Baptist Mission there were a lot of other Christian denominations like the Anglican Church, Presbyterian, Seventh Day and Roman Catholics who worked in the Chin Hills. They all have contributed to the spread of education in the Hills.

When the schools were first opened, people were quite reluctant to go to school to receive education. The youths were also hesitant as they did not know the value of education and likewise the parents also saw education as a means of wasting their time. They wanted their children to help in the jhum and go for hunting or for some other things which they considered to be worthy from their perspective. The government then ordered that all village chiefs or headmen should send some students to the schools. Moreover, it was also decided that the chiefs' son should receive education. So the first students were mostly the sons of the chiefs or the council of elders who were forced to go to schools.⁹³ As the families did not have the extra surplus to pay for the fees and their food, it was decided that the village should pay for their needs. Hence the villagers used to collect grains and firewood for the students.⁹⁴ At the initial stage it was mostly the sons who were sent to school. Girls also wanted to be literate but the idea that the parents had was that girls should stay

⁹² Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.254

⁹³ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.149

⁹⁴ *ibid*

at home and do all the necessary household chores and also help in the fields.⁹⁵ They regarded that school would make them useless in the house and they would not be able to find a suitable husband. Parents did not want their daughters to be educated as they thought that schools would make them useless to do their works at home and in the fields. They also thought that educated girls would not get husbands. However as time passed girls also slowly got the privilege of being sent to school. However after finishing high school, since there was no college in the hills, they had to go to the plains to graduate. This meant a lot of expenditure for the family and parents were not willing to spend a lot on their daughters.⁹⁶ So girls receiving higher education were scarce. However sons of the well to do were sent to the plains and received higher education. As girls did not receive higher education, there were few jobs offered to them. Some of the girls were sent for college courses but they were very few. Moreover, most of the girls who went out of the hills to receive education were mostly trained as nurses. Therefore it can be seen that education in the hills was quite biased. Boys could get higher education which means better jobs while girls had to work in the lower ranks.

One of the significant changes brought about by the British administration was the position of the chiefs. Earlier there were the tribal chiefs who were known as *mi uk* in Falam and *ukpi* in Halkha region. They were the over all chiefs of all his clans. Under his suzerainty there were village chiefs. These village chiefs had to pay certain tribute to the tribal chiefs. After 1922 the government issued an order that only the tribal chiefs would be known as 'chiefs' and the village chiefs as

⁹⁵ Interview with Mr.L.Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21st Feb.2001 in Lunglei

⁹⁶ *ibid*

'headman'.⁹⁷ The tribal chiefs also became more powerful and could fine an offender up to Rs. 50/-. All the villagers had to pay some portion of their grains to the tribal chiefs and this proved to be a burden for the villagers who were far away as there were no proper roads. Some of the earlier dues which the people had to pay to their chiefs were also done away with by the government.

Another change introduced by the government was the abolition of slavery. Slavery as mentioned earlier could be of different types. In spite of some slaves or *bawi* who were well treated by the owners or masters, the Deputy Commissioner of Falam issued an order on 23.4.1939 that all slaves could be freed.⁹⁸ Those who wanted to be freed had to pay a mithun or Rs.60/- for the men and Rs.25/- for women. Thus many *bawi* became free persons. However there were some slaves who preferred to stay on with their masters. Thus slavery slowly became extinct in the Chin Hills.

Another change which took place in the hills is the dying of the various feasts of merit and drinking on different occasions. When money economy began to be introduced in the hills, cash became difficult to acquire and as they began to have more contact with the plains, the people wanted to accumulate cash. So instead of spending their hard earned surplus for feasting and feeding the whole village, they began to use the money for other purposes. Moreover when the people embraced Christianity, the missionaries encouraged the people to refrain from the various feasts of merit as they regarded it to be a heathen practice. Thus the Christians did not participate in the feasts and gradually people began to stop feasting the whole

⁹⁷ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.153

⁹⁸ "Slavery" Deputy Commissioner Office, Falam, Chin Hills, No.2V-2, p.21 in B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.674

village. Thus they abandoned their traditional feasts and sacrificial ceremonies which were associated with their past religion. According to Lian H.Sakhong, “These were the key social and ritual activities through which the transformation of identities and communities are accomplished.”⁹⁹ The Christian missionaries also taught the new converts that they should abstain themselves from drinking. Hence the Christian converts did not take part in the drinking bouts and they also stopped from making liquor. This habit slowly influenced the other people also. Though there are many people who still drink, they do not drink openly and so it can be said that drinking spree in which all the whole villagers used to participate was slowly done away with. This had its impact on women as men who were drunk often used to abuse their wives and so there was a lot of wife beating. However as they stopped drinking, these abuses were slowly done away with. Hence women were spared one source of abuse and could have some freedom for themselves.

The funeral system also changed. As already mentioned, in the earlier phase the people did not respond to Christianity with enthusiasm but at present about 98% of the Zo in Chin Hills are Christians.¹⁰⁰ Since most of the Zo people are now Christians, the Christian custom of funeral is now followed. At present they do not practice slaughter of animals and the corpse is not put in the house for days. The corpse is usually buried in the same day or the next day. As the custom of feeding the whole village was not practiced anymore, the people need not spend a lot of resources on funeral rites and so they now could save their harvest.

⁹⁹ Lian H.Sakhong, *Religion and Politics Among the Chin People in Burma*, (Uppsala University, 2000) p.344

¹⁰⁰ Samuel N.Lynn, “Voices of Minority Ethnic Christians in Myanmar” in www.cca.org.hk/resources

The entry of western culture, Christianity and education also changed many of the lives of women. Prior to the advent of the British, women were confined to the house and in working in the fields. However as education slowly spread, women were enrolled in the schools and later many of them had their own jobs outside their home. Many of them became nurses and teachers. However, women officers were still very few. The professions which they often take up are nurses and clerks.¹⁰¹ So it is found that women who took up salaried jobs were often in the low rank and lesser paying works. In literacy rate, when compared to men, women's literacy rate is much lower. In the field of religion also, some of the women were educated in Theological Colleges and the church now has allowed the women to be ordained as ministers. Hence in the Chin Hills, women pastors are to be found. However these women pastors are all single women.¹⁰² Moreover these women pastors are all almost serving under the Baptist Church and there is no women pastor in the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰³ There are also women deacons and in the church meetings, women delegates are sent to represent the women wing. But even though they may be pastors and take part in all the religious affairs, the head of the churches are all men. So all important decisions are very often taken by the men and women had to follow the rules and regulations laid down by the men dominated church. In the sphere of politics there are no women politicians as yet. This can be because men do not appreciate women who take up politics and also because of the political situation in the country. As one looks into the present scenario and the traditional society, it appears that the situation has not changed much in the society as women were never

¹⁰¹ Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem from Chekkhan, Myanmar on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei.

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ Interview with Mr.Lalmuansanga from Tahan, Myanmar on 19th December 2005 in Lunglei

decision makers in the family and in the society and today also they are not the decision makers. This could be due to the patriarchal thoughts and values which still exist in the society in which men are the sole decision makers and that women had to follow the dictates and terms laid down by men.

The political situation in Burma which greatly affect the lives of the Zo people in Burma could be traced back to the pre-independence times of Burma. When Burma was to gain independence from British, General Aung San, the leader of the Anti-Fascist Freedom League (AFPFL) wanted to incorporate the small pre-British independent states of Shan, Karen, Kachin and Zo (Chins) into Burma. He then called a meeting called the Panglong Conference with the representatives of these small states. In this Conference, Aung San assured the representatives that ‘... the Hill people would be allowed to administer their own areas in any way they please and the Burmese would not interfere in their internal administration.’¹⁰⁴ He also knew that the Zo people wanted to retain their old customary laws and hence made the Chin Hills an administrative division of Burma with special status called the Chin Special Division.¹⁰⁵ Thus the Zo people signed the Panglong Agreement on February 1947 and thereby agreed to join the Union of Burma hoping that there would be no racial or religious discrimination. However Aung San was soon assassinated and the AFPFL was split into three factions. The hope of the Zo people that there would be development, racial harmony and equal treatment also did not materialise under the Prime Ministership of U Nu. This was because the Burmese central government controlled education, finance, revenue, police, defense, foreign

¹⁰⁴ New Times of Burma, February 11, 1947 in Dr. Vumson, *op. cit.*, p,190

¹⁰⁵ www.zomi.info

policy, economy and trade. There was little that the minorities could do by themselves. The Minister of the Zo Affairs Council had no control over development projects as Burma National Planning Commission had full control over development projects. Even if a project was made, the money hardly reached the hills.¹⁰⁶

Situation for the Zo people became more difficult when General Ne Win took over the government in 1962 by a coup de tat. The government tried to uplift Burma culture and emphasized Buddhism, Burmese language and Burmese dress. In spite of Panglong Agreement and constitutional provision for freedom of religion, Buddhism was made the state religion. The Zo language was taught only upto Grade 2 and Zo language was banned as a medium of instruction in the schools.¹⁰⁷ Moreover the government also did not put the hill people's histories, cultures and customs in school and university curriculum.¹⁰⁸ All the important cabinet posts and high civil service positions were also held by the Burmese. As the British employed a large number of the hill (frontier) people in the armed forces, there were many hill people holding important positions in the army. Brigadier Ya Lum Tang who was a Kachin was forced to resign from the army and Colonel Dalzakam, a Zo was also dismissed and the Air Force Chief of Staff who was a Karen was also replaced.¹⁰⁹ Thus the hill people in Burma faced a lot of discrimination and difficulties under the Burman Government. Since life was hard and also life threatening, many of them migrated to other countries. Many of the Zo people have also entered Mizoram and it is believed

¹⁰⁶ Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.203

¹⁰⁷ Salai Za Uk Ling & Salai Bawi Lian Mang, *Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma*, (Canada, 2004) p.82

¹⁰⁸ Vumson, *op.cit.*, p.204

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* p,205

that there are about 50,000 Zo people in Mizoram.¹¹⁰ Many of them also fled to Delhi, Kolkata and other foreign countries.

When the people as a whole faced a lot of problems, it is not the men alone who had to be burdened with the situation, but it is also the women who had to face many hardships. The soldiers who were stationed in the hills were encouraged to marry Chin girls and to convert them to Buddhism, using rank promotion as an incentive.¹¹¹ There are also many cases of rape by the soldiers on the womenfolk. The women had to find solutions to fend not only for herself but also for her family. As living became difficult and earning money became a problem under the government, the women had to go out of her house and try to procure the various needs of her family. Thus, there are a lot of women who are engaged in trading and who had to go to various countries of South East Asia to buy goods and then sell it somewhere else. Thus many Zo women from Burma are entering Mizoram to sell their goods. It can be assumed that women travelling to and fro are at a risk of being raped and other physical abuses by the men especially the soldiers. However, they are compelled to do it so that their family could benefit from them. Besides engaging in trading activities, women are also seen to work as helpers in different homes in different places.¹¹² To earn money, they do not hesitate to work as a low paying job. However, though they may work hard and procure money for the family, the income

¹¹⁰ F.Lalremsiama, "Impact of the Myanmarese Settlement on Mizoram" Paper presented at the seminar on *Cross Border Movement of People in Mizoram* on 25th April 2002, Aizawl.

¹¹¹ Salai Za Uk Ling & Salai Bawi Lian Mang, *op. cit.*, p.82

¹¹² Dr.Sangkima, "The Coming and Settlement of Myanmarese in Mizoram since the beginning of the Twentieth Century AD to the Present", paper presented at the seminar on *Cross Border Movements of People in Mizoram* on 25th April 2002, Aizawl.

which they generated is not at their disposal.¹¹³ Their fathers and husbands still have the rights over them and also control the money which the women earned.

Thus, it could be seen from this chapter that the Zo women and men in Burma (Myanmar) are introduced to a new culture and a new way of life. Though they are exposed to a new culture and have even adopted many of it, they have still retained many of their traditional culture and values. From the studies done in the chapters we know that patriarchy was firmly entrenched in the Zo society and gender relations was in favour of men. The system of patriarchy did not change after being administered by the British and being exposed to a new culture. We also find that there are many similarities and dissimilarities between the Zo and Mizo and their gender relations. To know the exact point of their similarities and differences, a comparison would be done in the other chapters. However in order to know how patriarchy was rooted in the society and how this system affects gender relations a study would be done on the genesis and growth of patriarchy.

¹¹³ Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem from Chekkhan, Myanmar on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei.

CHAPTER VI

TRACING PATRIARCHY IN MIZO SOCIETY:

GENESIS AND GROWTH OF PATRIARCHY

As discussed in the first chapter, the term patriarchy which is frequently used by feminists and writers literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch' in a family where the eldest male assumes the position of the head of the family whereby he controls his wife, children and other members of the family¹. The word patriarchy is now generally used to refer to male domination in the family, society, polity etc whereby men have the privilege of being the decision makers. It can also be said to be an ideology in which men are seen as superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and that they are part of men's properties.² However patriarchy has not been a constant state in history and could and has changed according to the different periods of history. So also in Mizo society although patriarchy had existed it is necessary to study how it had changed in different periods of time and particularly in the context of migration. However as explained in the earlier chapter, Mizo did not have any written record as they did not have a written language before the advent of the Christian missionaries. Hence the early history of the Mizo has to be gleaned largely from the oral traditions which have been passed on through generations and also the folk tales and songs which had been sung and remembered from past generations.

¹ Kamla Bhasin, *What is Patriarchy*, (New Delhi, 1994) p,3

² Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, (New York, 1993) p.3,4

Before the Mizo migrated to the present Mizoram, as described in the earlier chapter, in their migration process they settled down in Myanmar for a considerable period of time. One of the places for their settlement was regarded to be in the Kale-Kabaw Valley. However Mizo historians have not written anything very definite about the culture of the people at that time. So sources for this period need to be taken from oral traditions like folk tales. Some of the Mizo historians have assumed that folk tales like *Chhura*, *Liandova*, *Lalruanga*, *Chemtatrawta*, *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi*, *Kawrdumbela* are from the days of Kale-Kabaw.³ They regarded these folk tales to be from this period because they have pointed out that many of the Mizo tribes like Lusei, Lai, Paite, Bongcher and Mara have these same stories though the title of the story are different. But the plot and the story remains the same. So they are of the opinion that these stories would have been from the times prior to the dispersal of the various Mizo tribes from Kale Kabaw Valley.

From these folk tales as described in the earlier chapter, it can be assumed that patriarchy had existed even at the time of their settlement in the Kabaw Valley. However it is seen from these tales that patriarchy was not very deeply entrenched. This can be derived from *Chhura*'s story in which one can find that his wife told him to look after the baby and cook the food while she went to the fields.⁴ So it appears that men also did the household chores and that they did not mind baby sitting. On the other hand men also worked in the fields and sometimes went out for trading purposes as was seen in the other episodes of *Chhura*.⁵ This reveals that

³ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001) p.65; H.L.C.A. Zofate *Chanchin* (Tahan Kelemyo, 1995) p.12; Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2000) p.95; L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thuhla* (Aizawl, 1994) p.9. The contents of these folktales are briefly mentioned in Chapter II.

⁴ P.S.Dahrawka, *Mizo Thawnthu* (Aizawl, reprint, 1994) p.257

⁵ *ibid*

gender roles were not clearly defined and were not entirely determined by sex. So division of work was not clearly as demarcated for the men and women as it came to develop in the later period. In *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi*'s story, Tualvungi was seen to be weaving and that a bird came and told her about the death of Zawlpala.⁶ So during the times prior to the settlement in the hills, the people already knew the art of weaving and it was done by women. The story of *Lalruanga* clearly shows that women had little time to take care of themselves for his mother Zawltleipuii went to the fields even when she was heavily pregnant with child.⁷ As there were no other means of subsistence, it can be assumed that all the family were busy in working in the fields to procure their daily food and concern for women was not very evident.

These folk tales also reveal that bride price had existed even at that time and the price would be quite high especially for the chief's daughters. For instance in the story of *Liandova*, Liandova who had married the chief's daughter had to pay a large number of mithun and even necklaces as bride price.⁸

This same story also depicts that wise women were respected and consulted during this period. Liandova was helped by a wise woman and heeding her advice, Liandova became the owner of a large number of mithuns.⁹ He was also helped by a *khuavang*. *Khuavang* as explained in the earlier chapter was one of the gods which was worshipped by the people and in this story *khuavang* took the shape of an old woman. *Khuavang* helped Liandova to have a good harvest and also cooked food for him.¹⁰ The people also believed in fairies who were regarded to bestow blessings

⁶ *ibid* p.137

⁷ Nuchhungi & Zirtiri, *Serkawn Graded Readers Mizo Thawnthu* (Serkawn, reprint, 2003) p.102-106

⁸ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p.79

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid* p.70-73

upon the people. In the story of *Lalruanga*, his parents Zelhranga and Zawltleipui were blessed by fairies when they were born.¹¹ The father was also blessed with the power of magic. In the story of *Kawrdumbela*, Kawrdumbela was a very ugly person but he was blessed by a female deity and he became handsome and thereby earned his wife's favour.¹² So it can be seen from many of these folk tales that women were considered to have wisdom and thus the society respected them accordingly. The other important fact revealed by these folk tales is that there existed important female deities to whom men went for blessings. Women deities were also regarded to be harbingers of blessings and they therefore played an important role in the lives of the people. Seeking counsel from the old women and the existence and worship of female deities reveal that the society's attitude towards women were not very derogatory. Moreover at this period of time, there was the absence of derogatory terms and sayings for women as was seen in the later period.

Beyond what we can get not much is known about their life in the Kale Kabaw valley. However after their dispersal, different tribes began to migrate to various places but some of the settlement sites were quite close to each other. There are folk tales and songs which tells us about the lives of the people prior to the Mizo's migration to present Mizoram.

In legends we find that when the Mizo started shifting to the hills they did not have proper dress and that they used leaves to cover themselves. This dress was known as *siap suap* and *hnawkhal*.¹³ However in many of the folktales which existed prior to the migration to present Mizoram, there is not a single mention of the dress

¹¹ Nuchhungi & Zirtiri, *op. cit.*

¹² *ibid.* p.26-28

¹³ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.169

which was said to be worn at that time. However though their dress was not specified, in the various folktales it is found that weaving was done by women. In the story of *Liandova* which existed during the days of Kale Kabaw, Liandova's wife mended his clothes. In the story of the same period *Zawlpala leh Tualvungi*, Tualvungi was also seen to be weaving. So it can be clearly understood that when the Mizo settled in the Kale Kabaw Valley and before migrating to the hills, weaving was done by Mizo women. However as mentioned in Chapter III, it appears that when the people started to migrate to the hills they were constantly on the move and so they had little time to do all the processes of weaving as the process took a long time. So they did not have the time to weave and hence they had to resort to wearing clothes made of leaves. Cotton growing was perhaps not very possible for a moving population. Finally when they had a more or less settled life, they again revived the art of weaving.

In the family and in the society, it appears that patriarchy had existed. This can be drawn from the story of *Duhmanga leh Dardini*¹⁴, in which the father is the decision maker in the family. In the story mentioned, Duhmanga had a wife named Dardini who was disliked by her in-laws. So when Duhmanga went to the forest for hunting, they divorced her. This was in contrast to the customs which later prevailed. According to the custom, parents cannot divorce their daughter-in-law. The only one who could divorce a wife was her husband. However Duhmanga somehow remarried her. Among the unmarried male youth, there seem to have started the notion that girls should act according to men's desires. In the story mentioned, Dardini showed favour to Duhmanga while there were other suitors also. This angered the other

¹⁴ P.S.Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p.178 - 179

suitors and they stopped going to Dardini's place. But other than stopping their visits they did not take any action against Dardini. So, it appears that men wanted women to please them but did not take any harsh action against her or her family as was seen in later period. This would also reveal the fact that women's private space was more respected which decreased as time passed. This could be because the people did not have *zawlbuk* (bachelors' dormitory) as it was not mentioned in this story by the writer. Moreover in many of the folk tales which were told during this period, not a single of them mentioned *zawlbuk*, so it appears that *zawlbuk* did not exist at that point of time. It is not known when *zawlbuk* began to exist in the Mizo villages. It might have started when the people were near the Tiau river or after they entered present day Mizoram. This is because the Lai and Mara did not have any *zawlbuk*. In the folk tales, *zawlbuk* is found in the story of *Chalkunga leh Thanghniangi*¹⁵. This story is from the period when the Mizo had settled in Mizoram and the place where these two people reside was in a village called Khawnglung which was in south Mizoram.

When the people were between Thantlang and Run, there seems to be no war among themselves. Even if a war had occurred between the different tribes, there are no records of it in the oral traditions. Hence the wars might not be significant. However after the Mizo had crossed Lentlang and were near the Tiau river (this is today the boundary between India and Burma), there are instances of wars against each other.¹⁶ As mentioned in the earlier chapter, all the men did not take part in the war but only a selected man would represent the whole tribe. However later on

¹⁵ *ibid.* p.193-219

¹⁶ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.180

almost all the men used to take part in the war. Gradually the people began to raid, loot and kill trying to usurp each other's power. In this case, the society being patriarchal and men who were considered to be stronger assumed the role of warriors. Since the different tribes were now in a constant state of warfare, men assumed the role of protectors of the village. They now began to bring the head of the slain and held a ceremony in which the slayers were honoured.¹⁷ Men then began to hold more power, prestige and dignity in their hands. As women were seen to be in need of protection, men assumed more importance than before. Women had to depend on the men for their survival. Due to the many wars which were fought among the tribes the people began to migrate to different places. Moreover since the people practiced jhum cultivation, they needed more land spaces and when their sites began to be exhausted they had to move to other places. Eventually they began to spread themselves into present Mizoram. However all the tribes did not migrate to Mizoram and some tribes stayed behind in the Chin Hills.

As the people were constantly on the move, women had to depend more and more on men. Men began to decide when and where to migrate and in this process of migration men played the part of decision makers and protectors. This increased the patriarchal domination and hence women had to follow all the norms laid down by men. Hence in the process of migration, patriarchy became more defined. This resulted in a clear cut demarcation between the roles of women and men. Men took up the role of hunters and warriors while women were confined to the house and the jhum. Men began to dominate the public realm and women were relegated into the private domain. However it should be noted that women were not the authority in the

¹⁷ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976) p.82-84

private domain. Men were also the decision makers in the private arena. Thus women had no voice either in the public or private sphere. Moreover due to the insecurity of the people women could not easily move from place to place as there was the constant fear of being killed by their enemies. They had to be constantly accompanied by male companions who acted as their guard. Thus the mobility of the womenfolk was restricted and they had to depend on their men more than before. As a result women could not have any power in their hands and men began to use derogatory remarks to show that men were superior to women. Thus the men converted the biological constraints to gender roles.

Various sayings began to surface which showed how women were viewed by the men. There appeared sayings like ‘Women and crab do not have any religion’, ‘Women’s wisdom do not cross the village spring’ and others which are mentioned in the earlier chapter. These sayings clearly reflect the attitude towards women and the social values of the time. From these sayings it can be seen that women were regarded not to have any wisdom and reasoning power and that they were not worth to have any power in the public and private domain. It appears that these sayings became common after the Sailo dominated the other Lusei tribes and ruled more or less over most parts of Mizoram. In the various folk tales of the Mizo, the sayings which are mentioned above were not to be seen at all. Mizo also had a belief that entry to *pialral* (the highest abode of the dead) could be attained only through their husband’s merit. If their husbands had killed the requisite animals and also give a feast of merit, then only can women enter *pialral*.¹⁸ Thus women could not enter *pialral* by themselves. This made women to be more dependent and subservient to

¹⁸ Lalthanliana, *op. cit.*, p.261

the men. This belief reveals that the dominant male values in the society also created religious beliefs. Moreover the Lusei also believed that a man who did not sleep with his lover would be shot by *Pawla* on the route to *pialral* after his death.¹⁹ This belief is not to be seen among the Lai and Mara. This would indicate that the concept of being shot by *Pawla* was fabricated by the Lusei after they departed from the other tribes. This belief showed the men's attitude towards women and that a religious sanction was given for the control of women's sexuality. If the men had respected women, then they would not always seduce women or do something which could be derogatory to them. It can also be understood that this belief was one method of subordination of women. Among the Lusei, it was a habit for men to boast if they had successfully seduced a woman and would not think about the feelings of the girl.²⁰ The idea of men boasting their lovers to their friends had existed in the society for a long time and had circulated in the society so much so that girls and boys are reared on these patriarchal societal values and norms. The men did not care whether they loved the girl or not and all they wanted was to win as many girls as possible. However this was absent among the Lai and Mara.²¹ This could be because their society gave more personal space to the womenfolk and were more respected than the Mizo women and also they need not have to live in fear of *Pawla* after they died. So the Lai and Mara never boasted of their love lives to their friends. The attitude of the Mizo men indicate that the level of patriarchy had been more strengthened after the Mizo migrated to Mizoram.

¹⁹ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.138; also see N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p. 291

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p. 291

The change in the level of patriarchy could be seen not only in the belief of the Mizo but also in the language. Lalrinawmi commented that the term *hmeichhia* appeared when the Sailo began to attain supremacy in Mizoram.²² *Hmeichhia* is used for the word 'women'. *Hmei* means mistress or concubine and *chhia* means bad. Lalrinawmi further stressed that prior to the ascendancy of the Sailo, the term *minu* was used and not *hmeichhia*. *Mi* denotes a person and *nu* denotes a feminine gender. This appears to be true because if we look at the other tribes of Mizo, they have not used the term *hmeichhia* at all. The Zo and the Lai have used the word *minu*²³ for women while the Mara used *chanong*.²⁴ The Zo and Mara have used the term to denote a feminine gender while the Mizo have included a word which was derogatory. V.Lunghnema in his book wrote one of the oldest songs of the Mizo and this song runs as follows:

Mi inhrawkna hril tang ningla Ja-eh

A kung hruiah hril tang ningla Ja-eh

Minu leh mipa aw Leiranot seija

*Mi inthawkna ti tang ning e, Ja-eh.*²⁵

This song talks about the creation of earth and the people in it. It states that women and men were created together and it uses the word *minu* for women.

So, in this song, we find that *minu* was used for the word women and since this song is regarded to be one of the earliest songs of the Mizo, it can be deduced that *minu* was used to denote women rather than the word *hmeichhia*. As it is

²² Lalrinawmi, "Crab Theology: A Critique of Patriarchy-Cultural Degradation and Empowerment of Mizo Women". D.Min dissertation, Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, 1993. p.64ff

²³ Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nunphung* (Falam, 2001)

²⁴ N.E.Parry, *op. cit.*, p.508

²⁵ V.Lunghnema, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1993) p.6

believed that all the Mizo tribes are descended from the same place and since the other tribes did not use the term *hmeichhia*, it could be deduced that this term was coined only after the Mizo have settled in present Mizoram. Thus it could be regarded that subordination of women was seen not only in the sayings about women but also in the term for women. Hence women's subordination became more prominent after the Mizo have migrated to Mizoram and had more a settled life and more of immovable property and that even the language had changed to show how women had been considered as inferiors.

The attitude towards women was clearly revealed in the life of Sibuta. Sibuta was a chief of *Palian* clan who settled down in Mizoram. He took the life of his half sister, Darlalpuui by slaying her.²⁶ He speared her in a way in which a mithun was killed to be used for the feast of merit. He might be the only one to be shown in Mizo history who was described as a cruel chief but the murder he committed showed the position of women in the society. If women had some respectable status in the society the chief would not dare treat his female family member so cruelly. Writers on this topic mentioned that onlookers also did not try to save the girl as they were afraid of their chief. But this also revealed that if a man was treated in the same way, he might have someone to save him.

The Mizo had their own concept of religion and believed in the existence of God who looked after them. The people also believed that spirits of different kinds which were mentioned earlier resided everywhere and that they need to be appeased. However, different tribes had their own way of sacrifices and rites but there were not much differences. They had a clear concept of a creator who was supposed to look

²⁶ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p.49

after the humans. They called this *Pathian*, *khuavang* and *khuanu*²⁷ – the first refers to a male deity while the second refer to a female deity. Lalrinawmi considered that *khuanu* had an important place in the earlier religious beliefs and practices of the Mizo and that *khuanu* was later replaced by the favoured Sailo male deity, *Pathian*.²⁸ *Pathian* could be said to be the favourite deity of the Sailo because in the folk tales we find that *Pathian* visited the village of Zahmuaka, the predecessor of Sailo. *Pathian* tried to enter the house of a Hnamte clan, but as that man was having a certain sacrifice, he could not entertain any guests. So Zahmuaka welcomed him in his house and *Pathian* was very pleased with him and hence blessed him saying that he would rule and prosper.²⁹ Hence *Pathian* was worshipped by the Sailo and when other tribes submitted to the Sailo, they too followed what the Sailo worshipped. This legend was thus used to legitimize Sailo supremacy just as we find in many early societies in other parts of India that Brahmins and kings often claimed that they were from a divine lineage and had been divinely appointed. However, it should be noted that the importance of *khuanu* did not mean that the Mizo society was at any time a matriarchal society but it signified a more egalitarian gender relations. However the importance of *khuanu* in the lives of the people could not be ignored. Lalrinawmi further argued that the displacement of the female deity by a male deity showed that Mizo religion was moving towards a stronger patriarchal religion.³⁰ The *duhlian* dialect which the Sailo used became dominant after the Sailo ascertained their supremacy and hence the male god *pathian* got concretised and people accepted it as the one who created and looked after them. This would also show that the

²⁷ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua* (Aizawl, 1994) p.3-4

²⁸ Lalrinawmi, *op. cit.* p.24ff

²⁹ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.164

³⁰ Lalrinawmi, *op. cit.*, p.26

society was increasingly becoming patriarchal in which women hardly had a place in the society. It was during this period when only *pathian* was worshipped that Christianity entered Mizoram. The missionaries themselves came from a strong patriarchal society and the values which they had were also based on patriarchal norms. Hence “the ecclesiastical structures, perceived as the inheritors of the powers exercised by male missionaries, came to support the movements of patriarchalization that were already in process in the pre-modern or early modern period.”³¹ When the missionaries came and began to translate the Bible, their interpreters did not know the term to be used for God because they could not decide whether *khuavang* or *pathian* was more powerful. So the earlier translation for God was given as Jehova. But this term was later replaced by *Pathian* as it was ‘the most suitable in most men’s opinion’³² as mentioned by J.Merion Lloyd, one of the Welsh missionaries in Mizoram. Gradually therefore the concept that God could have been female (*khuanu* or *khuavang*) was completely overridden and *Pathian* the male God concept became dominant – a concept first popularized by the Sailo dominance and later crystallized by Christianity.

There were also women seers called *zawlnei* in all the villages and in the folk tales we find that women *zawlnei* were more popular than their male counterparts. They were consulted by the people when they were in trouble or when they fell sick.³³ They were consulted because they were believed to be in touch with the supernatural world. These *zawlnei* were in great demand as the people believed that sickness could be cured only by sacrifices to appease the spirits. Though *zawlnei* did

³¹ Frederick S.Downs, *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India* (Shillong, 1996)

³² J.Merion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl, reprint, 1991) p.79

³³ Saiaithanga, *op.cit.*, p.14

not perform any rites yet the people depended on them to know which sacrifices were to be offered.³⁴ But they did not act within the true religious sphere and hence they did not occupy official position. Hence they were not given any remuneration by the villagers to show their gratitude. Though they were not much respected as the male priest yet the village could not do without them. Thus though they did not occupy a high position yet the roles as *zawlnei* gave an influential status for some women.

Besides *zawlnei* there were people who composed songs and sang those songs themselves and a significant number of the poet composers were women. If we look at the history and culture of other communities also³⁵, we find that women are nature poets and constitute the larger number of poets. One of the early famous Mizo women composer was Pi Hmuaki.³⁶ She was from the Ngente tribe and she was believed to have lived before the Lusei migrated to present Mizoram. She could easily compose songs and she did compose a lot of songs. The people thought that if she continued to compose songs then later generations would have nothing to compose about. They therefore buried her alive so that she would stop composing. This showed not only the people's ignorance but it also revealed their attitude towards women. There were also other women poets like Thailungi, Aikhiangi, Darpawngi, Saikuti, Laltheri, Lianchhiari.³⁷ These women lived after the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram. They did not have power in their hands but they were respected and people sang their songs. Thus these few talented women gained

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ For instance see the reference to Assamese women in Birenchi Kumar Baruah's writings on Assamese language and culture.

³⁶ Lalthanliana, *op. cit.*, p.355

³⁷ *ibid*

respect of the men through their songs. These women went to the chiefs' houses in the evening and sang along with the men. So, these few women had the opportunity to visit the chief's house and gained the respect of the villagers. But the respect which they earned was only for themselves and they did not improve the lot of the women in general.

Women were thus subordinated in all spheres of life even though they played an important role in the society. It was in this kind of patriarchal society that the British began to administer and they were followed by the Christian missionaries. After the missionaries spread the gospel, in a few years all the Mizo embraced Christianity. However in the Chin Hills, it took a lot of time for the people to convert themselves to Christianity. But at present all the Chin people under the present study are now Christians.³⁸ Many changes were brought about and the government also tried to amend some of the existing customs such as raids. But the missionaries and the government did not try to change the customs such as inheritance for women and other laws which would be in favour of women. So the present customary laws are still in favour of men as was described in the earlier chapter. Due to the customary laws and the patriarchal values women therefore had to face many problems till today. This could be seen in some of the report submitted to the National Commission for Women, New Delhi.³⁹ One case which was seen in this report is about Marthi and Lala who were married but childless. Both of them were employed under the government and so they took Housing Loans and built their own house. However Lala died soon after. After a month, Kunga, the brother of Lala ordered

³⁸ Interview with Laltansanga in Lunglei on 15th December 2005. He is from Myanmar but is now settled in Lunglei.

³⁹ Lalthansangi, *Situational Analysis of Women in the State of Mizoram – A Report* submitted to the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, December 2004.

Marthi to vacate the house as he said that the house belonged to his brother and since they did not have any son, the property should be passed to him. Marthi having limited knowledge about legal issues vacated the house and rented a place. She also took furnitures and other household properties. Kunga was still not satisfied with just owning the house and snatched her television, refrigerator etc saying they were his brother's property which should be passed on to him. Marthi could not fight him back and being under stress passed away within a year. There are also other more or less similar cases in which women were the victims of their in-laws. It can also be said that these women were the victims of the discrimination of women in customary law. Thus British administration and change of religion to Christianity did not change the existing customs in which women could inherit property without any interference and also the right to claim their children. On the other hand, all divorced or widowed women do not face problems as this is because of the leniency of their in-laws who have sympathy for them. But if they have some clash with their in-laws they often face problems and the customary laws could hardly do anything for them. Thus the changes brought about by western influence were mainly under the patriarchal system and did not question or challenge the existing patriarchal structures.

The government and the missionaries work among the Mizo and Zo was not however confined to men only. They introduced schools for girls which had a profound effect on women. Though the missionaries wanted women to receive education and develop but the main reason for the missionaries work among women

was done so that the development of the people would be on the same level.⁴⁰ This was because a lot of men had received education and were employed while a few women were educated. This resulted in an imbalance between the development of men and women. The missionaries also wanted the Christian men to have Christian wives who would help them in their responsibilities. Hence due to the missionaries work among women, women began to receive education even though it was a slow process. Nevertheless, more and more women were educated and thus opened new avenues for them. They got employment in the church, schools and even in government offices. Hence education can be said to be the most important agency for the women to develop themselves and undergo a change. There is a change in the family life as explained in the earlier chapter. Christian husbands began to take more interest in the family and even helped their wives in the chores whereas in the pre-Christian period husband and wife rarely talked to each other.⁴¹

Christianity and education can be therefore said to have helped women in some ways. But the patriarchal norms which definitely became stronger and dominant in the society through the process of migration did not become weaker and Christianity did not help in weakening it either. For instance in the church, women are still excluded in many of the important positions. In the early Christian period there were some women who were appointed by the Presbyterian and Baptist Church as Bible Women.⁴² These Bible Women went from village to village spreading the gospel and helping in the church activities. But later in the 1950's these jobs were taken away from them and the post of Bible Women do not exist any more. So it can

⁴⁰ E.Chapman & M.Clark, *Mizo Miracle*, Marjorie Sykes (ed) (Madras, 1968) p.5

⁴¹ C.L.Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, 1987) p.293-294

⁴² BMS Annual Report for 1920

be said that the role played by *zawlnei* in pre-Christian era was continued by the Bible Women during the early Christian period. Unfortunately this role as Bible Women which gave some women an important position was taken away. Thus it could be said that the role of women in the early years of Christianity was more important than it became later. In the church, patriarchy is also prominent as it could be seen that all the important posts are held by men. This is because women are still not allowed to be ordained as ministers. As all the important posts have to be filled up by ordained ministers, women therefore do not find any place in the decision making bodies. There are women committee members who represent the women's organisation but in such committee meetings, women are just one or two. Thus they do not have any voice in such decision making meetings. So women are subordinated in the religious sphere. This is reflected when Baptist Kohhran Hmeichhe Pawl (Women's Organisation in the Church) submitted a petition to the Church that women should be allowed to be ordained. But this agenda was rejected by the General Committee which scrutinized the various agendas for the Assembly.⁴³ Thus the petition did not reach the Assembly meetings. The role played by women in the church is mainly as fund raisers which is not much different from the pre-modern period where the animals to be offered for sacrifices were reared by women.

In conclusion, it can be said that patriarchy had existed long before the Mizo had migrated to Mizoram. It was always the eldest male who was the head of the family. In the society also, men were the decision makers. As time passed and as the people migrated to the hills and to Mizoram, patriarchy also grew stronger. The

⁴³ B.Lalrinchani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District". Unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to NEHU, 1998. p.98

patriarchal domination increased as the people became more and more involved in wars and raids. Hence men who were the warriors took up the role of protectors and women became dependent on them for their survival. Though women depended on their men for safety against their enemies, food was mostly procured by women. They had to look after the household chores and work in the fields. They worked hard for the family but recognition was not given to them. They did not have any voice in the society also. Thus men dominated the public and private realm and women were relegated to the background. Women no doubt are educated today and could earn their own living, but they do not have any legal rights. Land even today is mostly owned by the male head of the family and women can not inherit any property except in a very special case. Women have been economically empowered through education and employment but they are still not the decision makers in the society and in the government also. There are no women ministers in the government at present. In the church also, women are pushed to the background. Thus patriarchy which had existed from pre-migration times and which was strengthened in the process of migration still exist in that strengthened form in the society. However to know how much migration had effected gender relations in the society still needs to be examined. This will be studied in the next chapter in which a comparative study of the Mizo who had migrated to Mizoram and the Zo of the Chin Hills in Burma is made.

CHAPTER SEVEN
GENDER RELATIONS AMONG THE MIZO AND LAI-ZO:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A comparative study of the Mizo women in Mizoram and the Zo women in Myanmar is being taken up in this chapter in order to move towards an understanding of the patterns of patriarchy. Though the society and gender relations of the Mizo and the Zo has been discussed in chapters IV and V respectively yet it is necessary to do a comparison between the women of both the society for a better assessment of the impact of migration on gender - relations. Hence the similar and dissimilar roles played by the women in the society, family, religion and economy in both the societies is again studied briefly so as to assess their exact position and the evolving gender relations in the society. This comparison needs to be done so that we would be able to highlight whether migration and exposure to different economy, polity and religion had played any role in changing the status of women. This comparison would also bring into focus the various ways patriarchy might have undergone changes in the process of migration. The comparison of the societies would be classified broadly under two periods of time, the traditional period coupled with the colonial period and the modern day period.

The Mizo and Zo authors have described the various duties and responsibilities of the women. They have written these from a male perspective under the belief that it was the right and normal duties for women. Though they did not view the work of women as productive labour and also did not realize the effects on her of the labour she provided yet one can use these works for interpreting the

actual social position of women and the society's attitude towards women. According to the Mizo writers like Dr. Lalthanliana¹, in the traditional period of the pre-migration times, women were responsible for the well being of their family. A girl was raised in the same belief that women had to do all the household chores and so she was trained right from her childhood and had to look after her siblings.² The various duties of a woman and the manner in which a girl child was brought up so as to be acquainted with the chores was kept alive through the process of migration. After the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram a song composed by Saikuti when she was a child would reveal this:

Zawlbuk hnuaiah buhlem kan thap chiam a

*Hmarthanga pa zai kel be lo ang e.*³

The English translation would be

Under the *zawlbuk* we are winnowing sand

Hmarthanga's father sang and sounds like a goat's bleat.

As they grew up, women worked from sunrise before their husband awakes. As soon as she got up from bed, she had to pound the rice, winnow and cook the food. While cooking she would go to the spring and fetch water.⁴ The accounts of British writers like J.Shakespear extols the very patriarchal ideas about women by narrating their accepted social roles Fetching of water was a strenuous work for the Lusei as their villages were always situated at a hill top and usually the spring or well was situated down in the valley.⁵ This would be a back breaking work as they

¹ Dr Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2000) p.179

² Pastor Challiana, *Pi Pu Nun* (Aizawl, 1986) p.13

³ F.Lianchhinga & Thangruala Chinzah, *Pipute Zai*, (Serkawn, 2000) p.87

⁴ J.Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.16

⁵ T.H.Lewin, *Wild Races of SouthEastern India* (Aizawl, reprint, 1978) p.135

had to go back carrying water and climbing the steep hill. The existing descriptions of this kind in the works of the British writers and also subsequently the Mizo scholars do not reflect any sensitivity about the hardships that women laboured under. The Zo in Burma on the other hand did not build their village at a hill top but on the slopes of the hills.⁶ Carey and also Stevenson mentioned that water was taken from the spring to the village by means of central troughs or wooden leads and branch to be emptied into wooden troughs in each compound.⁷ Hence the Zo women did not have to fetch water like the Mizo girls. In this regard, the Zo were more technologically advanced than the Mizo. This could happen because the Zo had contact with the more advanced plain people of Burma and could learn this method of water collection. Thus the Zo in Burma seemed to have developed technology which was also women friendly. But this knowledge appears to have been lost somewhere in the process of migration because we do not see it practiced by the tribes in Mizoram. Or perhaps the exigencies of migration made the people less concerned about the labour of women. It could also be that the geographical terrain of the Mizo made it difficult for the people to collect water as the Zo did. The Mizo women after fetching water had to feed the pigs and chickens.⁸ It should be noted here that for both the Mizo and the Zo women household chores were not considered as real work in the perception of the male dominated society. Mizo and Zo men never wanted to do any of the household works and would not help their wives even if the latter were very busy. Any man who was seen to be helping his wife or doing

⁶ Carey & Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p.175

⁷ *ibid*; H.N.C.Stevenson, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes* (Aizawl, reprint, 1986) p.23

⁸ K.Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976) p.133

some household chores would be labeled as a *thaibawi* (henpecked husband)⁹. Thus women spent all their time working in the jhum fields and in household work. Pregnant women continued their usual duties till the date of their delivery.¹⁰ Unless they were in serious pain, they did not rest due to their delivery but would resume their duties the day after delivery.

Unmarried girls of both the Zo and Mizo society had a lot to do with pleasing their male counterparts. Since the society was quite free for boys and girls to mix, they did a lot of things together. In the various works which they did together like working in the fields or gathering firewood, besides working along with the boys, girls had to serve the boys by carrying their clothes and tools and also by cooking for them. They had to do this as they were afraid that the boys would not be happy with them. On the other hand, boys would not try to do any of the things that were considered to be women's work. Thus the gender roles which was ascribed to boys and girls were not in favour of girls. Gender roles also dictate that Mizo women had to entertain their male friends in the evening and also work with their weaving implements so that she would not sit idly beside the men. However Zo girls did not work in the evening when they had suitors in their house. They passed the time chatting and singing songs.¹¹ As mentioned in the earlier chapter, Zo people did not have the institution of the *zawlbuk* but rather they slept in the girl's house. So it appears that the gender roles were clearly demarcated and the women had to follow the assigned roles. From the above study it can be inferred that the gender roles

⁹ C.L.Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, reprint, 1988) p.16

¹⁰ A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 2003) p.175

¹¹ C.Laitanga, *Pawi Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1988) p.51

which were assigned for both the Mizo and Zo women were a bit more friendly so far as the Zo women were concerned.

The reason for girls to go on working in spite of boys coming to her house to court her could be because they wanted to project themselves as being industrious. They had to present the image that they were not lazy as the society wanted the girls to be hard working. If they show some signs of being lazy or that they could not do the chores properly they would not be able to get a husband. So even if the girls were not feeling well or very tired, they still had to go on working to please the boys and fulfill the expectation of the society. K.Zawla wrote that to also show the image of being a good worker, a girl would hardly tell others if she was not feeling well.¹² This was written from a male perception of the women as if hiding illnesses were a natural thing for a woman to do. There was no consideration of the consequences of hiding illness and the danger of not being treated properly. Women had to behave in this particular way as she would try to show that she is capable of doing work and so she always had to hide any illnesses. At that period of time or for that matter at any period of time in a patriarchal society, getting married was a very important issue and every girl's dream was to get married as marriage seemed to provide security to them. Mizo and Zo women smoked *tuibur* and this information has been provided by many of the writers who wrote about Mizo and Zo history. As mentioned earlier, smoking was not so much for the pleasure of smoking as for collecting the nicotine water. A woman was expected to supply her family and friends with nicotine water all the time. The authors have all mentioned that a woman who did not have this

¹² K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.136

water ready at all times was said to be lazy.¹³ They have all given these descriptions without showing any consideration for what it might mean for the women and they seemed to accept this role of the women as normal and natural. The writers did not consider the negative effects of smoking and how women were also fed up of smoking. Thus women did the roles which was not women friendly as the society expected them to do regardless of their health or happiness.

The Mizo and Zo society also expected women to glorify men when the latter returned from their hunting expedition and when they returned from raiding other villages. After the men successfully raided other villages and brought home slaves or loots and the heads of the slain, women and other villagers were expected to welcome those men. Women garlanded them and danced with them in the celebration. Men who mastered the art of warfare and could bring home more heads were respected and glorified more than the others. In the same way, good hunters were respected and it should also be noted here that only men were hunters as women never ventured out in hunting. It is interesting to note that in many other societies, women were involved in small hunt but Mizo and Zo women never hunted in big or small game. Women were expected not to venture into any types of hunting which show the well demarcated division of work. In this division of work women were expected to honour the men for doing the work which the society expected of them, but interestingly there was no concept of honouring the women for doing the work which the society assigned to them. Thus men were honoured and respected in the realm in which women were not allowed to take part.

¹³ *ibid.* p.134

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, Mizo historians wrote that girls and boys of the Mizo and Zo society were free to love each other and they have many chances to get acquainted with each other. They participated in the various festivals by singing and dancing together in the festivals. These writers have not criticized or tried to see how this system would have affected gender relations. They did not give a second thought that free mixing of the sexes and selecting their own friends could harm the girls more than the boys. A re-interpretation of this system actually shows that it was not very friendly for the girls. This was because girls had practically no time for themselves and had to be always alert so that they would not displease their male friends. Though they were free to have their own friends, marriages were usually arranged by the parents of the boys. The qualities which every Mizo parent looked for in their daughter-in-law were not only a pretty face but rather that she should be a hard-worker, a good weaver, healthy and who is a good smoker.¹⁴ The Zo parents also tried to find a girl who was industrious but they tried to make the arrangements so as to strengthen the position of their chiefs and also consolidate the power of the clans.¹⁵ Hence among the Zo when a marriage was arranged, they had to inform their chiefs and the chief could give their approval or refuse consent to the match.¹⁶ According to Carey and Tuck, it was this desire to “ensure the friendship of rival villages by inter-marriage”¹⁷ that child marriage was conducted among the Zo tribes. However they did not stay together till they attained maturity. So before the children could comprehend the reason and understood the ideas of love and marriage

¹⁴ H.L.C.A, *Zofate Chanchin* (Tahan Kelemyo, 1995) p.177

¹⁵ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.190

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.190

they were given off in marriage without their consent. However child marriage was not practiced among the Mizo.

The bride price of the Mizo girl was usually four to six mithuns (*setlai*).* As discussed earlier a bride price was divided into two categories – *manpui* (main price) and *mantang* (secondary price). The Zo named the main price as *phunthawh* or *manpi* whereas the secondary price was called *mante*. If a Mizo bride had a lot of necklaces and other personal goods, her main price was five mithuns whereas a bride who did not possess goods such as necklaces and other personal items it was four mithuns.¹⁸ A chief's daughter's price was usually six mithuns.¹⁹ A Zo chief's daughter bride price was usually around 10 *sepui*, 50 pigs, 10 guns, a number of gongs, slaves and a large quantity of grain and also several pots of beer to be drunk at the feast.²⁰ The Zo chiefs took such pride in receiving a huge amount of bride price and compete with other chiefs so much so that they preferred their daughters to die spinsters rather than receive lesser sum than the daughter of other chiefs.²¹ Sometimes, it was difficult for the man to pay the bride price at one time and so in an understanding the man could pay by installments.²² However sometimes the man could not pay the bride prices for many years and there are prevalent stories about quarrels among the men over the unpaid marriage price of their grandmothers or other female ancestors.²³

* *Setlai* is not a full grown mithun and in the early phase of monetised economy it was equivalent to Rs.20/-. A *sepui* is a full grown mithun and was equivalent to Rs.40/-.

¹⁸ L.K.Liana, *Zofate Thuhla* (Aizawl, 1994) p.182

¹⁹ H.L.C.A, *op. cit.*, p.178

²⁰ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.190

²¹ *ibid.* p.191

²² H.L.C.A. *op. cit.*, p.179

²³ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.190-191

The *manpui* or *manpi* was received by the girl's father or brothers while the *mantang* or *mante* was divided among the bride's relatives. If the bride did not have a father or brother, her nearest male relative would get the price. It should be noted that the bride herself did not get any part of the bride price but rather it was the male relations who made use of the bride price. Hence when daughters got married, fathers often said that they are selling their daughter. The mother might receive the bride price if the bride's father had died and she herself had not remarried. The only case in which a mother could claim her daughter's bride price as of right was if the daughter was born out of marriage and had not been recognised by the father.²⁴ Bride price which was present both in the traditional Mizo and Zo societies was an important part of a marriage. However this needs to be analysed from a women's perspective to know its impact on gender relations. Due to the existence of bride price, women were often seen as commodities to be bought and it was originally intended to compensate the girl's family for the loss of an economically active member. It thus could become an easy justification for men to abuse their wives and treat them as disposable commodities. Thus bride price sometimes acted as a hindrance for a woman if she wanted to leave her husband which will be discussed later on.

One of the debates during the early phase of Christianity in Mizoram was the question of bride price.²⁵ Some people felt that women should not be bought as commodities and so there was the debate whether bride price should be continued or not. Some Christian men who were not in favour of bride price even married without

²⁴ N.E.Parry, *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (Aizawl, reprint, 1988) p.25

²⁵ J.M.Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)* (Aizawl, 1991) p.159

any bride price.²⁶ However as mentioned earlier women were expected to work hard and a pregnant woman would not stop working and had to continue with her work soon after child birth. Moreover many of the problems in a marriage were between the bride and her in-laws, hence bride price often acted as a security for the bride if the in-laws tried to instigate the husband to divorce his wife. Therefore some people saw bride price as a seal to the marriage contract and also a stabilising factor in a marriage. Hence bride price could not be done away with. Moreover, the higher bride price gave security to the women as many men would not easily divorce their wives after they had given a huge amount as bride price to get married. This was stated by N.E.Parry when he wrote about the bride price among the Maras, “The high marriage price in force strengthen a wife’s position, and divorce is far less common than among the Luseis”.²⁷ However examining the bride price from different views it could also be argued that paying for his wife by the man did not really mean giving more respect to the women. In fact in many cases it could be worse than dowry paid by the bride’s father, because the man’s family could always claim they had “bought” the woman.

Though the men had to pay a bride price to get married, a man could easily divorce his wife by just saying, “I divorce you”. This kind of separation is called *mak*.²⁸ If this happens, the wife had to leave the house and return to her parents or relatives. However, in this case the husband could not claim the bride price he had paid earlier. If he still had not cleared all of the bride price he should pay the balance which was still left. If they were in a separate house, all the grains which they had

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl, reprint, 1976) p, 276

²⁸ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.101

was to be divided between the two where the wife's share was one third of the total.²⁹

As mentioned, Mizo and Zo husbands could easily divorce their wives if they wanted a separation. The wife also could walk away from her husband if she was not satisfied or could not bear to be with him. This type of separation by the wife is called *sumchhuah*.³⁰ In this case, the wife had to return back the bride price which her family obtained from her husband. In this case it should be noted that the bride price which the wife's family obtained could have been disposed off or the mithun which was paid as a bride price might have died. Moreover, the bride price was distributed among the wife's relatives and getting back all of it would be difficult and the wife's parents might not be able to return back all the things which was received from the husband's family. As a result, a wife often found it difficult to leave her husband as she could not afford to return back the bride price. So, even if the wife was abused by her husband, she could not easily leave him as she could not return the bride price. In this case, the bride price was a burden and it could also act as a barrier for the wife to leave her husband. The wife therefore had to stay on with her husband even if she did not want to and she had to suffer for the bride price which was not received by her but by her relatives. Thus, women could not easily part with her husband while the husband could easily divorce his wife. So one finds that the gender relations were unfriendly to women, in the respect of marriage relation in both the Zo and Mizo societies.

²⁹ *ibid.* p.185

³⁰ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.101

Husband and wife could also be separated due to adultery committed by the wife. If a wife was suspected to have committed adultery or caught doing so, her husband could divorce her. But if the husband did not divorce her immediately, he could not divorce her later on in case of adultery.³¹ In case of adultery, the bride price had to be returned and the wife could not take any of her property including her dresses except the one which she was wearing. A wife therefore had to be very careful with her relations with men. On the other hand, for a man to commit adultery was not considered a sin³² and a wife was helpless if the husband was a womaniser. In fact, men would boast of their extra-marital affairs. The only thing which a wife could do to her unfaithful husband was to leave him. However if she left him, she still had to return back to her husband the bride price which was paid for her. So the bride price which was paid for a woman could be an asset for her family but on the other hand it could also be a problem for the wife. It should also be noted that for the Lusei the man with whom the wife committed adultery was not liable to be fined and no compensation could be claimed from him.³³ However for the Zo and also for the Lai in Mizoram, the man with whom the adultery was committed had to pay the amount of the wife's *manpi* and a pig to the wife's relatives and not to the husband.³⁴ Thus we find that the gender relations among the Mizo was most unfavourable for women as they had no redress for their complaints against their husbands but on the other hand, they were punished if they were found to have committed adultery.

³¹ L.K.Liana, *op. cit.*, p.185

³² Dr. Sangkima, *Mizos, Society and Social Change* (Aizawl, 1992) p.28

³³ N.E.Parry, *op. cit.*, p.49

³⁴ C.Laitanga, *op. cit.*, p.157

In case of separation, among the Mizo, children were supposed to stay with their father.³⁵ A child could stay with the mother only if a child was born out of marriage and the father did not recognise nor try to take from the mother.

In the Mizo and Zo society, divorced women and widows were allowed to remarry. However there were certain rituals which a widow had to undergo before being married again. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, in the traditional society, when a married man died, the widow had to perform the *thlaichhiah* ceremony and *thlahual* ceremony in her husband's house. She then had to keep aside a certain amount of food for her deceased husband every time she took her meal. After three months had elapsed, she would then be taken back to her parent's house called *inkaichhuah* which meant to take out. She would again perform the *thlahual* ceremony. After the ceremony, if she wished she could go back to her matrimonial home. If she had performed the *thlahual* ceremony, she would be saved from certain penalties if she had relationship with another man. A widow who wanted to get married again had to consult her children. If the children disagreed with her, she had to get married from another relation's house. When a widow remarried, her children and the property would have to go to their father's relatives.³⁶ However the bride price of divorced and widow were generally less than the usual price.³⁷ Among the Mara, widows could remarry after they had erected a memorial stone for their husband.³⁸ Widows were given liberty to get married and unlike the Mizo they were not regarded to have committed adultery even if they still lived in their matrimonial home. Among the Zo people when a man died, his brother could marry his brother's

³⁵ E.Chapman & M.Clark, *Mizo Miracle* (Madras, 1968) p.14

³⁶ J.Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p.52

³⁷ N.E.Parry, *op. cit.*, p.40-41

³⁸ N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers, op. cit.*, p.295

widow provided the widow accepted the proposal.³⁹ If the widow refused to marry her brother-in-law, she could leave her husband's house and return to her family. There was no objection to her marrying another man if she so desired. Thus for a widow to get remarried, there were a lot of ceremonies and rituals to perform. Moreover there were also restrictions on her if she wanted to get married again. But for a widower there were no restrictions and he need not perform many of the ceremonies and rituals which a widow had to do. This very clearly depicts the very patriarchal nature of gender relations in the societies of both the Zo and Mizo although in the Zo society the norms were not as rigid as in the Mizo society.

Mizo and Zo women could not inherit any of the property. The only thing which they could inherit was their mother's personal property such as necklaces, earrings and other ornaments or working implements. This was also inherited by the youngest daughter and she could distribute among her sisters. All the property and wealth of a family was usually inherited by the youngest son among the Lusei⁴⁰ and the eldest son among the Zo⁴¹. The inheritor could distribute his inheritance among his brothers. If a man did not have any sons, the heir would be the nearest male on his side.⁴² A daughter or his widow could inherit only if the man did not have any male relatives. A Zo daughter could also inherit if she did not have any brothers.⁴³ Among the Mara, a girl could inherit only if she did not have any male relatives.⁴⁴ Among the Mizo and also the Zo, a widow could not inherit her husband's property. She could take charge of the estate and other property if her children were still

³⁹ Rev. Khup Za Go, *Chin Chronicles* (Churachanpur, 1998) p.5

⁴⁰ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p.113

⁴¹ Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.208

⁴² A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p.114

⁴³ Rev.Khup Za Go, *op. cit.*, p.33-34

⁴⁴ N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers, op. cit.*, p.286

minors. However, she had to be careful in her dealings with the property as her husband's brothers could take away the property or estate if she was found to be frittering away the properties or if she did not live up to their expectations.⁴⁵ Though women had to be very careful in her dealings with the property, society had no problems with a man who squandered his inheritance and even the relatives had no say in it. But for a woman it was altogether a different matter and she had to live up to the expectations of her male relatives so that her properties which she looked after would not be taken away from her. So we find that women were restricted and governed by the expectations of the male standards which was dominated by patriarchal norms.

In the realm of traditional religion, there were some Mizo men and women, generally women who were considered or presented as having the power to put themselves in a trance and communicate with the spirit. These kind of women were called *zawlnei*.⁴⁶ They were consulted when people fell sick and the *zawlnei* could tell them what kind of sacrifices had to be performed. In the Zo society also there were such women as F.K.Lehman mentioned that there were shamans or seers in the Zo society but that they were not respected in the society.⁴⁷ Thus it can be seen that in the religious sphere, women were consulted but though people made use of their knowledge, they were not given the same respected place as the male priests like the *bawlpui* were given. *Bawlpui* were like modern doctors, they were called to cure the sick and were given grain as remuneration for their services.⁴⁸ They were given high social rank. On the other hand, women seers or shamans who were also consulted to

⁴⁵ A.G.McCall, *op.cit.*, p.114-115

⁴⁶ J.Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p.109

⁴⁷ F.K.Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl, reprint, 1980) p. 175

⁴⁸ N.E.Parry, *A Monograph...., op. cit.*, p.7

know the cause of sickness and what animals were to be offered to propitiate the spirit, were not respected. However it could be assumed that a much earlier time women must have played a very prominent role in the sphere of religious beliefs and practices. They could even have had a leading role to play in the religious rituals but as time passed and as patriarchal ideas began to spread, the role played by women came to be sidelined. Thus in the traditional period, women still played a very important role as consultants but their importance were not recognized by the patriarchal society. Mizo and Zo women also played a role in the sacrifices which were offered to the spirits. The animals which were killed for sacrifices were usually pigs, dogs and chicken. Since women were the ones to rear pigs and chickens, hence the animals which were offered were reared by women. So women played an important role in the background of the religious ceremonies.

The denial of importance to women could also be seen in the concept of life after death which was believed by the Mizo and Zo society. Women could not go to *pialral* (the highest order of the place of the dead) by themselves. Men could go to *pialral* if they were chiefs and had accomplished all the tasks to be *thangchhuah* both in the hunting sphere and by giving several feasts of merit. When they have accomplished these tasks, they were considered to have attained a high status in the society and even in their life after death. On the other hand, women could go to *pialral* only if their husbands were chiefs or were *thangchhuah*.⁴⁹ Since women could not possess property in their name they could not afford to give the feasts of merit. Moreover, they never engaged themselves in hunting and so could not attain *thangchhuah* through hunting. Hence women could not acquire the high status by

⁴⁹ Challiana, *op. cit.*, p.36

themselves and had to depend on their husbands for it. The place where ordinary men and women could go to a place after their death was called *mitthi khua*. Before reaching *pialral* or *mitthi khua*, the Mizo people believed that there was a place called *zingvunzawl* where Pawla lived. He knew all about the past of the dead people who passed by. The Mizo believed that any adult man who did not have physical relationship with a woman and a woman who had a lover would be shot by Pawla with a big pellet bow.⁵⁰

The Zo on the other hand believed that Sanu resides in *zingvunzawl* and knew the past of everyone who arrived. They believed that Sanu would break a man's rib bones if he did not kill a deer during his lifetime and would skin a man who was lazy and did not have sufficient products for the family.⁵¹ They also believed that a girl who did not know how to weave was beaten with one of the weaving implements.⁵² These beliefs would indicate that the society regarded men to be good hunters while women were expected to be good in weaving. The Maras on the other hand believed that Chhongchhongpipa resides on the way to the abode of the dead and steals the clothes of the spirits who pass that way.⁵³ Thus it can be seen that it was only the Mizo or rather the Lusei who believed that a man who did not have sexual intercourse was punished. These beliefs by the people of both the society was to give a religious sanction to gender relations and roles. The belief by the Zo that a woman who did not know the art of weaving would be punished reflects that women were involved in social production and such role of theirs was recognised. However as further migration took place, this idea was changed and by the time the Mizo settled

⁵⁰ K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.138

⁵¹ Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nunphung* (Falam, 2001) p.126

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ N.E.Parry, *The Lakhers, op. cit.*, p.397

in present Mizoram, women were marginalized in social perception regarding social production. The new belief of the Mizo of being shot by Pawla indicate the fact that the society was now more concerned only about the reproductive role of women. Thus we find that as migration took place, these beliefs highlight the deepening of patriarchal norms.

Women of both the Mizo and Zo society played an important role in the economy. As discussed earlier, they were responsible for all the household chores and had to work in the fields as well. They also had to provide the family with clothes and pots and had to look after the domesticated animals also. It was the labour of women that the family had to depend on for most of the family requirements. However the amount of work done by her was not taken into account as the product of a woman's labour in her husband's house belongs to the husband by custom and not to the wife.⁵⁴ Moreover, women did not have any decision making power in their hands. The things which they produced in surplus like pots and clothes were also disposed off by the men. Moreover the works which they did like weaving and pottery were done in the lean season when hard work was not needed in the fields. Thus, women's labour was also restricted and they could not do the works which pleased them but had to do according to the dictates of the male oriented society.

Despite the important role Mizo and Zo women played in the family, society and economy, they were not given their share in the political set up. In traditional society, the chiefs were usually men except in very rare cases where women chiefs

⁵⁴ A.G.McCall, *op. cit.*, p.106

were also found as mentioned in the earlier chapter.⁵⁵ The Council of Elders consisted of only male members.⁵⁶ Women were not seen in this exclusive council as women were thought to be confined in the household and field works. The time and place of migration to other places and villages, community sacrifices and other important functions of the village were all decided by men. Plan for raids and strategy were all done by men in the chief's house or in the *zawlbuk* for the Mizo. Thus, the important decisions to be made in a village were always decided by men, and women had to follow their dictates. As they were excluded from these meetings they did not have any say in things which affected them. It should be remembered that raids also affected women as the men who went out for raids were their relatives and women had to take care of the family during their male relatives' outings. Moreover when enemies raided the village women were usually the victims of rape and being caught as captives. So, it was a form of subordination that women could not have any voice in the village meetings which had a profound effect on them.

Even after the British administration was introduced, things did not change. The few new laws which were passed were all done by the male administrators. Chiefs who were newly installed by the Government were also all men. This was because the new administrators were themselves from a patriarchal society and so they applied those patriarchal values to the areas which they administered.

Thus we see that in the traditional setting and during the colonial period, the patriarchal values was strengthened in the process of migration. However in modern times also, the responsibility of Mizo and Zo women have not changed much. They

⁵⁵ Refer to Chapter IV, pp.150-152

⁵⁶ J.Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p.43

are still the ones who are expected to do all the household chores. However in case of well to do families, they could have a maid or a helper to carry out the chores. But in the absence of a helper, all the household chores are to be carried out by women.

The bride price which had existed continued to be practiced till today. However bride price is now seen as a mere formality to complete a marriage. It is quite interesting to note that the Government in its Gazette Notification had fixed the bride price for the Mizo at around Rs.420/- only.⁵⁷ Though the people might not have followed this Notification, it reflects the patriarchal views of the people holding the power. Comparing the bride price of the earlier period and the existing bride price it appears that the society does not consider the value of women to be high. However among the Zo, the bride price is still quite high. The average bride price ranges from Rs.5000/- to Rs. 20,000/-.⁵⁸ Even this amount is much lesser than compared to their price during the traditional period, but it is definitely higher than the present Mizo women's bride price. The higher bride price among the Zo could indicate that the society gave more importance to women when compared to the women of Mizo society.

In case of separation also, the customary laws which prevailed in the traditional period had not changed much under the administration of the British. It still continued to be used till today and Mizo women do not have any right to her children. If the children are still very young, they often stay with their mother but

⁵⁷ The Mizoram Gazette, Mizo Hnam Dan, Notification No.H.12018/119/03-LJD/62,the 4th April 2005

⁵⁸ Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem from Chekkhan, Myanmar. Interview done on April 30th 2005 in Lunglei, Mizoram.

when they are three years the father can claim the children.⁵⁹ However with mutual consent the children could stay with their mother. Among the Zo also, the introduction of a different system of government did not change the customary laws which prevailed in the traditional period and is still used in the present society. For the Zo, if a wife left her husband – *sumchhuah*, the *manpi* (main price) was not returned back. If the father took back the *manpi*, he still had to pay the exact amount of *manpi* to the wife if he wanted to take back his children.⁶⁰ However if he took back the *manpi* but did not pay to the wife's family the exact amount of *manpi* the children were to be with their mother. In case of a husband divorcing his wife – *mak*, he could retain the children only if he paid the full amount of bride price otherwise the children were to be with their mother.⁶¹ Thus we find that the patriarchal attitude towards women which prevailed earlier continued to be used in the present society.

After the entry of the British and till today, inheritance is still through the male line and women have no inheritance rights. However if a man did not have any sons, the daughters could inherit the property.⁶² A wife also could inherit her late husband's property as a guardian but she should remain with her children and take care of them. If she happened to get remarried or if she was seen to have an affair with other men, she could not claim any of the property.⁶³ Moreover if the couples were not living independently but were still living in the man's father's house, and if the husband died, she could not claim any of the property. So the laws of inheritance

⁵⁹ The Mizoram Gazette, Mizo Hnam Dan, Notification No.H.12018/119/03-LJD/62,the 4th April 2005.

⁶⁰ C.Laitanga, *op.cit.*, p.156

⁶¹ *ibid* p.157

⁶² The Mizoram Gazette, Mizo Hnam Dan, Notification No.H.12018/119/03-LJD/62,the 4th April 2005

⁶³ *ibid*.

did not change much even after the entry of the British. Education also did not change the views of the society and hence the customary laws which denied importance to women were still practiced. Women cannot claim the property as her rights. They also have to show the image of a good wife and woman in the eyes of the husband's relatives. As she could be charged falsely with immorality and not taking proper care of her children, she had to always please the men in order to act as a guardian or to inherit the property. Among the Zo at present, all the property is not only for the men but according to an agreement a woman could also inherit some parts of the property and in case of divorce properties are usually divided between the husband and wife.⁶⁴

After the entry of Christianity and being Christians, women's position in the Mizo and Zo society does not change in the religious realm. The patriarchal values and norms which marginalized women in the traditional religion continued to flourish in the present religion also. The church is still dominated by male patriarchal values and all the important decision making roles are in the hands of the men. Women therefore are excluded in the ordained ministry as pastors and so they are not in the leadership roles of the church. However the role which they had played in the background still existed and they work a lot in raising funds. Christianity being a patriarchal religion re-enforced patriarchy and as a result women's marginalisation in all spheres of life is sanctioned by the church.

Among the Zo there are many women employed in the church administrative offices and under the different departments of the church. There are also women pastors under the Baptist and some other churches except under the Presbyterian

⁶⁴ Interview with Renlopari (Laizo tribe from Myanmar) on 7th May 2005 in Lunglei.

Church.⁶⁵ However these few women pastors are not married.⁶⁶ This is because the church has not allowed women pastors to get married while it did not have any restrictions on ordained men getting married. Thus, though women could be ordained ministers yet the church has discriminated against women on the basis of their sex and there is a definite male bias in trying to control the sexuality of the women. Thus in the religious sphere also it could be seen that women in the Zo society are better placed than the Mizo women as they could be ordained ministers and take part in the sacred sacraments but their position is still subordinated by the male dominated patriarchal church.

In modern times also Mizo women still play an important role in the economy. As the majority of the people are still engaged in agriculture, women are still working in the fields. Women of the villages which are near to the towns and cities bring their products to the markets to sell them. In Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, most of the vegetable sellers, hawkers and shopkeepers are women.⁶⁷ Many women are also employed in Central and State Government institutions and other services. However the majority of women's employment is seen in the lower paid positions as Lower Division Clerks and so there are very few women officers. It is important to note that though there are many women who are involved in business but since it is a patriarchal society, most of the shops are registered in the name of the father who is the head of the family.⁶⁸ In the Zo society also, women play an important role in the economy and are also earning their own livelihood. There are

⁶⁵ Interview with Laltansanga on 15th December 2005 in Zotlang, Lunglei. He is originally from Myanmar but has settled in Lunglei after finishing his studies.

⁶⁶ Interview with Lalbiakhnem on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei. She is from Myanmar and is a trader.

⁶⁷ Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Women Today* (Aizawl, 1991) p.16

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

women holding salaried jobs but women officers are still very scarce. Most of the women who are employed are nurses and clerks.⁶⁹ There are many Zo women who are involved in trading sectors. They go to different parts of South East Asia buying goods in wholesale and selling these in Mizoram and other north eastern states. In carrying on this kind of business they have to face many risks as most of their commodities are foreign made and so they are in danger of being arrested. However they have to do this work as the country is not a democratic state and so they face a lot of hardships under the military dictatorship. In a conversation a Zo man Mr. Laltansanga from Myanmar said that women being self-sacrificing had to take risks to provide food and other necessities for the family for fear of being in poverty.⁷⁰ This idea of women being “self – sacrificing” is a very male idea and women are socialized into this idea by the patriarchal norms of the society. Can there be anything biological in being self – sacrificing? This is a scientifically preposterous idea, and so one can see how women are made to believe in qualities in themselves which are convenient for strengthening patriarchy. Hence women of the Zo society are forced into facing great hardship in procuring food for the family. In roaming around the country to sell their wares, they constantly face the risk of rape and other harassment from the men. Zo women are involved not only in trading but they are also moving into Mizoram, Delhi and even abroad to serve as housemaids.⁷¹

The continuity of patriarchal attitude can still be seen in the political field also. As in the traditional times, after independence also, women hardly come to the forefront in the different political parties. In Mizoram there are women’s wings in

⁶⁹ Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem, Chekkhan, Myanmar on 30th April 2005, Lunglei.

⁷⁰ Interview with Mr. Laltansanga (Myanmar) on 15th December 2005 in Lunglei.

⁷¹ *ibid*

the political parties and women are the leaders in this wing but no leaders are to be seen in the main parties. The only lady MLA which Mizoram had seen was Lalhlimpui in 1987. She was an MLA for just a term. In the last Assembly election there were three women candidates but none of them were elected.⁷² There are 24 women members in the Village Council in Aizawl District and they form only 3.61% of the total elected members of the Village Council and so women form the minority, they do not have any significant voice in the local decision making bodies.⁷³ In the Zo political field also, women do not take an active part in politics.⁷⁴ The absence of candidates in the various parties could also denote that the people do not wish women to contest the elections and hence women are not given the chance to be elected. They therefore are not seen in any of the leadership roles in the village council or in any of the social organisation except in women's organisation.⁷⁵ This reflects the male oriented values in the society. Another factor is because Myanmar being under the military rule and the Zo people being a minority they would not have much influence in the country. Moreover women did not dare venture into the political arena as they are easily labeled as being anti-government and therefore dare not enter the political field.⁷⁶ Thus Zo women are not seen in the political scenario.

From the comparative study of Zo and Mizo women that has been done in the preceding pages, it can be seen that Zo women had a better life than the Mizo women in the traditional society. The beliefs that grew when the Mizo migrated and

⁷² Lalthansangi, "Situational Analysis of Women in the State of Mizoram" A report submitted to the National Commission of Women, New Delhi, December 2004.

⁷³ Paper presented by Audrey Laldinpui, "Women's Representation in Decision-making bodies- A Survey of two villages in Mizoram" in NEIHA Conference, Goalpara, 1st – 3rd November, 2007.

⁷⁴ Interview with Ms. Lalbiaknem (Myanmar) on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

settled in the present land such as the belief of the Mizo men being shot by *Pawla* (if they do not have physical relationship with women) reflect the strengthening of patriarchal values. The various sayings and terms for women also reflect the societal attitude towards women. The greater marginalisation of women in the society and religious beliefs and practices also show the deepening of patriarchal attitudes. On the other hand, the Zo did not have these beliefs and so it can be inferred that the patriarchal attitude was not as strong as in the Mizo society. The gendered roles where men as warriors and hunters had honours bestowed upon them and where there was no area for women to be honoured despite their very active participation in social production also indicates that the division of labour was in favour of men and that patriarchal values and norms subordinated women. The constant warfare led to the establishment of *zawlbuk* in every Lusei villages. As mentioned earlier *zawlbuk* played an important role in the society and the villagers also felt secure as the men all slept together and could easily defend the villages in case of a raid. However *zawlbuk* was also the nerve centre of the village and it was from here that many decisions were taken including the decision of how a particular girl should be punished. So it was from *zawlbuk* that men controlled women especially the unmarried girls.⁷⁷ Thus *zawlbuk* was a place from where women were controlled and subordinated. This view was also shared by some people and their views were put forward when A.G.McCall called a public meeting on 1st January 1938 to discuss whether *zawlbuk* was to be abolished or continued. One of the elders named Telela said that *zawlbuk* was to be abolished as schools were introduced and hence children would not have time to collect firewood for *zawlbuk* and that villages need not be

⁷⁷ H.L.C.A. *op. cit.*, p.174

guarded anymore. He continued saying that *zawlbuk* was a place where women were discussed and as a result some atrocious actions were taken against women.⁷⁸ However the Zo people did not have *zawlbuk* and hence they were free from the mob rule of the men. But it should also be considered that since the Zo did not have *zawlbuk*, men as a group usually slept in a girl's house and so women also had to be on her best behaviour at all times.

Thus the various beliefs and practices which came about during the process of migration and the establishment of *zawlbuk* in the Mizo villages deepened the patriarchal values and norms. The patriarchal attitude led to the marginalisation of women in all spheres of life regardless of their important contribution to the society and history of the Mizo. The Zo society also during their migration strengthened patriarchy as seen in the discussions. However the patriarchal values appear to have been more deeply influenced the Mizo society which made the gender relations unfriendly towards women.

⁷⁸ Zatluanga, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1966) p.114

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

This work began with a critique of the traditional history writing which exists where women are marginalized and hidden while men are presented as playing the dominant role. This was because most of the earlier historians were male and they recorded and wrote what they thought to be important. Since they were all men and influenced by patriarchal thoughts, the works and achievements of men were regarded to be important and worthy of being written down. However these biased writings were later found to be an injustice by many women. They also realised that women were subordinated in all walks of life and so this was reflected in the writings of history. This study therefore adopted the Socialist Feminist Theory as discussed in Chapter I as this theory believes that the differences between women and men are not dictated nor are they pre-social and given but are socially constructed and are liable to change. It also advocated that gender relations are not constant and that the level of patriarchy could vary in different societies and in different periods of time. Therefore, by using Socialist Feminism as the analytical tool, women`s position and gender relations among the Mizo has been sought to be understood. This study has also been structured according to additive gender history whereby the existing secondary and primary sources are reinterpreted from the perspective of the women. Hence under the framework of Socialist Feminist theory and on the lines of additive gender history, this work has tried to study how gender relations had changed in Mizo society when they were in the process of migration from Myanmar (Burma) to present Mizoram and when they were exposed to different forms of changes like cultural, religious and political.

Mizo is a generic term to denote the people who were earlier called as Kuki, Lushai and Chin. As described earlier the different tribes under Mizo are believed to have migrated from China to Myanmar.¹ Most of the sources had to be based on oral traditions as the people did not have a written script. In Myanmar they had settled in Chindwin and later in Kale-Kabaw Valley. However after years of staying there they had to move to the hills. So, from the folk tales and other oral traditions which were mentioned it has been shown how patriarchy had existed and that most of the decisions were taken by the head of the family which was the eldest male. There were chores which were supposed to be done by men and women but it appeared that from the tales of *Chhura* that there was no clear cut division of labour. Men also did the household chores if needed which as discussed earlier was not done in the period after migration. Hence gender roles did not seem to have been very distinctly carved out which reflect that patriarchy was not very deeply entrenched in the society. When the people were still in Myanmar, they had a more or less similar way of life and customs. These customs were still practiced when they dispersed. However as the different tribes began to live on their own, it was inevitable that some changes would occur in the society. As discussed in Chapter III, when the people dispersed from Kale Kabaw Valley, they began to separate according to their clans and took different routes. A clan often moved together and went on migrating. The Thado, Paite etc were the earlier ones to migrate. The Lai moved to Hmunli and settled in the present Chin Hills. But some of them entered present Mizoram and settled in the southern part. The Lusei settled in Lentlang and moved towards the Tiau river and entered Mizoram and settled there. When the different tribes settled in the hills

¹ See Chapter II

gender roles were seen to have become clearly demarcated. Women had to work in the jhum fields and in the household. Pottery and weaving were included in the household chores. Men on the other hand were confined to building houses, clear the forest for jhum cultivation and hunt. In the later part of their stay in Myanmar, they began to indulge in warfare and so the men assumed the position of warriors. They were thus raiders and protectors of their villages which made women dependent on men. Men began to assert their superiority as protectors of the women, who gradually came to be presented as the weaker sex and the societal norms socialized women into these perceptions. Patriarchal ideas were now asserted more than before and those began to influence the beliefs of the Mizo and Zo societies so much so that they believed that only those who had performed the various feasts of merit and who had killed all the required animals would go to *pialral* (the highest abode of the place of the dead) as discussed earlier. Moreover honour was bestowed upon a person who could kill an enemy. Since women were not supposed to hunt and raid, women did not have the chance to get honour in the village and also did not have the chance to attain the merit to enter *pialral*. Moreover the society did not have any facilities to award honour to women. Hence, women did not have any chance to get recognition or honour from the people. The people rather believed that women could go to *pialral* only through their husbands. This belief was designed to make women more dependent on men. Thus these beliefs show that gender relations tended towards idealizing male dominance and female submissiveness.

The Mizo then migrated towards the west and settled in present Mizoram while the Zo stayed back in Myanmar and settled in present Chin Hills.² Those who migrated and settled in present Mizoram have been called Mizo and those who stayed back have been identified as Zo. As mentioned earlier, the Zo and Mizo society were also strictly patriarchal. Hence women did not have any voice in the society and in the family. They were under the dictats of their fathers and after getting married their husbands. There was also a clear division of labour as was found among the Mizo. Men concentrated on building houses, raids, hunting, felling and burning for the jhum fields. Women on the other hand, had to do all the other works of jhum labour, household chores, pottery and weaving. They also had to smoke continuously to supply their family members with nicotine water. Women's position in the society and their subordination in the family and society were seen in the customary laws that prevailed where women could not own any land or property nor could they inherit from their father or husband. So we find that what a woman owned was just her personal clothes and ornaments. A widow could look after the house if she continued to live and look after her children. Like the Mizo women, Zo women too were not seen to have a leading role in any of the religious functions except that the animals such as pigs and chickens which were killed for offerings were all reared by women. Both the Mizo and Zo women did not play any leadership roles in the village administration. All the councils of elders were men and this would mean that women would have no power in the village decision making. So raids, shifting of village and the time for communal sacrifices were all decided by men. However all Mizo women did not remain invisible as there were some women,

² See Chapter IV and V

as mentioned in the earlier chapter, who could rule over the village after their husbands died. Ropuiliani, one of the women chiefs proved herself to be a brave and fearless chief. Hence it could be seen that women had the capability to rule the people but they were not given the chance to prove it. The few women who were chiefs also could attain this position because of their relationship with a chief and due to some specific circumstances. However in the recorded history and oral tradition we find that there were no women chiefs among the Zo. Thus it could be said that Zo women did not inherit or look after the village even if their husbands happened to die. From this it can be inferred that women were not considered worthy enough to look after the affairs of the people. Thus both Mizo and Zo women were under the subordination of men both in the private and public domain. The control of women by men could also be seen in the society's attitude that women had to always please the men. Women could not do things and act as she liked. Thus women were in constant need of curbing their desires and had to act according to what would please the men. But the existing oral traditions show that there were women achievers in the society like composers, *zawlnei*, soothsayers whose identities has been submerged and hidden in the conventional recordings.

As the Mizo and Zo society migrated towards their new land, it can be seen that gender relations of the Mizo and Zo society had undergone some changes and that the changes were in favour of men ³. When the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram, the Sailo gradually asserted their supremacy among the Lusei. It was in this period after the Sailo became the ruling clan of the Lusei that we find many sayings which accorded women an inferior status. The sayings which were prevalent

³ See Chapter VI and VII

were “Women’s wisdom do not cross the village spring”, “Women and crab do not have religion”, “A dog, walnut and women, the more you beat them the better they be”, “A wife and an old fence can be easily replaced”, “A woman’s word is no word just as crab meat is not real meat”. After settling in the hills by themselves, the Zo also had some sayings to show their attitude towards women. Some of the sayings were “As a gong is to be beaten, so are women”, “Unthreatened women and uncut grass are both unbearable”, “A woman’s word and a female mithun’s horn cannot be used for anything”. However it appears that Mizo had more sayings which show women’s inferiority, than the Zo people. These sayings show that women were subordinated, presumed to be intellectually inferior to men and hence had to be excluded in the decision making processes. Thus by the time the people were settled in their new lands, we see that there was a strengthening of patriarchal ideas and greater marginalisation of women.

As the Sailo dominated over most parts of present Mizoram, the term for women in the Mizo language also changed to *hmeichhia* (*hmei* – mistress/concubine; *chhia* – bad) which was derogatory and which inferred that women were regarded as inferiors. The term also denoted that women were regarded as commodity. However the Zo refer to their women as *minu* which denotes a feminine gender and is not degrading. It was during this same period that beliefs like Pawla began to emerge. As mentioned earlier it was believed that Pawla would shoot any man who did not have sexual intercourse with women. This belief would also show that men were trying to control and subordinate women’s sexuality. So the various sayings, term for women and belief of Pawla reflect the societal attitude towards women. This belief that a man who did not have sexual intercourse with women would be shot was

absent in the Zo, Lai and Mara's concept of life after death which showed that this particular belief rose after the Mizo had separated from the other Zo tribes and had lived by themselves. The patriarchal ideas which had become more entrenched in the society was also seen in the decline of the female deity *khuanu*. The people began to take more interest in the *pathian* which is a male deity. Hence *Khuanu* began to be found merely in songs and other poetic expressions. Even in the written accounts of the Mizo *khuanu* is not given importance. So it can be said that the Mizo religious beliefs and practices after their migration were becoming more patriarchal..

It was in this type of patriarchal society that British government and Christian missionaries entered Mizoram and Chin Hills. Many people began to be converted to Christianity and education which was also introduced by the missionaries was acquired by the people. Women also received education though it was much slower than the men. Nevertheless education opened new avenues and many women were employed both under the government, private sector and the church. Education was more accessible for the women in Mizoram than the Zo in Myanmar because schools for girls were opened both in the north and south Mizoram. But in the Chin Hills, separate schools for girls were not opened and hence girls could not receive education as the boys did in the earlier stage as their parents were more partial to boys than girls to go to school. Thus both Mizo and Zo women due to being educated are seen to be employed in different sectors whereby they could earn their own income. But due to the turbulent political scene in Myanmar, Zo people could not have complete freedom and had to go to other countries as refugees and work as maids and in other jobs which were available. So this created many problems for the Zo especially women. It is seen that even though Zo women

face many difficulties, they are also responsible for earning and maintaining their family. However though Zo and Mizo women are earning and contributing to the family's income, they still cannot inherit the property except in rare cases. Lands are still owned by the men and so in case of divorce and death, the wife very often has to go back to her parent's house without taking any of the property except her personal belongings. So it can be seen that women's position in terms of inheritance and property has changed very little even after being educated and being Christians.

In political field also, women are still rarely seen. Politics is still left to men and few women who are involved in politics do not have leadership roles. They are also not given any important posts in the party as a whole. The leadership roles which they could get are only in the women's wing. Only one woman was made a minister but she had worked in the male dominated arena, so she had little voice. Among the Zo, women did not play any major part in the politics and so there are no women politicians. So the decision of the management of the state and society is always under the domain of men which is almost similar to the period prior to the advent of the British administration.

In religious field also, the part played by Christian women is almost similar to the roles they have in the traditional religion. They are still not given important posts so that they could not have a voice in the affairs of the church. In the traditional religion, they are the ones to rear the animals and chickens to be offered for sacrifices and in Christianity also, the important role they play are mostly as fund raisers and other supportive works which were done in the background. In the traditional religion there were women seers or prophetess who were consulted by the people and whose opinion were respected by the people. In the earlier stage of the

spread of Christianity, there were Bible Women who were appointed by the church but this post was soon abolished. There are of course women theologians but they are few in number and they do not enjoy the same rights as the male theologians. Even though qualification wise they are equal to the men theologians they are not allowed to be ordained as pastors, proving the point of gender historians that women have been discriminated against for biological reasons. Since women could not be ordained as ministers, these women theologians are posted in the general department in which they cannot preside over the important sacraments. However in the Chin Hills, under the Baptist church, women are ordained as ministers. But these women ministers are not allowed to get married. So even though they are ordained and seem to be in a better position than the Mizo women, yet, it can be seen that they still have to act according to the structure designed by men and they have no right to decide about their lives. They are not in a position to change the laws in the church. So it can be said that Christianity has brought some positive changes for women especially in the family atmosphere and in employment as explained in the earlier chapter but in the real sense it can also be said that Christianity has reinforced patriarchy.

From the discussion and the evidence provided in the earlier chapters it can be concluded that in the Mizo society class formation has not yet crystallised and the stratification of the society is still at a low level. In the traditional society there were the chiefs' wives and in the modern scenario there are the educated and employed women who are seen to have better positions than the other women. However these women are also subordinated by patriarchal values. Patriarchal norms are therefore seen to exist in the society and it affects women of all strata irrespective of being

educated or uneducated. Hence in this study socialist feminist theoretical framework was used to see gender relations as an “individual’s life experience is shaped by her sex and gender...class, race and nationality” and is liable to change through its conscious and cooperative productive capacity. The use of additive approach to gender history within the socialist feminist thought is thus relevant for this study as it provides a model within which gender relation in the society can be analysed. Thus sources which were available have been used and re-interpreted from the perspective of the woman. By using the above mentioned theoretical framework, a comparative study was made between the Mizo and Zo women through the process of migration and examining whether patriarchy had remained constant or did it vary in different periods of time and the final findings of this study are that in the pre-migration period there is no indication of the existence of a mother right and patriarchal ideas had found its roots among the people but these ideas were still at a weaker level. Gender roles were not clearly defined as yet. As the Mizo and Zo migrated to the hills of Burma, patriarchy came to be gradually intensified due to the wars and interclan rivalries and men assumed the gendered roles of warriors. Women began to be marginalized more than before and gender roles was clearly defined. As the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram, Sairo supremacy was ascertained and various sayings and terms for women which were degrading were seen to have become popularly used in the society during this period. The religious beliefs also began to be used to give legitimacy to the patriarchal values. *Zawlbuk* which was established in all the Lusei villages proved to be one of the center of the subordination of women. Women were thus pushed to the background and as a result all the gender relations were in favour of men and men alone were the decision makers in the religious beliefs and

practices, political, economy and in the society. Thus patriarchy was deeply entrenched in the society. The introduction of Christianity and education did not change the patriarchal norms and values which existed in the society but rather re-enforced patriarchy.

The one important conclusion that can be seen as emerging from this study is that relations of power and authority were the dominant strains of the gender relations in both the Zo and Mizo societies. Power and authority basically signify subordination by those who have power and submission by the powerless and in both Zo and Mizo society, power was a male prerogative and submission the fate of the women. However these relations were not always constant and in many respects patriarchal domination in Zo society was less overbearing. But the process of migration seems to have deepened and intensified patriarchy so that in the Mizo society patriarchal norms have come to be more domineering and suffocating for the majority of the women and Christianity and modern administration has not brought about any basic structural changes.

Extracts of Information Collected in the Tradition of Oral History

APPENDIX-I

Interview with L.Thawng on 21st February 2001 in Lunglei. He is from Falam, Myanmar and have come to Lunglei to visit some friends.

LRC: Can you tell me about the status and position of women of your society in the traditional and present situation and how the society expects them to behave?

L.T: Women worked very hard from dawn till they sleep. They did all the household chores and also worked in the field. While going to the fields, they even had to carry all the men's clothes and other things. While coming back from the field, women always carry some wood and vegetables or fruits from the fields. But men hardly carry anything and instead they go empty handed. It was also the responsibility of women to clothe their family and so all the process for making clothes were in their hands.

The society expected the best of everything from the women. Women had to keep a cheerful appearances at all times so that they would not be talked badly and they try to keep the men happy. Girls were not expected to roam around while boys could freely did anything which pleased them.

Things have not changed much in today's society. They still work a lot and if they happened to be employed then they hardly work in the fields but still the household chores are still in their hands. The men also still expects women to serve them.

LRC: Can you tell me about education especially women's education?

L.T: Schools were first started in the Chin Hills by the missionaries and the government also gave its support. In the early stage, only the boys were enrolled in the schools. This was because parents did not want to sent their daughters to schools as they thought it to be a waste of time. They had the idea that girls were to do all the household chores and also work in the fields. They thought that sending their daughters would not enable them to do the various works and that they would not get husbands. Moreover, sending their children meant spending money and they did not

want to spent their little savings for their daughters and so they sent only their sons to schools.

APPENDIX – II

Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem in Lunglei on 30th April 2005. She is from Chekkhan, Myanmar. She came to Lunglei for trading purposes.

LRC: Can you please tell me about women`s employment among your people?

LBN: In today`s society, many girls receive education and are being sent to schools. But in our area, there are no good colleges, so many girls are not being sent to colleges as their parents cannot afford it. Hence, women are mostly employed as nurses and clerks and there are hardly any women officers. There are also women pastors but the church does not allow them to get married so they are all single. But, men are allowed to get married. In politics also, women are not seen at all. This could be because our country is not a democratic state, and so we are afraid that if we take part in politics we would be viewed with suspicion and could be charged as being anti-government. Also, women are not encouraged to participate in politics and so we are reluctant to be involved in politics as we do not get the support of our men.

LRC: What about the income of these employed women? Is it at their disposal?

LBN: Even though many women receive salary, they do not spend it as they will. They usually submit their money to their husbands or father and money is controlled by the men. I also have income through my trading business but the disposal of it is not done by me but by my husband.

LRC: Does bride price still exist and what is the rate of the bride price?

LBN: Of course, bride price is very much still practiced and the rate is usually from 5000/- to 20,000/- in Indian rupee (for you to understand).

APPENDIX – III

Interview with Ms. Renlopari in Lunglei on 7th May 2005. She was from Taisun village, Chin Hills, Myanmar. She came to Lunglei for trading purposes some years back and have settled in Lunglei.

LRC: Narrate how boys and girls mix in the society in the traditional period and how the marriage process.

RP: In the traditional period, we did not have *zawlbuk* like the Lusei did. Boys slept in any girl's house which they fancied. Boys go to the girl's house to court them and they spent the time singing and chatting. Girls did not have to work while the boys courted them. They also work together in the fields, but on the way, girls had to carry the boy's working tools and also other things which they would need in the field while the boys went empty handed. Marriages were usually arranged by the parents and the boys parents always looked for a girl who could work hard and was healthy. They did not care whether the girl was pretty or not. There were no restriction on whom to marry except that boys were forbidden to marry their father's sister's daughter. The parents of the boys sent intermediaries and if there were no problems, the day of the marriage and the bride price was fixed. On the first night of the marriage, the bride and bridegroom did not sleep together but they slept with their own friends. It was only from the second night that they slept together. If the son was not the eldest, then the newly married man would built a house for himself, not a big house, but something like a hut and after establishing himself and if he could, he would give a series of feasts. Then only could he establish his house as a ceremonial entity.

LRC: Could women inherit and do they have any share in case of divorce?

RP: At present, women could inherit some parts of the property and in cases of divorce, property are usually divided.

APPENDIX – IV

Interview with Mr. Laltansanga in Lunglei on 15th December 2005. He was from Chin Hills Myanmar. He was educated there but have settled in Lunglei, teaching in a school.

LRC: Tell me some important duties of women in traditional society.

LTS: Women duties are to look after the welfare of the family, they did all the household chores, weave clothes and blankets for the family, collect firewood, fetch water and work in the fields. They also had to look after the domesticated animals, make pottery and brew all the liquors for the family's consumption and for festivals.

LRC: Are all the Zo converted to Christianity? Are there any women pastors in the church?

LTS: All the Zo in the Chin Hills are now converted to Christians. There are women pastors in the Baptist church but in the Presbyterian church there are no ordained women pastors. The women pastors in the Baptist church are all unmarried ladies.

LRC: Are women presently involved in procuring money for the family?

LTS: Majority of the Zo traders are women. They had to do all kinds of jobs or works in order to have some sort of income, so they are involved in trading business which is a very risky job as they constantly face the danger of being arrested and also rape by the soldiers. Many Zo women are also in Mizoram, other parts of India and also abroad serving as housemaids.

APPENDIX – V

Interview with Mr. Lahmunsanga in Lunglei on 19th December 2005. He is from Tahan, Myanmar and have come to Lunglei to trade and also to visit some relatives.

LRC: Tell me about women's involvement in the church.

LHS: Women are mainly seen as leaders in the women's organization. There are no women pastors in the Presbyterian church whereas there are some single lady pastors in the Baptist church. Women however play an important role as fund raisers and they are very good in attending church services also. But they are not given any leadership roles in the administration of the church.

APPENDIX – VI

Nguni who was born around 1928 and B.Lalawia who was born around 1932 from Bualpui (H) village were also interviewed on 27th August 2004. They were asked about the traditional society and they narrated about their works in the fields and also about the society during their early days and also from what they heard from their parents. They were both interviewed at the same time so the information which was collected from them would be summarized for both of them. Their narration is important for the present work because the process of cultivation had not changed much through the years and they themselves had worked in the fields and they also remembered clearly what was told to them by their parents and grandparents.

Nguni and B.Lalawia said that the village land belonged to their chief and each village would have its own area for cultivation. They were not allowed to encroach upon other village lands. When it was time for cultivation, the chiefs and his elders would decide the time to select the cultivable land. The chief would first select the area, followed by his brothers and elders and then the prominent or wealthy families and lastly the other population. After the lands were selected, the sites would be cleared. This was considered to be the work of the men but sometimes women also would help them. However sowing the seeds and weeding were the works of women. Weeding was a hard and back breaking work which effected the women so much so that many of them used to get sick. Harvesting was done by both men and women. They considered harvesting to be a time of joy for them. On the last day of the harvest, they went with their friends and celebrate it. Nguni mentioned that her father used to kill a pig so that she and her brothers and friends could enjoy the day. Collection of the paddy from the fields to the house was again a hard work in which both men and women took part but this work was done mostly by women as the men wanted to engage themselves in hunting.

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