

**ROLE OF PAITE ELITES
IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF
PAITE AND ZOMI IDENTITIES IN MANIPUR**

ABSTRACT

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ROLE OF PAITE ELITES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PAITE AND ZOMI IDENTITIES IN MANIPUR

Introduction

Northeast India has been witnessing various forms of movements and conflicts as a result of competing assertions of the ethnic identities in the region. The assertion of ethnic identities and ethnic movements in the northeast is not confined to the larger communities or nationalities; many of the smaller ethnic communities in the region are also asserting and articulating their rights, interests and identities under the guidance of the emerging indigenous ethnic elites. Comprehending the nature and role of indigenous ethnic elites in the construction of ethnic identities is essential to understand the nature and the dynamics of ethnic movements in the northeast.

Statement of the Problem

Apart from making efforts to unite their own communities, the upcoming elites among the Nagas and the Thadou-Kuki attempted to bring other smaller communities under their domination. Such attempts appear to have caused apprehensions and a sense of insecurity in the minds of smaller ethnic communities in the hills of Manipur. Although the weaker among them succumbed to the pressures, some communities who had reached a certain level of social, political, and economic awareness and development and witnessed the rise of modern educated elites, asserted their separate ethnic identities. The Paite is one such community in Manipur.

The Paite, a trans-border community of India and Burma, belongs to the Zo people of Tibeto-Burman family. In India, the Paite are recognized as a scheduled tribe (ST) community in Manipur and Mizoram. In the state of Manipur, they are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur (the local populace call it Lamka) district. Apart from the different colonial and post-colonial developments that have contributed to identity consciousness among Paite, the emerging Paite elites also seem to have contributed considerably to the process of construction of Paite and Zomi identities among the Paite community. Understanding the politics of construction of ethnic identities among smaller ethnic communities like Paite necessitate a comprehensive study of the socio-economic background of the modern Paite elites; their interests and outlook, and the roles that they have been playing in the identity discourse of the community.

Review of Literature

One comes across some exploratory historical, anthropological, linguistic and political studies on Paite and Zomi. The available works on Paite undertaken by H Kamkhenthang,¹ Nangkhanpau Hauzel,² Siamkhum Guite,³ T Liankhohau,⁴ T K Muana,⁵ Naorem Saratchandra Singh,⁶ Grace Don Nemching,⁷ etc., throw light on historical, anthropological and linguistic account of the community. On the Zomis, scholars like Thangkhingin Ngaihte,⁸ L S Gangte,⁹ Vumson,¹⁰ L Chinzakham Ngaihte,¹¹ Neihzial Tualchin,¹² Chinkholian Guite,¹³ Sing Khaw Khai,¹⁴ L Vanlalruat Guite,¹⁵ L Lam Khan Piang,¹⁶ Khup Za Go¹⁷ provide us information about the historical, anthropological, economic, cultural aspects of the Zo people, their political participation, political aspirations and political movements.

Considerable work has been done to understand the general history, politics, and ethnic dynamics of Manipur. Bimal J Dev and Dilip K Lahiri's *Manipur: Culture and Politics*, and Naorem Joykumar Singh's *Colonialism to Democracy: A History of Manipur 1819-1972*, give interesting accounts of political developments that took place in Manipur. In *Bleeding Manipur*,

¹ H Kamkhenthang, *The Paite: A Transborder Tribe of India and Burma*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

² Nangkhanpau Hauzel, 'History and Culture of the Paite Tribe', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1987.

³ Siamkhum Guite, 'A Study of the Changing Faces of Paite Community', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1989.

⁴ T Liankhohau, *Social, Cultural, Economic and Religious Life of a Transformed Community: A Study of Paite Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

⁵ T K Muana, 'Nominal Phrase in Paite and English: A Contrastive Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1998.

⁶ Naorem Saratchandra Singh, *A Grammar of Paite*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006.

⁷ Grace Don Nemching, *Marriage, Family and Kinship among the Paite Tribe of Manipur*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008.

⁸ Thangkhingin Ngaihte, 'History of the Zomi of Mizoram and Surrounding Areas: Aspects of Pre-Colonial Society', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1979.

⁹ L S Gangte, 'Zomi Polity in Transition: A Case Study in Manipur', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1979.

¹⁰ Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh*, published by the author, Aizawl, 1987.

¹¹ L Chinzakham Ngaihte, *Tribal Agrarian System of Manipur: A Study of Zomi*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998.

¹² Neihzial Tualchin, 'History and Culture of the Zomis', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1993.

¹³ Chinkholian Guite, 'Politico-economic Development of the Zomis of Manipur since Statehood', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1995.

¹⁴ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*, Lamka, Manipur, 1995.

¹⁵ Vanlalruat Guite, 'Traditional Dresses and Crafts of the Zomi in Manipur: A Historical Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1999.

¹⁶ L Lam Khan Piang, 'Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the Zo', Ph. D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2005.

¹⁷ Khup Za Go, *Zo Chronicles: A Documentary Study of History and Culture of the Kuki-Chin-Lushai Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2008.

Phanjoubam Tarapot gives an insider's story of the ethnic armed conflicts in Manipur. Rajat Kanti Das's work, *Manipur Tribal Scene* highlights how kinship, marriage, and others have shaped the structure of tribal society. B K Roy Burman's article 'Ethnicity and Stratification in Manipur' describes the ethnic processes, identity dilemmas and identity shifts among the tribal communities of Manipur. R K Ranjit Singh's article 'Ethnicity among the Small Tribal Groups of Manipur: An Anthropological Analysis' studies how group chauvinism affects the interaction between groups and acts as the vital force behind the erupting ethnic tensions.

Research on other northeastern states also gives considerable insights into the dynamics of ethnic movements and construction of identities in the region.¹⁸ The works of B Datta Ray,¹⁹ A K Baruah,²⁰ Manorama Sharma,²¹ L S Gassah,²² Susmita Sen Gupta,²³ etc., talk about the role of the emerging educated middle class elites in different ethnic communities and their contributions to construction of those ethnic identities. The work of Urmila Phadnis,²⁴ Ajit K Danda,²⁵ Susana B C Devalle,²⁶ Atul Kohli, Amrita Basu,²⁷ D L Sheth, and Gurpreet Mahajan,²⁸ to mention a few, provided critical appraisals of the identity problems of the minorities and the dynamics of ethnic communities in the context of pluri-cultural realities of Indian sub-continent.

There is also an immense material available on the conceptual and theoretical understanding of ethnicity. The scholars like Clifford Geertz, Pierre L van den Berghe, Yu V

¹⁸ Udayon Misra, *The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to the Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 2000; B Datta Ray (ed.), *Agenda for North-East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002; Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005; Apurba K Baruah and Rajesh Dev (eds.), *Ethnic Identities and Democracy: Electoral Politics in North East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2006; Bimal J Dev (ed.), *Ethnic Issues, Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006.

¹⁹ B Datta Ray (ed.), *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in Northeast India*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1983.

²⁰ A K Baruah, *Social Tension in Assam: Middle Class Politics*, Purbanchal Prakash, Guwahati, 1991; A K Baruah, 'Middle Class Hegemony and the National Question in Assam', in Milton S Sangma (ed.), *Essays on North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 243-277.

²¹ Manorama Sharma, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1990.

²² L S Gassah, 'Traditional and Emerging Leadership Pattern in Khasi-Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya', in Milton S Sangma (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.190-203.

²³ Susmita Sen Gupta, *Regionalism in Meghalaya*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2005.

²⁴ Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1980.

²⁵ Ajit K Danda, *Ethnicity in India*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

²⁶ Susana B C Devalle, *Discourse of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

²⁷ Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (eds.), *Community Conflicts and the State in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

²⁸ D L Sheth and Gurpreet Mahajan (eds.), *Minority Identities and the Nation-State*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

Bromley,²⁹ Paul R Brass³⁰ Fredrik Barth,³¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen,³² T K Oommen,³³ Benedict Anderson,³⁴ Eric Hobsbawm,³⁵ Anthony D Smith,³⁶ and Edna Bonacich,³⁷ have come out with diverse conceptualizations and theorizations of the nature and dynamics of ethnic communities and the politics of identity formation. The availability of diverse approaches or theories on ethnicity indicates that no single theory can explain all aspects of ethnicity.

From the review of literature, it becomes evident that several academic studies have been carried out at regional, national and global levels to understand the history of ethnic communities and nature of ethnic conflicts and identity politics in different communities and regions. On the Paite and the Zomi, one comes across some interesting descriptive, historical, anthropological, linguistic, and political studies. However, so far there has been no systematic work that examined and analyzed role played by the Paite elites in the process of formation of Paite identity and Zomi consciousness among the Paite community. Moreover, none of the studies on Paite-Zomi examined the politics of identity formation among the Paite community using the rich theoretical insights on ethnicity and identity available to us. In view of these limitations in the existing literature on the Paite community, there is a need to study the role played by the emerging elites in the construction of Paite and Zomi identities among the Paite community by using appropriate theoretical framework.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, Pierre L van den Berghe, and Yu V Bromley are primordialists. See, Clifford Geertz, 'Primordial Ties' in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 40-45; Pierre L van den Berghe, 'Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1978, pp. 401-11; Yu V Bromley, *Theoretical Ethnography*, General Editorial Board for Foreign Publication, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1984.

³⁰ Paul R Brass, an instrumentalist, articulated his stages of ethnic community formation in his book, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

³¹ Fredrik Barth focuses his attention on the making and maintenance of ethnic boundaries. See, Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1969, pp. 1-38.

³² Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Pluto Press, London, 1993.

³³ T K Oommen formulated 'ethnification' processes in his book, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity*, Polity Press, Jaipur, 2001.

³⁴ Benedict Anderson propounded his 'Imagined Communities' theory in his book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

³⁵ The 'Invention of Tradition' thesis is associated with Eric Hobsbawm. See, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 (first edited 1983).

³⁶ Anthony D Smith advocated ethno-symbolism approach. See, Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Blackwell Press, Oxford, 1986; Anthony D Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

³⁷ Edna Bonacich is a Marxist scholar. See, Edna Bonacich, 'Class Approaches to Ethnicity and Race', in Norman R Yetman (ed.), *Majority and Minority*, Allyn and Bacon Inc., London, 1985, pp. 62-78; Edna Bonacich, 'A Theory of Middleman Minority', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, 1973, pp. 583-594.

Objectives of the Study

- i) To understand the emergence and growth of modern Paite elites in Manipur;
- ii) To examine the social, economic, and ideological background of the Paite elites in Churachandpur district;
- iii) To study the role of Paite elites in the formation of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite in Manipur.

Collection of Data and Methodology

The research study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary sources include materials collected from central and state government records, census reports, NSS data, minutes of meeting proceedings, documents and literature of different Paite and Zomi organizations, memoranda and petitions, autobiographies and other writings of prominent Paite-Zomi elites that provide first hand information on the identity issues and politics of the community.

Secondary data are drawn from academic works available in the form of books, articles in relevant journals, magazines and newspapers and relevant theses and dissertations.

In addition to the above, in-depth interviews were undertaken with a cross section of the Paite elites with the purpose of getting firsthand information about their socio-economic background and for understanding their role in the construction of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite. For this purpose, initially a list of hundred active Paite elites in Churachandpur district, playing significant roles in politics, business, bureaucracy, church, students and youth wings, and also in the fields of literature, academics and journalism was prepared. For preparing the list of Paite elites, the scholar took the help of Paite newspapers such as *The Lamka Post*, *Manipur Express* of several years, referred to Paite history and literature and discussed with members of different Paite organizations.

The list so prepared includes the names of important surviving traditional chiefs, church leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, intelligentsia, and students and youth leaders, who have played important roles in political and social life of Paite community. The list is broadly classified into

five categories – 1) the politicians, 2) the intellectuals, 3) the bureaucrats and businessmen, 4) students and youth leaders, and 5) the traditional and church leaders.³⁸

Using stratified random sampling method, five members are chosen from each category at random through a lot and a sample of twenty-five persons was identified for the purpose of interview. We choose Churachandpur (local populace call it Lamka) as our area of survey as more than ninety percent of the Paite people in Manipur resided in the district. Taking into consideration the size of Paite population and the compact area they occupy, the sample size of twenty five Paite elites was considered as representative.

The structured schedules were administered to these members to secure data on their social, economic, and ideological background. Efforts are made to crosscheck the claims made by the informants through empirical observation of their movable and immovable properties and also by talking to others who have knowledge of the persons included in the sample.

In-depth interviews were also undertaken with the Paite elites so chosen to examine their perceptions about Paite and Zomi identities and to understand the roles played by them in their respective domains for advancement of the cause of Paite and Zomi interests.

Based on the data collected, the study sought to understand different inter-related issues such as the development of ethnic community, nature and dynamics of the ethnic elites, politics of boundary making, role of language and literature, and the relevance or irrelevance of the memories of the past in construction of identities. As we found that no single theory is adequate to explain all issues that we sought to understand, to interpret and analyze the data, the study relied on theoretical insights of different thinkers such as Paul R Brass, Benedict Anderson, Fredrik Barth, Anthony D Smith, and Eric Hobsbawm.

It is imperative to present the working definitions of / the meanings assigned to the key terms used in the research study such as ethnicity, ethnic community, ethnic elites, identity, and other related terms. Ethnicity has been perceived both from the subjective feelings of the community as well as the objective conditions that facilitate or obstruct the communities' perceptions of themselves. Ethnic community is a politicized cultural group already drawn into the vertex of modernity, but falls short of attaining the status of a nationality. Any group of people, which uses cultural symbols to create internal cohesion and to differentiate themselves

³⁸ We are aware that some individuals can be placed in more than one category. But for the purpose of survey, we took into considerations how the individual would like to identity themselves.

from others, is a subjectively self-conscious political community. An ethnic community is different from a tribe as they are already drawn into the process of modernization. Many of the communities that were labeled as tribes in India had become politically conscious of their status and their rights. Today in northeast India, we hardly find primitive tribes untouched by modernity. Although the communities still follow many traditional tribal practices, in economic and political sense they have already emerged as ethnic communities, conscious of their rights and their role in the Indian national polity and economy.

A single or a group of ethnic communities sharing the same culture, common myths and same political aspirations, and inhabiting contiguous geographic area forms a nationality. By the expression, 'smaller ethnic communities', we refer to numerically smaller and politically and economically weaker ethnic communities in the designated region.

In the study, ethnic identity refers to ethnic self-awareness on the part of people as belonging to a particular ethnic community. It includes principles of 'inclusiveness' and 'exclusiveness', carried out by distinction between 'us' and 'them.' The collective ethnic identity consciousness evolves out of the communities' desire to safeguard their social, cultural and political rights and satisfy certain basic and universal human needs such as recognition, security, autonomy, etc. In situations where different ethnic groups live together, one or more groups may attempt to secure their social, political and economic rights and interests for the advancement of the community. Such assertion of ethnic identity by one or more groups may lead to conflicts between the different ethnic groups or even with the state. The term ethnicity basically explains the complicated nature and processes determining the relations between the ethnic communities.

Ethnic elites refer to the individuals within the community who take the lead in educating, organizing, and mobilizing its members in pursuit of the interest of the ethnic community. As society and social values change, the nature of the elites also changes. For the present study, it will suffice to say that the term elite refer to ethnic community elites who emerge within the community and are organically linked to it. The ethnic elites comprise of a broad spectrum of influential people within the ethnic community, such as traditional chiefs, church leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, intelligentsia and students / youth leaders. The ethnic elites take the lead in constructing the political identity of a community and works towards building internal cohesion and solidarity by making use of certain ethnic markers.

The ethnic community tends to develop organizations through which collective feelings and collective identities are pursued. Ethnic organizations reinforce community solidarity either through the ethnic goals they pursue or through the homogeneity of the ethnic membership. As communities become more conscious of their rights and identity, the ethnic organizations come into existence to articulate their interests inside and outside the ethnic boundaries. Besides the efficient pursuit of collective interests, ethnic organizations also serve as one important markers of the group with its homogeneous membership and also serve the important function of making visible the broader unity of the community.³⁹ The ethnic elites make use of ethnic based organizations to generate political consciousness among the community members, and through them propagate and articulate the interests and values essential for the survival of the community.

Chapterization

The findings of the study are discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter I Introduction

Chapter II Emergence of Modern Paite Elites: Socio-Political Background

Chapter III Socio-economic Status and Political Orientation of Paite Elites in
Churachandpur District

Chapter IV Construction of Paite Identity

Chapter V Development of Zomi Identity Consciousness among the Paite

Chapter VI Conclusion

Summary of the Chapters

Chapter I

The chapter briefly describes the demography, colonial history, and ethnic dynamics of Manipur in general and the hill areas of Manipur in particular. The chapter clarifies the problem that the thesis seeks to study. It makes an in-depth study of the literature available on the subject and spells out the objectives of the study and explains the methodology used. The chapter also critically analyzed different theories or approaches of ethnicity and examines their applicability

³⁹ Benjamin B Ringer and Elinor R Lawless, 'The We-They Character of Race and Ethnicity', in Harry Goulbourne (ed.), *Race and Ethnicity*, Routledge, London, New York, Vol. 1, 2001, p. 62.

for analyzing role of ethnic elites in the construction of ethnic identities among the Paite community. In view of diverse conceptualizations, the chapter comes out with working definitions / understanding of the terms such as ethnic community, ethnic identity, elites, and other related terms as understood and used in the proposed study. At the end, it introduces the contents and issues of subsequent chapters.

Chapter II

The chapter begins with a brief description of the Paite. The chapter examines the political developments in the hills of Manipur, ever since the princely state of Manipur became subservient to the British colonial rule. Autonomy that the hills enjoyed during the period led to a new trajectory in the history of the tribal communities inhabiting the hills of Manipur. In the pre-colonial era, the Paite lived in villages and the village chief and his council of elders exercised considerable influence in social, political and cultural life of the people in the villages. However, after they came under the influence of modernization, the traditional political system, social values and the traditional power structure of the Paite that were intact for centuries began to transform gradually. The dawn of modernity led to the emergence and growth of new indigenous Paite elites and created dual leadership situations: the traditional Paite elites represented by the chiefs and his council of elders on the one side and the newly emerging Christianized modern Paite elites on the other side. Even though there was stiff resistance from the chiefs and elders to the new faith and modern ideas, the traditional forces could not stand against the newly emerging social forces in the long run. By the time India attained independence, a considerable number of modern elites emerged among the Paite.

Another development that advanced the cause of the Paite community was formation of different Paite organizations such as Siamsinpawlpi (1947), Paite National Council (1949), Young Paite Association (1953), Paite Literature Society (1954), and different Church denominations. Formation of different Paite organizations strengthened the up-coming Paite elites and facilitated the emergence of student and youth leaders.

Apart from the structural changes, the changing political situation in the hills of Manipur since India's independence has also influenced the political outlook and dynamics of the modern Paite elites. The political transformation of the state of Manipur from monarchy to constitutional monarchy on the eve of India's independence saw induction of the tribal people in the political

affairs of the state. The subsequent integration of Manipur state into the Indian Union and adoption of parliamentary democratic form of government created a new platform for the hill communities including the Paite. The post-colonial developments such as enactment of Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947; Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act 1947; Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act 1956; Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act 1960; Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act 1967; Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act 1971, also influenced the political orientation of modern Paite elites. The process of urbanization, expansion of communication network, modern facilities, and market economy further opened up new opportunities and avenues for employment and people began to get jobs in various fields of administration and trades. All these developments led to the growing influence of the indigenous modern elites - politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats and businessmen - in Paite public life.

Chapter III

Some studies on elites have shown that high levels of education, higher incomes and high standards of living, job security, wider exposure, etc. are important attributes of modern leaders / elites. Since there is no empirical work to prove whether these assumptions are true in case of the Paite elites also, a survey was undertaken in the district of Churachandpur to comprehend the social, economic and ideological position of modern Paite elites and understand their role in construction of Paite and Zomi identities in Manipur. The selection of samples and other aspects related to methodology were done as per the approved methodology. The schedule administered to the select Paite elites included queries concerning their socio-economic background and also their perceptions on community issues and their role in Paite politics.

The following are the observations drawn from the survey:

- i) It is observed that an overwhelming number of Paite elites are above forty years of age.
- ii) There is an unequal gender representation in the affairs of the community. Only one member of the elite out of the twenty-five surveyed elites is a woman. Further investigation shows that only in student (Siamsinpawlpi) and church organizations, women participation was noticed. Even in these organizations, women generally occupy lower rungs of hierarchy.

- iii) There are no illiterate elites among the respondents. All elites are educated and most of them have completed degree.
- iv) Even though elites are drawn from different occupational backgrounds, most of them are salaried employees and have stable economic means.
- v) Although some of their parents have agricultural background, none of the elites is found to be engaged in cultivation for their livelihood. This indicates total shift of elites from agriculture to modern activities and symbolizes the decline of traditional hold on the society.
- vi) It is observed that majority of the elites hail from joint family background. The average size of family ranges from six to 10.4.
- vii) Although the incidences of inter-community marriage are not many, the community elites are quite open and liberal when it comes to inter-community marriages.
- viii) There is more than one earning member in the families of the respondents. Together there are sixty earning members in the families of twenty-five surveyed elites. The average number of earners in Paite elite family ranges from two to three.
- ix) Even though the families depended from two or more different sources, salaries is concluded as the main source of earnings for majority of the families.
- x) The majority of the Paite elites families surveyed have a decent income of over sixteen thousand per month.
- xi) Out of the twenty-five surveyed elites, only one family did not have television, three families are without fridge, eight families did not possess washing machine, and one family did not have vehicle. Even though none of the elites is found to possess all these household items, it is found that they enjoy comfortable standard life and possess households amenities considered luxuries by the poorer sections.
- xii) It is observed that fourteen members of elites out of the twenty-five respondents are associated with three or more than three community organizations while six are associated with only one organization. Four others claimed that they work for two organizations. The data indicates high involvement of the elites in community affairs. The study shows that twelve members of elites are involved in organizing and planning of public meetings, while eleven members of elites are found to attend public meetings just to listen to what leaders say. Ten members of elites usually participate in public

meetings as special guests. The study also shows overlapping of roles performed by the elites. In contrast to the above, fourteen members of elites stay away from political demonstrations and processions.

- xiii) It is observed that political parties does not play important role in the political life of the elites. Record of accomplishment of parties and party manifestoes are not relevant to them.
- xiv) From the survey, it is learned that all respondents read newspapers regularly. The study established that news concerning community issues is the first preference of elites.

Chapter IV

The chapter analyses the role of Paite elites in the construction of Paite identity. It throws light on the contributions of the indigenous elites in the development of Paite script and language and examines the role they played in the movement for official recognition of the tribe and later in codification of Paite customary laws. Development of the script for Paite language played an important role in the advancement of Paite community. In the year 1903 a Welsh Calvinistic Foreign Missionary Rev. David E Jones and T Vialphung (1889-1936) of Kaihlam village, who was attending mission school in Aizawl prepared Paite Primer. Almost at the same time in 1904, George A Grierson published his linguistic survey of North-Eastern India which made reference to Paite language. In Tedim region in Chin state of Burma, Rev. J H Cope, a Christian missionary, who also was a linguist, prepared Chin Primers in Tedim (Paite) dialect in the year 1913. The arrival of H Nengzachin on the scene during the last part of the 1930s had set a new trend in the development of Paite language in Manipur.

As different persons were involved in developing the script for the Paite, one could see differences in spelling and writing. Notwithstanding such limitations in the script, the very development of a script language enhances the power of the language thereby, increasing the consciousness of the members as a political community. The development of script was accompanied by the formation of Paite organizations through which Paite leaders / elites articulated and propagated the identity and interests of the Paite community both within and outside the social boundary.

The first Scheduled Tribes list order issued by the President of India in 1951 categorized the tribes of Manipur as any Naga tribes, any Kuki tribes, and any Lushai tribes. Because of the

non-inclusion of Paite in the first Scheduled Tribes list, the nomination papers of the PNC supported candidate named T Thangkhai was rejected, when he refused to declare himself as Naga or Kuki or Lushai. Hurt by the incident, the PNC leaders demanded recognition of the Paite as a distinct scheduled tribe. The demand for political recognition was mobilized by PNC and its leaders. Paite leaders and PNC initiated peaceful and democratic movement. They presented a memorandum to the Government of India in 1955 wherein they stated that Paite have their own customs, language and literature, and identity different from their neighbors and demanded that all benefits and safeguards be guaranteed to the tribes under the Indian Constitution. Ultimately, in the year 1956 the Paite was recognized as distinct schedule tribe of India.

Since then, a number of steps and decisions were taken by Paite leaders to further strengthen the identity base of the community. These apart, the PNC and Paite leaders codified all customary laws and practices of the community. Demand was also made insisting on introduction of Paite vernacular subject in schools and colleges in Manipur. Initially, Paite vernacular paper was introduced in 1975 from class I to class V in Manipur. Since the academic year 2004-2005, it has been introduced as a subject at college level also.

Paite vernacular writers have also contributed considerably to the promotion of Paite language and literature in their writings. Their writings reflected the thoughts, ideas and aspirations of the Paite elites. The growth of print media and books including magazines and journals in the secular and non-secular fields enabled the Paite people to become conscious of their history, customs, traditions and culture.

Chapter V

This chapter discusses development of Zomi consciousness among the Paite. Even though Zomi identity is not exclusive to the Paite community, the Paite elites played an important role in propagating and asserting Zomi identity in Manipur. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the meaning of the term Zomi. The chapter then identifies the forces and factors that generated Zomi identity consciousness by focusing on the controversy over the common nomenclature among the Kuki-Chin tribes in Manipur, the question of indigenous name vis-à-vis imposed nomenclature, the politics of Zomi movements, the fall out of Kuki-Naga and thereafter Kuki-Zomi conflicts. The contributions of indigenous intelligentsia to Zomi identity

and Zomi consciousness as represented in vernacular songs and lyrics are also the main emphasis of the chapter.

The Zo people who reside in the trans-border area of India and Burma are known in Burma as Chin and are called Kuki or Lushai in India. The hyphenated term Chin-Kuki or Chin-Kuki-Lushai were used to refer to these culturally, linguistically, and ethnically related people. Even though the Zo people accepted these names for sometime, some started rejecting them even during the British times. In Manipur, a number of scholars and writers have considered the dominant attitude of the Thadou community as responsible for the rejection of Kuki by the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Lusei, Kom, Anals, and others. The Kuki tag is contested also on the ground that it was not indigenous name, but imposed upon them by outsiders.

A number of organizations clamoring for Zo solidarity have come up from time to time. The Paite people lent support to different political and militant organizations such as Khulmi National Union (KNU), Chin Liberation Army (CLA), Zomi National Congress (ZNC), Zomi Re-unification Organization (ZRO), etc., which promised to unite Zo communities of India and Burma. Paite elites from time to time reiterated its resolve or support to all efforts to unite all Zo people, as seen in the resolutions of PNC Annual General Assemblies and the PNC Chief Executive Council meetings. In the year 1997 Zomi Council (ZC), apex Zomi organization in Manipur was formed and PNC became one of the constituent members of ZC. Recognizing that one tribe (read Paite) alone cannot become a nation (in the context of the Zo people), the 48th Annual General Assembly of PNC 2003 rechristened PNC as Paite Tribe Council.

Even though Zomi identity and its political movement initially sought to include all Zo communities, the term became popular among the non-Thadou-Kuki speaking Zo communities in Manipur. The idea of Zomi as something opposed to Kuki received wider audience during the Kuki-Zomi conflict of 1997. The Kuki-Zomi conflict came to an end with the signing of Peace Accord on October 1, 1998 by President of Kuki Inpi and Chairman of Zomi Council wherein both the parties agreed that, the nomenclatures Kuki and Zomi shall be mutually respected by all Zomis and Kukis. The nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall not in any way be imposed upon any person or group against his / their will at any point of time.

Apart from the above, the scholarly works of Zomi intelligentsia both from the secular and theologian backgrounds have also facilitated in creating common ethnic consciousness among the Zomis. From the reading of the available indigenous works on Zomi, one can get the

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Zomi's point of view about themselves, their history, and their political goals. They repeatedly refuted the colonial names attributed to them; emphasized on their common ethnic origins and roots; narrated on how the Zo people had become an 'ethnified nation'. Apart from the writings in English, vernacular works on Zomi help in disseminating information to the non-English literate Zo people about their history and politics. Moreover, the Zomi activists effectively used folklore, songs, and lyrics to rouse the political consciousness of the members. Many of the Zomi nationalist songs espouse love for their land, express their desire for unification and inspire the Zomis to work together. The Zomi writers, lyricists and singers played a conscious role in using the cultural forms to promote and strengthen the Zo / Zomi consciousness.

Chapter VI

This chapter sums up the major findings of the study and also arrives at following conclusions.

The study showed that no single theory on ethnicity is adequate to explain that the research study sought to understand. Although the study was originally planned to look into the politics of construction of ethnic identities in the light of the elite competition theory of Paul R Brass, in course of study it is realized that in addition to Paul Brass, one has to make use of theoretical insights of other thinkers such as Benedict Anderson, Fredrik Barth, Anthony D Smith and Eric Hobsbawm for understanding and analyzing relevant issues like the nature and dynamics of the ethnic elites, development of ethnic community, politics of boundary making, role of language and literature, and relevance or irrelevance of the memories of the past in construction of identities.

Apart from Christianity and modern education, other factors like post-colonial political and economic setting, policies of the Government of India, regional ethnic conflicts and competition, etc., also contributed to the emergence of Paite elites and to the shaping up of their political and ideological orientation.

Although at one time, it appeared that the emerging modern Paite elites would completely do away with the traditional elite as in the Mizo hills, political developments in the hills in Manipur after Indian independence forced a compromise between traditional and modern elites. Far from acting as opposites, the traditional elites began to change, while modern elites stopped targeting the traditional elites. The political compulsions to protect collective interests of the



community forced them to come together to resist the real or imagined domination by more powerful ethnic communities in the state. As such one can see elements of both modernity and tradition in the Paite elites.

It is observed that the Paite elites, which are playing active roles in construction of Paite and Zomi identities, are mostly from middle class background. Unlike their fathers who depended on agriculture for their livelihood, most Paite elites today rely on salaried jobs and other modern professions. This indicates a marked shift in the economic and occupational base of the elites from agriculture to modern activities. It also signifies the decline of traditional hold on the society.

It is found that political manifesto or party ideologies have no significance for the Paite elites. Instead, they are more interested in community issues and actively involve themselves in the activities of the community. The membership of Paite elites in different community organizations shows the important role that community organizations play in the Paite society.

The crucial role of language and literature in the formation of Paite identity consciousness reiterated the views of Benedict Anderson and Paul Brass. The transformation of the spoken dialect of the Paite into a print language and the consequent growth of Paite literature strengthened their consciousness as a community. The Paite elites with the help of mass media and different literary and cultural organizations played an important role in the development of language and literature.

The Paite elites, through its relentless campaign, succeeded in securing recognition of its distinct identity as a community. Recognition of Paite as a separate schedule tribe community, codification of customary practices of Paite community, introduction of Paite language and literature in school and college syllabi etc., become possible only because of the efforts of the Paite elites.

Initially while asserting its separate identity, the Paite elites tried to project Paite as a distinct 'nation' and named their political organization as Paite National Council. However, learning from the experience, the Paite elites realized that in the context of the Zo people, one community alone cannot make a nation. Therefore, advocating the idea that the Paite should join other cognate Zo communities to build the 'Zo nation', the Paite leaders renamed Paite National Council (PNC) as Paite Tribe Council (PTC) and work together with other Zo communities to strengthening of Zo solidarity among different Kuki-Chin communities in Manipur. This

experience of the Paite is a deviation from Paul Brass's formulation regarding development of an ethnic community to the stage of a nationality.

The Zo people in general have not completely cut off themselves from traditions, as Gellner⁴⁰ would expect. This becomes evident from their beliefs, folklores, and contemporary literature. The Zomi experience reminds us of Anthony D Smith's argument that in their quest to discover a true identity, the communities look backwards to find their origins and genealogy.⁴¹ The assertion of Zomi identity based on the socio-cultural and pre-existing ethnic ties / past validates Smith's contention that ethnic beliefs and myths become a rallying point for marginalized and submerged communities aspiring to national status and territorial recognition.⁴² In the absence of written traditions, it is difficult to ascertain how old these traditions and beliefs really are. But the Zo people's interpretation of *Zo* as the fore-father of all Zo communities appears to validate Eric Hobsbawm thesis on 'invention of tradition', wherein he says that many of the traditions, which were considered as very ancient are in fact constructed or invented rather recently by community or nationalists leaders to meet various political, social and cultural needs and challenges of the community.

Alongside consolidating the Paite identity, the Paite elites also played an important role in the movements for Zomi identity with the aim to integrate or unify all the Zo communities / tribes of India and Burma. The Zomi leaders rejected outsiders imposed nomenclature and articulated their common ethnic origin and cultural similarities to bring the cognate Zo communities together. They propagated Zomi nationalism through community organizations, literature and folklores, political and militant outfits and mass media. Even though Zomi solidarity was initially articulated to include all the Zo communities, the political conflicts and competition in Manipur compelled Zomi as a political platform for the non-Thadou Kuki speaking Zo communities in Manipur. Boundaries created between Zomi and Kuki in spite of their shared cultural and ethnic features validates Fredrik Barth's view of transient nature of ethnic boundaries. The Zomi and Kuki experience shows the relevance of Barth's thesis that mere cultural and racial similarities are not enough to creation of social boundaries and to the subsequent consolidation of ethnic identities. Political interests, as perceived and articulated by

⁴⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell Publishers Limited, Oxford, 1983, p. 15.

⁴¹ Anthony D Smith, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

the community elites, play important role in the politics of boundary maintenance and identity construction.

As such, apart from throwing light on the contribution of the Paite-Zomi elites, the present study on the role of Paite elites in construction of Paite identity and Zomi consciousness among the Paite shows how complex socio-political issues and trajectories influence the role of elites in construction of ethnic identities among smaller ethnic communities.

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**ROLE OF PAITE ELITES
IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF
PAITE AND ZOMI IDENTITIES IN MANIPUR**

By

THIANLALMUAN NGAIHTE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE



Submitted in Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
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(L) S VUNGZAGIN NGAIHTE

MY FATHER


(01/03/1941 – 01/03/2006)

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

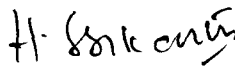
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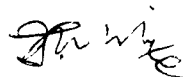
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PREFACE

Northeast India has been witnessing various forms of movements and conflicts as a result of competing assertions of the ethnic identities in the region. Despite the re-organization of states in the northeast India on ethnic lines, the region continues to witness identity assertions and ethnic movements of diverse forms. The assertion of ethnic identities and ethnic movements in the northeast is not confined to the larger communities or nationalities; many of the smaller ethnic communities in the region are also asserting and articulating their rights, interests and identities. In spite of the fact that ethnicity is a collective or group affair, there are always individuals or group of individuals that articulate, organize, educate, and lead the masses and movements. The crucial role played by the elites in the ethno-national movements and in the identity discourses of a community or nationality makes it necessary to comprehend the nature and role of indigenous ethnic elites. The present doctoral thesis entitled, 'Role of Paite Elites in the Construction of Paite and Zomi Identities in Manipur', is an attempt at understanding and analyzing the nature of Paite elites and the role they play in the identity politics of the community. The thesis has six chapters, each focusing on the different aspects of the study. The study uses information collected from both primary and secondary sources. The study relies on theoretical insights of different scholars of ethnicity for analyzing and explaining different but inter-related dimensions relevant to the study.

A number of people have helped me in completing this thesis. I sincerely acknowledge their support, cooperation, and valuable advice and express my deep appreciation to all of them.

At the outset, I express my gratitude to Dr. H Srikanth, my Ph. D research supervisor, who guided me at every stage of my research work. His critical but

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I also express my sincere gratitude to Professor B J Deb, Head of the department of Political Science and other teachers of the department for the help and valuable suggestions I have received from them. I am also thankful to the non-teaching staff of the department of Political Science for their assistance in all official matters relating to the research.

I am very much obliged to the Paite-Zomi leaders and elites for their kind cooperation during the course of my fieldwork. They took keen interest in my work and sincerely responded to the questionnaires and interviews administered to them, thereby providing much needed information and feedback necessary for the study. My special thanks also go to Pu H Chin Khenthang IAS (Retd.) and Dr. N Puzakhup for their help in translating Paite (Zokam) vernacular songs and lyrics to English.

I benefited from the discussions and interactions that I had with my friends and research fellows viz. Lalmalsawma Khiantge, Mhathung Yanthung, P Khongsai, Haans J Freddy, Th Haokip, Thangkhanlal Ngaihte, Suanlian Tombing, Lianthangsang Guite, N Donglalmang, Miss Liankhoman to mention a few. Some of them even allowed me to use their computers and other necessary things before I could buy my own.

I also express my deep sense of gratitude to Professor Niklesh Kumar, the then Head of the Department of Sociology, NEHU whose help I sought in the initial years of my research work. I extend my thanks to the Librarian and other staff members of NEHU and Manipur University Libraries for helping me in locating important books. Also to the


office staff of SSPP, PTC and other Paite organizations for giving me access to their files and documents. And to C J Thomas, Acting Director, ICSSR NERC, Shillong for providing platform to share my views and ideas with fellow researchers and other academicians from the northeast and other parts of India. Without such help, my research work would not have reached its final destination.

I would not be able to bear the expenses of my work if I had not received financial assistance from Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and University Grants Commission (UGC). The centrally administered doctoral fellowship awarded to me by ICSSR, New Delhi; Contingency Grant from ICSSR NERC; and the UGC's Rajiv Gandhi National Junior Research Fellowship have greatly made my work much easier to handle the financial expenditure. I declare my heartfelt thanks to ICSSR and UGC for enabling me to work on the thesis without bothering about financial matters.

I am also grateful to my mother (Thiankhongai Ngaihte), brother (S Kamkhanmung). A very special note of appreciation is also due to my wife (Rosemary Mannemkim) and my two daughters (Chinghuaisiam and Ngainunnem). My father S Vungzagin Ngaihte, who taught me to pursue knowledge and encouraged me to take up research work, is always a source of my strength. Even though he was really eager to see his son complete his research work, he left me on 2006.

Finally, I give glory to the Almighty God for the accomplishment that I have achieved, one significant milestone in my life.

Shillong
October 2010


Thianlalmuan Ngaihte

ABBREVIATIONS

CEC	Chief Executive Council
CLA	Chin Liberation Army
EBC	Evangelical Baptist Convention
KNA	Kuki National Assembly
KNU	Khulmi National Union
MDC	Member of District Council
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MLR&LR	Manipur Land Revenue and Land Right
MNA	Mizo National Army
MNF	Mizo National Front
MP	Member of Parliament
NEIGM	North East India General Mission
PLS	Paite Literature Society
PNC	Paite National Council
PTC	Paite Tribe Council
SSPP	<i>Siamsinpawlpi</i>
TKPM	Thadou Kuki Pioneer Mission
YPA	Young Paite Association
ZC	Zomi Council
ZCLS	<i>Zomi Christian Literature Society</i>
ZNC	Zomi National Congress
ZRA	Zomi Revolutionary Army
ZRO	Zomi Reunification Organization

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Manipur is bordered on the east and south by Myanmar. The small tip of southern Manipur adjoins Mizoram. It is bounded on west by Cachar district of Assam, in southeast by North Cachar Hills of Assam, on north by the state of Nagaland. It covers an area of 22,327 sq. kms with a population of over two millions.¹ The state comprises of nine districts viz. Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Bishnupur in the valley and Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Chandel and Churachandpur (the local populace call it Lamka) in the hills. Different ethnic communities of various sizes inhabit Manipur.² The major indigenous ethnic communities of the state are the Meiteis, the Nagas and the Zo communities (Kuki-Zomi). Besides the above-mentioned communities, the Bengalis, the Punjabis, the Biharis, etc. who came from other states of India also live in the state.

In Manipur, the Meitei are mainly concentrated in the valley districts viz. Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur which together account for only one-tenth of the total geographical area of the state. The Naga and Zo communities inhabit mainly the five-hill districts viz. Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Chandel and Churachandpur. The Naga communities such as Zeliangrong, Mao, Maring, Tangkhul, etc. are predominant in the three northwestern and northern hill districts of Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul. The Nagas are present in substantial numbers in the southeastern district of Chandel also. The Zo communities such as the Thadou-

¹ According to 2001 Census of India, total population of Manipur is twenty-three lakh eighty-eight thousands six hundred and forty-three.

² Population of the different indigenous tribal communities of Manipur according to 1991 Census of India are as follows: Thadou (1,03,667), Tangkhul (1,00, 088), Mao (71, 517), Paite (41, 108), Hmar (36, 092), Liangmai (25, 126), Kuki (23,072), Lusei (8, 598).

Kuki, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Zou, Lusei, etc. mostly inhabit Churachanpur and parts of Senapati and Chandel districts.

The British administrators and early ethnographers have broadly classified the hill tribes of Manipur into two broad categories - Naga and Kuki. For political and administrative reasons, this classification was used to designate the hill tribes of not only Manipur, but also of the then Lushai Hills (presently Mizoram) and the then Naga Hills (at present a part of Nagaland). These colonially constructed identities have survived even after the masters who had given the names left the region. While Kuki and Naga identities have emerged as overarching identities in the regions, these identities are at times contested from within. The communities that have rejected to identify with externally imposed nomenclature began asserting what they believed to be their 'true and genuine' collective generic name. In Manipur, rejecting outsiders names, the Paite, Vaiphei, Zou, Simte, Mate, Kom and others identified themselves as Zomi.³

Colonial Interventions and Boundary Demarcation

Manipur existed as an independent monarchical state for several centuries. In the past, the plain areas (present Imphal area and its surroundings) were under the control of the native Meitei kings. The hills areas were the abode of hill tribes. In the hills, the tribal chiefs exercised authority and control over the hill communities. The people in every hill village considered it their utmost duty to safeguard and promote the interests and above all the freedom of their community and village.⁴

³ One writer observed, "There is no 'Kuki' as a tribe in Manipur and it is the Thadou who are officially called Thadou-Kuki". See, T Thangholim Haokip, 'Kuki Polity with Special Reference to Village Administration', M. Phil Dissertation, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1991, p. 11.

⁴ Refer, Alexander Mackenzie, *The Northeast Frontier of India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2001 (first published 1884).

Prior to the British colonial intervention in the political affairs of the Manipur princely state, the political and territorial boundaries of state and villages were rather vague. Boundaries were never rigidly demarcated. The first recorded attempt at boundary demarcation between Manipur and Burma (Chin Hills-Manipur boundary) began with the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese War by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. With this treaty, the king of Ava (Burma) recognized the independence of Manipur. Subsequently, two more agreements were concluded with the Manipur state, one in 1833 and the other in 1834. The Treaty of 1833 demarcated the western boundary of Manipur. The Treaty of 1834 ceded Kubo Valley to Burma. The Treaty of 1834 also demarcated the southeast boundary of Manipur based on an imaginary line drawn northwards from the valley by Captain Pemberton.⁵ All this happened before the British colonial master directly controlled Manipur. Even though there were no definite political boundaries, the Pemberton's line had effect on the local indigenous people.⁶ In 1881, fearing Burmese aggression, the British Government set up a commission to survey the area and draw a definite boundary between Manipur and Burma. Commenting on the development, Mackenzie noted that some of the Chasad villages situated on the frontier have moved westwards and peaceably settled down as quiet subjects of Manipur, and thus removed the possibility of dispute as to whether they belong to Burmese or Manipur territory.⁷ Carey and Tuck wrote, "by the delimitation of the Manipur boundary Howchinkhup lost several villages which his forefathers had conquered and which up to that time had paid him a nominal tribute...The border line between the Chin Hills and Manipur has carved the

⁵ Refer, Alexander Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172 and 208-210; also see S Bertram Carey and H N Tuck, *The Chin Hills*, Vol. 1, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, 1983 (first published 1896), p. 18.

⁶ Alexander Mackenzie, *ibid*, pp. 173-174.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-210.

tribe into two...”⁸ In this colonial decision to demarcate boundaries, neither the native rulers of Burma or Manipur, nor the indigenous tribal communities, whose territory was being divided, had any say. With demarcation of political boundaries, the indigenous people began finding themselves in two sides of the boundary, as many of them are also living in the Burma’s side of the boundary line. With boundary demarcation within their reach, the people on both sides of the border experienced what T K Oommen called ‘ethnification’ process.⁹ New political boundaries, in course of time, shaped the thoughts and feelings of the people, and in the process impacted on the social and political life of the people.

After Manipur came under the direct control of the British in the year 1891, the British, for their own colonial interests appointed a Political Advisor to supervise and guide the administration of the valley region by the king and his men. Though the British started interfering in the valley from 1891 through their Political Agents, they allowed the hill tribes to retain their traditional system of village administration. They were left to be governed by their traditional chiefs based on their customs and traditions. In course of time, the British took the responsibility of the hill areas of Manipur inhabited by different tribes in their own hands. In the year 1894, administrative changes were effected in the state, and Manipur was divided into two administrative units – the valley and the hills. The hill areas were put under the British administration and the valley under the Maharaja.¹⁰ When Major Maxwell was Political Agent, the Chin Hills Regulations Act, 1896 was applied to the hills of Manipur state, and a hill house tax of Rs. 3/- per year per household was imposed.

⁸ S Bertram Carey and H N Tuck, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁹ By ‘ethnification’ T K Oommen mean the process of endangering the integrity of a nation as a result of division or separation of a collectivity of people and their ancestral land, and other processes. Refer T K Oommen, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity*, Polity Press, Jaipur, 2001, pp. 13-22.

¹⁰ Chinkholian Guite, ‘Politico-economic Development of the Zomis of Manipur since Statehood’, Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1995, p. 96.

During this period, there were no sub-divisions or outposts, no garrison of any sort in the hills. The President of the State Durbar relied on petty local officials known as *Lambus*, who acted as representatives of the central authority.

Later the hill areas were further divided into five divisions, each of which was looked after by a *Lam-Subedar*. The British officer i.e. the President of the State Durbar indirectly administered the hill areas through their petty officials - *Lam-Subedars*. Each *Lam-Subedar* was assisted by the *Lambus* who acted as middlemen between the tribal chiefs and the people. Even though, the *Lambus* were to act as interpreters, in actual practice, they also carried out investigation work within their area of operation. They periodically sent reports to the state government through the *Lam-Subedar*. Apart from this, the hills did not have any proper administrative set up. No provision was ever made in the budget for creating permanent administrative machinery in the hills. Neither the Maharaja of Manipur, nor the British administrators showed any genuine interest in the affairs of the hill tribes.¹¹ Except for constructing a few footpaths and seasonal roads, they did little to develop the hill region. They were mainly concerned with collecting house-taxes. Their main concern was to check the tribals' sporadic raids into the valley.¹² There was no personal interaction between the officers of the state government and the villagers. The plight of the hill tribes multiplied as the *Lambus* often pillaged the villagers. The tribal chiefs saw in the *Lambus*, who assumed more and more undefined powers in the day-to-day administration of the hill areas, a threat to their traditional authority.¹³

¹¹ J N Das, *A Study of the Land System of Manipur*, Law Research Institute Eastern Region, Gauhati High Court, Gauhati, 1985, p. 20.

¹² M Horam, 'Problems and Prospects of Development in the Hills of Manipur Revenue', in M Horam (ed.), *The Rising Manipur*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 74-93.

¹³ Lal Dena, 'British Policy towards Manipur, 1891-1919', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1973, p. 50.

Introduction of Christianity and Modern Education

The coming of the colonial rule opened the door for the Christian missionaries to set their feet in the princely state of Manipur. The first missionary to enter Manipur with full support from the British authorities was William Pettigrew from the Arthington Aborigine Mission Society. He started his work in Imphal on February 6, 1894. The local Meitei king viewed Pettigrew's work as an attempt to impose upon them what he called the 'government's religion'.¹⁴ It may be noted that the Royal government of Manipur had already declared Vaishnavite Hinduism as a principal religion by a royal edict in 1705.¹⁵ Maxwell, the first British Political Agent considered this move of the Meitei king alarming and expressed his fear that trouble might arise if Pettigrew was allowed to continue his missionary work. Maxwell, served ultimatum to Pettigrew to leave Imphal or discontinue his mission activities. He also advised Pettigrew to work among the hill tribes - in the northeastern part of Manipur among the Tangkhul tribes. Accordingly, Pettigrew moved to Ukhrul in the early part of 1894. There he started his mission work among the Tangkhul community. Pettigrew soon engaged himself in learning the local dialect, and carried out translation work in Tangkhul language. In due course, the missionary movement began to extend to the Kuki inhabited areas of Sadar Hill, north of Imphal. Among the Kuki, local institutionalized church was established by the local Christian converts.¹⁶ As the number of tribal Christians grew, some Christian tribals' began to hold petty clerical posts in the government offices. The Manipur Durbar allowed the missionary

¹⁴ For critical understanding on the relationship between Christian missions and British colonial policy, see Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1988.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁶ This development took place in part of present day Ukhrul and Senapati district.

activities among the tribes on the condition that they should not attempt to extend the missionary work in the valley. That gave Pettigrew the opportunity to work freely among the hill tribes of Manipur.¹⁷ Another missionary, U M Fox joined Pettigrew in 1911. The southern hills (present day Churachanpur district) of Manipur remained untouched by any missionary activities until 1910. It was on May 7, 1910 that a Christian missionary Watkin Robert reached among the Zo communities of Churachandpur. They reached Senvon, a village on the Manipur-Mizoram border from Aizawl. The missionaries set up mission schools to impart education to the people. The NEIG Mission Compound (old Churachand) became the centre of literate culture in southern Manipur. By the time India became independent considerable number of Paite elites had emerged among the Paite community.

Direct Involvement of British Officials in Hill Administration

During the time of J Shakespeare, the British administrators issued boundary documents to all village chiefs.¹⁸ Through the effective machinery of chieftainship and its council of elders, the British could effectively control and secure the support of the hill tribes. They also collected hill house tax of Rs 3/- per year from each household through the tribal chiefs. The chiefs in return got the support and patronage of the British administrators. The British did not encounter any serious challenge to their authority in the hills until the outbreak of Kuki Uprising in 1917 (in local parlance it is known as *Zogal*, which means 'Zo rebellion').¹⁹ The First World War broke out in the year 1914. The British Government made efforts to involve the indigenous tribal people in the war efforts. Many of the hill tribes were engaged in the

¹⁷ Annual Report of American Baptist Mission Conference, cited in Lal Dena, 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁸ Thangkhopao Ngaihte, *My Memoirs*, Imphal, 2001, pp. 1-2; L Chinzakham Ngaihte, *Tribal Agrarian System of Manipur: A Study of Zomi*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 116.

¹⁹ Hereafter referred to as *Zogal*.

Labor Corps. The corps so recruited were sent to the European continent to help / join the allied forces. This forced recruitment for the labor corps had sparked an anti-colonial protest, which came to be known as *Zogal* of 1917-1918. The British suppressed the rebellious *Zos* with force. However, it cost the government of India nearly twenty lakhs of rupees. Large number of tribal people and the forces engaged in the operation died during this period.²⁰

In the aftermath of *Zogal*, the British administrators gave more importance to the hill administration and administrative reforms were introduced in the hill areas. For efficient administration, the hill areas of Manipur were re-organized in 1919 into four sub-divisions, one with headquarters at Imphal and the other three in the hill areas. The Imphal headquarters was under direct administration of the President of the Manipur State Durbar (British ICS Officer of Assam cadre). The other three were placed under Sub-Divisional Officer viz. Southwest Area with headquarters at Churachanpur under B C Gasper as Sub-Divisional Officer, Northwest Area with headquarters at Tamenglong under William Shaw as Sub-Divisional Officer, and the Northeast Area with headquarters at Ukhrul under L L Peters as Sub-Divisional Officer. The President was given overall charge of administration of the entire hill areas of Manipur. He was assisted by some officers of the State on behalf of the Maharaja. Under this reform, neither the Maharaja, nor the Durbar had any real share in the administration of the Hills. What is important to be noted is that even after the active participation of the British officials in the hill administration, they allowed the hill tribes to continue with their respective traditional systems of administration of justice.

²⁰ For detail on *Zogal*, refer, S M A W Chishti, *The Kuki Uprising in Manipur: 1917-1920*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2004.

Statement of the Problem

The influence of colonial administration coupled with the introduction of new social values and system among the hill tribes had profound influence on the traditional life and practices of the people. Wherever the missionaries operated, they made efforts to educate the people by opening up mission schools. This opens up new vistas and opportunities for the hill tribes. These developments, especially evangelizing works, modern education, introduction of new social values and institutions among the hill tribes contributed to the birth of new group of people - modern elites from among the tribal communities who contributed considerably to social and political awakening of the hill communities. Consequently, under the leadership of the newly emerging elites, many of the indigenous tribes gradually transformed themselves to more organized and politically conscious communities.

In the hills of Manipur, the ethnic identity assertions have first started among the Nagas and Thadou-Kuki communities. Apart from making efforts to unite their own communities, the upcoming elites among the Nagas and the Thadous attempted to bring other smaller ethnic communities under their domination. Such attempts appear to have caused apprehensions and a sense of insecurity in the minds of smaller ethnic communities in the hills of Manipur. Lack of resources and numerical disadvantage experienced by smaller communities compelled certain smaller ethnic groups to merge or identify with larger ethnic communities or nationalities. In this category falls the so called old-Kuki group in Manipur such as the Anal, Aimol, Monsang, who have shifted their ethnic affiliation by accepting Naga as their identity. Although the weaker among them succumbed to the pressures, some communities

who had reached a certain level of social, political, and economic awareness and development and witnessed the rise of modern educated elites, asserted their separate ethnic identities. In this backdrop of the quest for identity, the research study seeks to examine the political identity discourse among the Paite community.

The Paite, a trans-border community of India and Burma, belongs to the Zo people²¹ of Tibeto-Burman family. The Paite primarily comprises of all the Paite speaking clans / tribes of people residing in the hill areas of Manipur and adjacent states, who accept their identity as Paite. In India, the Paite are recognized as a scheduled tribe (ST) community in Manipur and Mizoram. In the state of Manipur, they are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur district. In the state of Mizoram, the Paite are found in Champhai and Aizawl districts. The people claiming to be Paite are found in other northeastern states as well. The Paite are also found in Chin state of Myanmar.²² As in the case of many other hill communities in northeast India, different colonial and post-colonial developments such as the arrival of Christianity, growth of modern educational institutions, introduction of modern political and administrative institutions and processes, development of market economy, and rise of ethnic organizations appears to have contributed to identity consciousness among Paite. Apart from these objective factors, the Paite elites also seem to have contributed considerably to the process of construction of Paite and Zomi identities among the Paite community. Given the influence that the emerging elites exercises over the Paite community, examining the socio-economic background of the modern Paite elites, their interests and outlook, and the roles that they have been playing in

²¹ Brief discussion of the Zo / Zo people is made in Chapter V.

²² For more discussion on Paite, refer, T Jamkhotang and H Kamkhenthang, 'A Brief Introduction to the Language and Culture of the Paites (Tedim Chins)', in K B Singh (ed.), *An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur*, Manipur State Kala Akademi, Imphal, 1976, pp. 108-136.

the construction of Paite and Zomi identities among the Paite would help us in understanding the politics of construction of identities among the smaller ethnic communities in northeast India.

Review of Literature

Over the years, several academic studies have been made on ethnic situation in India. In their pioneering work, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia*, Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly provided a comparative appraisal of the dynamics of ethnic communities and politicization of ethnic groups in multi-ethnic countries of the Indian sub-continent. The writers attributed the emergence of ethnic political movement in the region to the legacy of Western colonization and decolonization. In their view, incorporation of several distinct ethnic groups into one political unit was the main reason for frequent social and political turmoil in the Indian sub-continent. During the colonial period, the common objective of achieving independence from the colonizer somehow prevented serious ethnic cleavages among different ethnic communities. However, once the colonial masters had gone, the dominant or majority cultural group wanted to impose their social, political and cultural norms to other subordinate groups in the name of nation building. The growing assertiveness of the majority ethnic communities for restoration and promotion of their political, economic and socio-cultural privileges has led to rise of ethnic feelings and movements on the part of the ethnic minorities. This has made ethnicity and ethnic identity as crucial variables in the formation, reformation and consolidation of state structure in South Asia.²³ Ajit K Danda in his book, *Ethnicity in India*, conceives of

²³ Refer, Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1980.

ethnicity as a strategy of interest alliances in the context of pluri-cultural realities of India.²⁴ In the book, *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, Susana B C Devalle looks at ethnicity as manifested in the context of Jharkhand experience as a process evolving through time rather than dwelling on description of fixed ethnic forms.²⁵ Atul Kohli, Amrita Basu,²⁶ D L Sheth, and Gurpreet Mahajan,²⁷ have also contributed to the understanding of identity problems and community conflicts that emerge within the framework of nation-state.

Coming to northeast India, Nirmal Nibedon in his book, *Northeast India: The Ethnic Explosion*, examines the ethnic and nativistic factors shaping the politics in the northeastern region and studies the challenges that ethnic assertions pose to Indian state. He observes that the feeling of being ethnically and racially different from the rest of the sub-continent is one of the major factors of ethnic explosion in the region. Research on other northeastern states also gives considerable insights into the dynamics of ethnic movements in the region.²⁸ The works of B Datta Ray,²⁹ A K Baruah,³⁰ Manorama Sharma,³¹ P S Datta,³² L S Gassah,³³ Susmita Sen Gupta,³⁴ etc.,

²⁴ Ajit K Danda, *Ethnicity in India*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

²⁵ Susana B C Devalle, *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

²⁶ Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (eds.), *Community Conflicts and the State in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998.

²⁷ D L Sheth and Gurpreet Mahajan (eds.), *Minority Identities and the Nation-State*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

²⁸ For instance, Udayon Misra, *The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to the Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 2000; B Datta Ray (ed.), *Agenda for North-East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002; Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005; Apurba K Baruah and Rajesh Dev (eds.), *Ethnic Identities and Democracy: Electoral Politics in North East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2006; Bimal J Dev (ed.), *Ethnic Issues, Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006.

²⁹ B Datta Ray (ed.), *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in Northeast India*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1983.

³⁰ A K Baruah, *Social Tension in Assam: Middle Class Politics*, Purbanchal Prakash, Guwahati, 1991; A K Baruah, 'Middle Class Hegemony and the National Question in Assam', in Milton S Sangma (ed.), *Essay on North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 243-277.

give idea of the role of the emerging educated middle class elites in different ethnic communities and their contribution to construction of those ethnic identities. In *Social Tensions in Assam: Middle Class Politics*, and also in his article, 'Middle Class Hegemony and the National Question in Assam', A K Baruah links contemporary problems and conflicts of Assam with the dominant role and politics practiced by the Assamese middle class. Manorama Sharma in her book, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, argued that the middle class elites in Assam maintain their hegemony over the Assamese society through the articulation of interests relevant to majority of the Assamese masses. P S Datta maintains that the emerging middle class in northeast provides leadership and definite direction to different ethnic groups by articulating their interests in tune with the changed political environment and legal framework of the political environment. L S Gassah in 'Traditional and Emerging Leadership Pattern in Khasi-Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya', highlights the role of the newly emerging elites in arousing political consciousness among their community in order to protect, preserve and promote the rights, customs and culture of their people. B Datta Ray's edited book, *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in Northeast India*, provides us useful information about the role of the educated elites in various states in the northeast. Susmita Sen Gupta, analyze the role of elites in directing the course of regional politics in Meghalaya, thereby, presenting a comprehensive appraisal of politics of regionalism in the state.

³¹ Manorama Sharma, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1990.

³² P S Datta, 'Introduction', in P S Datta (ed.), *Ethnic Movements in Poly-cultural Assam*, Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd. with Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1990, pp. 15-20.

³³ L S Gassah, 'Traditional and Emerging Leadership Pattern in Khasi-Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya', in Milton S Sangma (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.190-203.

³⁴ Susmita Sen Gupta, *Regionalism in Meghalaya*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2005.

Ethnic situation in Manipur has attracted the attention of a good number of writers and social scientists. Considerable work has been done to understand the general history, politics, and ethnic dynamics of Manipur. Bimal J Dev and Dilip K Lahiri's *Manipur: Culture and Politics*, and Naorem Joykumar Singh's *Colonialism to Democracy: A History of Manipur 1819-1972*, gives interesting account of political developments that took place in Manipur. In *Bleeding Manipur*, Phanjoubam Tarapot gives an insider's story of the ethnic armed conflicts in Manipur. Rajat Kanti Das's work, *Manipur Tribal Scene* highlights how kinship, marriage, and others have shaped the structure of tribal society. Lucy Zehol in *Ethnicity in Manipur: Experience, Issues and Perspectives*, highlights the issues of ethnic identity problems of the Nagas, the Kuki-Chin-Mizo people, and the Meitei. B K Roy Burman's article 'Ethnicity and Stratification in Manipur' describes the ethnic processes, identity dilemmas and identity shifts among the tribal communities of Manipur. R K Ranjit Singh's article 'Ethnicity among the Small Tribal Groups of Manipur: An Anthropological Analysis' studies how group chauvinism affects the interaction between groups and acts as the vital force behind the erupting ethnic tensions.

One comes across some exploratory historical, anthropological, linguistic and political studies on Paite and Zomi as well. The available works on Paite undertaken by H Kamkhenthang,³⁵ Nangkhanpau Hauzel,³⁶ Siamkhum Guite,³⁷ T Liankhohau,³⁸ T

³⁵ H Kamkhenthang, *The Paite: A Transborder Tribe of India and Burma*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

³⁶ Nangkhanpau Hauzel, 'History and Culture of the Paite Tribe', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1987.

³⁷ Siamkhum Guite, 'A Study of the Changing Faces of Paite Community', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1989.

³⁸ T Liankhohau, *Social, Cultural, Economic and Religious Life of a Transformed Community: A Study of Paite Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

K Muana,³⁹ Naorem Saratchandra Singh,⁴⁰ Grace Don Nemching, etc.,⁴¹ throw light on historical, anthropological and linguistic account of the community. The socio-cultural and political changes that have taken place as a result of introduction of Christianity among the Paite have been examined in these studies. Coming to the Zomi of Manipur, scholars like Thangkhingin Ngaihte,⁴² L S Gangte,⁴³ Vumson,⁴⁴ L Chinzakham Ngaihte,⁴⁵ Neihisial Tualchin,⁴⁶ Chinkholian Guite,⁴⁷ Sing Khaw Khai,⁴⁸ L Vanlalruat Guite,⁴⁹ L Lam Khan Piang,⁵⁰ Khup Za Go,⁵¹ and *Prism of the Zo People*⁵² provide us information about the historical, anthropological, economic, cultural aspects of the Zo people, their political participation, political aspirations and political movements.



Objectives of the Study

From the review of existing literature, it is evident that several academic studies have been carried out at regional, national and global levels to understand the

³⁹ T K Muana, 'Nominal Phrase in Paite and English: A Contrastive Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1998.

⁴⁰ Naorem Saratchandra Singh, *A Grammar of Paite*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006.

⁴¹ Grace Don Nemching, *Marriage, Family and Kinship among the Paite Tribe of Manipur*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2008.

⁴² Thangkhingin Ngaihte, 'History of the Zomi of Mizoram and Surrounding Areas: Aspects of Pre-Colonial Society', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1979.

⁴³ L S Gangte, 'Zomi Polity in Transition: A Case Study in Manipur', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1979.

⁴⁴ Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh*, published by the author, Aizawl, 1987.

⁴⁵ L Chinzakham Ngaihte, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Neihisial Tualchin, 'History and Culture of the Zomis', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1993.

⁴⁷ Chinkholian Guite, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*, Lamka, Manipur, 1995.

⁴⁹ Vanlalruat Guite, 'Traditional Dresses and Crafts of the Zomi in Manipur: A Historical Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1999.

⁵⁰ L Lam Khan Piang, 'Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the Zo', Ph. D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2005.

⁵¹ Khup Za Go, *Zo Chronicles: A Documentary Study of History and Culture of the Kuki-Chin-Lushai Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2008.

⁵² *Prism of the Zo People*, Publication Board 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration Committee of 2008, Lamka, 2008.

history of ethnic communities and nature of ethnic conflicts and identity politics in different communities and regions. On the Paite and the Zomi, one comes across a few interesting descriptive, historical, anthropological, linguistic, and political studies. However, so far there has been no systematic work that examined and analyzed the process of formation of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite community and the role played by the Paite elites in directing the Paite politics in Manipur. Moreover, none of the available studies on Paite-Zomi examined the politics of identity formation among the Paite community using the rich theoretical insights into the issues of ethnicity and identity available to us. In view of these limitations in the existing literature on the Paite community, there is a need to study the role played by the emerging elites in the construction of Paite and Zomi identities among the Paite community by using appropriate theoretical insights.

Therefore, in the light of relevant theories of ethnicity, the present study has set three objectives:

- i) To understand the emergence and growth of modern Paite elites in Manipur;
- ii) To examine the social, economic, and ideological background of the Paite elites in Churachandpur district;
- iii) To study the role of Paite elites in the formation of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite in Manipur.

Theories Explaining Roots of Ethnic Conflicts

The scholars working on ethnic related issues have come out with various theoretical approaches to explain ethnic dynamics and account for the factors

responsible for ethnic conflicts. Some of the major theories of ethnicity may be discussed in brief here, so that we could see which of the theories are relevant to understand the problem that we seek to explore.

Primordial Theories

Scholars like Clifford Geertz, Yu V Bromley, Pierre L van den Berghe are associated with primordial theories. The primordialists consider ethnicity as rooted in 'human nature' based on the 'given' cultural markers such as religion, language, customs, descent, etc. They claim that ethnic communities and nations are natural units of history and integral elements of human experience.⁵³ Life attachments that stem from common descent, place of birth, kinship, religion, language that are sacred and 'spiritual' in character are central to ethnic groups. These 'attachments' constitute the 'givens' 'rooted' in the non-rational fundamentals of human personality. Clifford Geertz, describe how even in industrial societies the ethnic identities based on primordial ties persist along side secular and civic ties. Geertz pointed out that in the new states of Asia and Africa, the drive for personal identity based on the continuing attachment of given 'primordial' features persists even in the face of modernization.⁵⁴ Pierre L van den Berghe went to the extent of arguing that primordial attachments that form the bases of ethnicity are biological and genetic in nature.⁵⁵ In a study of the American's '*Beyond the Melting Pot*' experience, Nathan Glazer and Daniel P Moynihan argued that in-spite of a high degree of mobility and intermarriage between

⁵³ Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nation*, Blackwell Press, Oxford, 1986, p.12.

⁵⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and New States- the Quest for Modernity and in Asia and Africa*, Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1963, p. 109.

⁵⁵ For details refer, Pierre L van den Berghe, 'Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1978, pp. 401-411; Pierre L van den Berghe, 'Ethnicity and the Sociobiology Debate', in John Rex and David Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 (first Published 1986), pp. 246-263.

groups, ethnic identities continue to persist in American society. Various immigrant groups like the Italians, Jews, Puerto Ricans, etc. even up to the third and fourth generation, by and large maintain their distinct name, identity, and for the most part, primary group ties.⁵⁶

The fact that new cultural groups can be created out of pre-existing communities does not belittle the significance of primordialist perspectives. While many primordialists admit that some aspects of culture are changeable and that the boundaries of ethnic groups may be shifted in the course of social and political movements, they stick to one point that ethnic groups are based on distinctive cultures or myths of origin that have core features that persist through time.⁵⁷ In the world today, no group can authentically prove their real origin. As such, it is a belief in common descent but not actual ancestor that primordialists considered important.

The primordialists scholars have been subject to criticism from different quarters. It is held that cultural and biological determinism are insufficient theories of the self, and that social and political identities are created through both primary and secondary processes of socialization. To see ethnic identity awareness as solely a natural growth of primordial ties is questionable, for it underestimates the powerful influence that politics exert on people's lives. In contemporary society, multiple identities are common as identity varies according to situation. The primordialists pay little attention to the political construction of ethnic identity and hence, fail to explain

⁵⁶ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P Moynihan, cited in Paul R Brass, *Elite Competition and Nation Formation*, in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 87.

⁵⁷ See especially Charles F Keynes, 'Towards a New Formulation of the Concept of Ethnic Group', *Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1973, pp. 202-213.

why and how particular ethnic identities emerge, change and dissolve, or why so many people choose to emigrate to and assimilate with other ethnic communities.⁵⁸

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation theory stresses the importance of relative deprivation in the distribution of available resources, social benefits, and opportunities between different ethnic groups. Individuals and groups feel that they have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to live a good and self-sufficient life which the group believed that this can be achieved (which the people think they are capable of) if the social means are made available to them.⁵⁹ According to this theory, the feeling of being marginalized and discriminated by dominant communities within the state and the resultant feeling of frustration and deprivation precipitate ethnic identity consciousness among the less dominant groups. In other words, ethnic feelings are aroused by sense of relative deprivation arising out of objective exploitation of groups by an alien group, or of one social class by another.

Scholars like Paul Brass and Pradeep Kumar point out the problems with this type of explanation. In fact all ethnic movement justify themselves in terms of existing deprivation or anticipated oppression by a rival group. This however, is not in itself an explanation for the emergence of ethnic consciousness. As pointed out by Paul Brass, it is not the case of relative deprivation or status inequalities between different, but of competition for resources valued equally by different ethnic groups

⁵⁸ Anthony D Smith, 'Cultural, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism', *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1996, p. 446.

⁵⁹ Chong-da Hah and Jeffrey Martin, cited in Paul R Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p. 42.

that precipitate ethnic consciousness.⁶⁰ There is no way of measuring or even describing adequately the levels of relative deprivation experienced by different ethnic groups in different societies to test the basic theory that those groups which experience the highest levels of relative deprivation may be expected to be more nationalistic.⁶¹ Secondly, the theory accepts the arguments and myths of nationalists as data to demonstrate relative deprivation rather than seeing them as myths themselves in need of explanation. Third, the deprivation theory cannot explain nationalism of the privileged ethnic groups such as that of Afrikaners in South Africa. Pradeep Kumar⁶² also pointed out the limits of relative deprivation theory by taking the case of emergence of regional feeling in India. According to Pradeep Kumar, in India, centrifugal pulls have been strongest in regions with relatively better economic development as in Punjab, Tamil Nadu, etc and they are sometimes weakest in the economically least developed regions like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.⁶³ He also noted that the economic factor may not be sufficient factor to generate regional pulls, and one has to go beyond the socio-economic syndrome to understand some of the other subjective and objective factors that may be necessary for a mass scale mobilization on regional issues. It requires more than the growing awareness of economic deprivation, and this, according to Kumar happened to be ‘identity’ politics. As he put it, “you can’t convince a group, even less mobilize it, on the issue of economic deprivation unless you first identify or create one”.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Paul Brass, 1991, *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Pradeep Kumar, *The Uttarakhand Movement: Construction of Regional Identity*, Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, New Delhi, 2000.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1 (introduction).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

Relative Deprivation theory talks about the social conditions that give rise to ethnic consciousness and identity, but they do not account for individuals and agencies that articulate the needs of the community. Moreover, the significance of cultural features does not find a significant place in their analysis.

Rational Choice Theory

One of the well-known instrumentalist approaches is Rational Choice theory. Rational Choice theory views individual behavior as the result of the interaction of structural constraints and the sovereign preferences of individual. The structure first determines the constraints under which individual acts. Within these constraints, individuals explore various possible courses of actions. The course of action ultimately chosen is selected rationally. The Rational Choice theory sees ethnic identity consciousness and group solidarity as the results of 'rational choices' of the individuals' within the group. These groups of people maximize their access to public goods / goals through strategy of preferences. Michael Hechter,⁶⁵ who is associated with this kind of analysis, constructs models of group solidarity on the basis of individual pursuit of public goods. He explains ethnic solidarity as response to economic, political and cultural marginalization. To the question as to why people join ethnic movements led by the elites, Hechter says that people do so as they expect to receive a net individual benefit in return. In other words, individuals associate themselves with ethnic organization as long as it delivers individual benefits to its members.

⁶⁵ For details, refer, Michael Hechter, 'Rational Choice Theory and the Study of Ethnic and Race Relations', in John Rex and David Mason (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 264-279.

According to Michael Banton,⁶⁶ the application of Rational Choice theory for understanding ethnic relations depends on four presuppositions. First, the action of every individual is determined by the net benefit that one gets in return. Secondly, actions at one moment in time have a corresponding influence on the available alternatives between which individuals will have to choose at subsequent moments. Thirdly, socialization makes people recognize their dependence on others, and thus make them realize the necessity to forge group ties. Fourthly, it is only through collective action that an individual can realize his or her aims / ends. The realization of benefits that socialization entails compel individual's to join hands with others for collective action.

The Rational Choice theory lays stresses on the critical role of ethnic organizations. The organizations serve as the major source of private rewards and punishments that motivate the individual to participate in collective action.⁶⁷ Rational Choice theorists view that a rational man will comply with group norms and thereby contribute to the maintenance of social order. Collective action and social order rest on the belief that free riding and crime do not pay. Rational actor will commit crime to attain his or her goals, unless deterred by the fear of punishment. The Rational Choice theory explains the persistence of ethnic solidarity in terms of individual calculations and advantages.

Rational Choice theory has been criticized for giving much emphasis to rational preferences or choices of the individuals, ignoring the pre-existing social

⁶⁶ Michael Banton, 'The Actors Model of Ethnic Relations', in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 98-104.

⁶⁷ Michael Hechter, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

groups.⁶⁸ It transforms all choices, including cultural ones, into economic choices. This kind of analysis views ethnic differences as located more in the mind than in the genes or cultural differences. Their accounts leave no place for collective values, memories and emotions, but only for goods of wealth, status and power.⁶⁹ Moreover, it ignores that ethnic assertions are influenced more by emotions rather than by reason. Consequently, it fails to explain why ethnic conflicts are so often intense and unpredictable, and why the masses so readily respond to the calls of ethnic leaders.⁷⁰

Class Based Approaches

Many scholars influenced by Marxism approached ethnicity from the perspective of classes and class interests. Marxian interpretations of ethnicity view ethnic phenomenon as by-product of the contradictions of class-divided societies. In general, Marxist scholars give less importance to the role of ethnic, racial and nationalist groups. Classical Marxism believed that attachments based on ethnicity, race, caste and tribe would diminish with the growth of modernization. In their place, classes would assume central position and with the intensification of class contradictions, ethnic consciousness gives way to class-consciousness. Since Marx's prediction did not come true, the scholars following Marxist line were compelled to explain the continued persistence of ethnicity in the modern world. Working within the broad Marxist paradigm, some of them came out with interesting theories on ethnicity.

⁶⁸ For a critical analysis on Rational Choice Theory, see Siniša Malešević, 'Rational Choice Theory and the Sociology of Ethnic Relations: A Critique', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, March 2002, pp. 193–212.

⁶⁹ Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 70.

⁷⁰ Anthony D Smith, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

The Split-Labor Market theory is one such approach, which analyze ethnicity from the perspective of class.⁷¹ This approach places labor competition at the centre of racist or nationalist movements. It conceives ethnicity as markers used by employers, especially the bourgeoisie class, in their attempt to exploit and divide the working class. According to this theory, society is divided into three classes: those who own the means of production i.e. the bourgeoisie class, the highly paid laborers and the lowly paid laborers. The bourgeoisie split the labor market in order to strengthen their position in the system. This enables the dominant bourgeoisie to earn huge profits from the more oppressed sections and pay more for the privileged among the working class. The bourgeoisie class stabilizes the system by securing the support of the more privileged working class by making use of ethnicity.

The Split-Labor Market theory considers ethnicity as created or nurtured by the bourgeoisie of the dominant ethnic group or nationality. It is used to mark off 'super-exploited' class as inferior, and to bind the more advantaged workers to the ruling class through the ideology of ethnic solidarity, thereby masking conflicting class interests within that group. In the name of ethnic solidarity, the capitalist class persuades the privileged workers to support the system and to align themselves against other workers.

Middleman Minority theory is another class based theory. According to this theory, society is divided into three classes' viz. the dominant rich capitalist class, the

⁷¹ Edna Bonacich, 'Class Approaches to Ethnicity and Race', in Norman R Yetman (ed.), *Majority and Minority*, Allyn and Bacon Inc., London, 1985, pp. 62-78; also see Edna Bonacich, 'A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 1977, pp. 547-559. Also, refer, Michael Banton, 'Theoretical Approaches', in Harry Goulbourne (ed.), *Race and Ethnicity: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, Vol. 1, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, pp. 100-120.

middleman minority and the poor workers. This theory seeks to explain the social, political and economic relations that exist between these three classes of people in a capitalist society. The theory assumes that certain groups of people in society occupy middle rung position in the social and economic work place. These are people mostly of immigrants' communities / backgrounds. While majority of the immigrants communities are poor, unskilled workers, there are also some who are highly skilled workers. Due to their sheer numbers, some of the ethnic groups are over-represented in some business. For example, during the 1900s most American Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were poor workers and small merchants. They were initially employed in the garments industry, building and retail trades. However, by 1905, a significant number of them emerged as big entrepreneurs and even had a toehold in law, medicines and dentistry.⁷² Writing on the American Jewish community, Jacob Lestchinsky stated that due to their entrepreneurial skill and capital, they become largely owners and employers as compared to other ethnic groups. As a result, a disproportionately large numbers of them were self-employed.⁷³ In spite of their success in commercial pursuits, they were frequently denied social recognition and political power that success ought to have brought.⁷⁴ They were even perceived by the host society to have no political commitment in the host society, but only financial interests. As a result, the workers and the capitalists of the host society come together against the sojourner community. The capitalists soon monopolize middlemen position and thus, the latter become subject of discrimination by the host society. Their status and position in the society is that they are not welcome by either the dominant group or subordinate groups. They are trapped in their 'middleman'

⁷² Joe R Feagin, and Clairece Booher Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1993 (first edition 1978), pp. 142-175.

⁷³ Jacob Lestchinsky cited in T K Oommem, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

⁷⁴ Joe R Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

minority status. Any attempt made by them to move into the economic niches controlled by the dominant group is perceived as an intrusion into the domain of the dominant group. As such, the dominant group's attitude towards them is that they pose a threat to their economic and political interests. The workers also harbor resentment and hostility towards middleman minorities and blame them for their lack of access to power and resources. This perspective by the lower classes helps the dominant group ignore its responsibility for the cycle of exclusion and maintenance of power and resources in the social, political and economic set up.⁷⁵ They serve as distribution links between the producers of goods and those who buy them. As such, they fall in the category of classes between the capitalists and the subordinate working classes.⁷⁶ The consequence of such marginalization and discrimination faced by the middleman minority was the growth of ethnic economy based on ethnic ties and the subsequent emergence of ethnic market.

We may also note here the views of Tom Nairain's⁷⁷ explanation of the emergence of ethnic nationalism. Nairain highlights the close link between the bourgeoisie and ethnic nationalism. According to him, the bourgeoisie are the instruments of nationalism. Using the notion of 'uneven development' to account for the emergence of ethnic nationalism, he argued that ethnic nationalism emerges only when the problem of underdevelopment is reflected in a given society, perceived in a certain way, and then acted upon. The response to such feelings of deprivation is manifested in the first place among the intelligentsia, who are the most conscious and awakened section of the middle classes. His view on the fight against the domination

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁶ Edna Bonacich, 'A Theory of Middleman Minority', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, 1973, pp. 583-594.

⁷⁷ Tom Nairain, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1981, (first edition 1977).

of foreign rich bourgeoisie is that the relatively poor middle class and intelligentsia of the less advanced countries mobilize the people along cultural lines and harping on their ethnic diversities. In this way, Nairain shows that the intelligentsia can construct the feeling of ethnic nationalism by making use of social means available to them. Whatever differences among the Marxian protagonists' interpretation of ethnic antagonisms, they share the view that ethnic movements are not essentially political, or primordial, but one that have material roots in the relations of production. The class-based explanations have validity in advanced capitalist societies where forms of alignments and conflicts are based on class interests. Unlike the developed countries where society has been divided into antagonistic classes, in the northeastern region of India, the communities are not yet divided along lines of antagonistic classes and class ideologies. Major forms of social and political alignments and conflicts in the region are still based on ethnic considerations.⁷⁸

Elite Competition Theory

Another important instrumentalist approach is Elite Competition theory of Paul R Brass.⁷⁹ According to Brass, ethnicity is a modern phenomenon, socially and politically constructed. To him emerging elites in modernizing societies undergoing dramatic social change facilitate the process of development of politically conscious ethnic communities out of existing ethnic groups. This process involves competition and conflict between the ethnic elites of the dominant group and those of the non-dominant group, and between the states and ethnic elites.

⁷⁸ Refer, A K Baruah, 'Communities and Democracy: A Northeast Indian Perspective', *North East India Studies, (NEIDS)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 2005, pp. 13-30; H Srikanth, 'Militancy and Identity Politics in Assam', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 47, November 18-24, 2000, pp. 4117-4124.

⁷⁹ Paul R Brass, 1991, *op. cit.*

Brass believes that ethnic identity (trans)formation takes place in the course of elite competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits and social status within and among different ethnic categories. This competition arises from the broader economic and political environment rather than from the cultural values of the ethnic communities in question. In their competition for gaining the support of the masses and for achieving political goals, the cultural forms, values and practices of the ethnic groups becomes as political resources. The competing community elites strengthen exclusive identities through manipulation of objective cultural markers and turn them into subjective feelings among the communities. In the movement to create greater internal solidarity and to press more effectively ethnic demands against perceived rival groups, ethnic elites increasingly stress a variety of ways in which the members of the group are similar to each other and collectively different from others.⁸⁰ However, Brass admits that mere elite competition is not sufficient condition for achieving communal mobilization. For successful mass mobilization, the ethnic elites have to go beyond competition. The success of elites is determined by factors like growth of literacy, standardization of local language, ability to communicate with group members effectively, strategies (goals) pursued by elite political organization, etc.⁸¹ If the ethnic elites succeed in mobilizing and transforming an ethnic group, emerging ethnic community or nationality does not necessarily become an entirely new entity, but one whose boundaries have been transformed.⁸²

Nowadays, there is a widespread recognition that elites are to some extent constrained by external circumstances such as economic factors or public opinion.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-66.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

⁸³ M G Burton and J Higley, cited in George Moyser and Margaret Wagstaffe (eds.), *Research Methods for Elite Studies*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1987, pp. 1-2.

Moreover, values, movements and ideas in the course of history are determined by a number of variables, almost all of which are beyond the control of individual leaders. Ethnicity is a group or community affair, and not a personal choice. Paul Brass' Elite Competition theory has been criticized for viewing ethnicity as a property of individuals rather than of the collectivities.⁸⁴ While the instrumentalist theories explain how group identity can be manipulated, they fail to explain why the 'masses' should so readily respond to the call of ethnic origin and culture.⁸⁵

Theories Relevant to Understanding of Construction of Ethnic Identities

Before one looks at empirical facts, one may start the work with an understanding of theoretical contributions made on issues concerning ethnic communities. Considerable academic work has been carried out to understand, explain and analyze the factors and forces that determine the construction of ethnic identities. Some of the theoretical contributions directly relevant to the present study may be discussed here.

In his edited book, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Fredrik Barth approached ethnicity from transactionalist perspective.⁸⁶ Barth conceptualized ethnic groups as units of self-ascription and identification based on subjective factors, chosen by the members from their past as well as present conditions. Instead of focusing his analysis on the internal constitution and history of ethnic group, Barth emphasizes on the processes of making and

⁸⁴ Errol A Henderson, 'Culture or Contiguity: Ethnic Conflict, the Similarity of States and the on Set of War, 1820-1989', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 5, October 1997, p. 649; Anthony D Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 30.

⁸⁵ Anthony D Smith, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁸⁶ Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1969.

maintenance of ethnic boundaries. By deviating from the dominant sociological and anthropological perception on the central role of cultural stuff in the definition of ethnic groups, Barth said that ethnic boundaries define the group.⁸⁷ In a multi-ethnic or national situation, in spite of the continuous inter-ethnic contact, interdependence, and flow of personnel across the groups, boundaries persist. The primary agent to the persistence and durability of ethnic boundaries is because of the structural differences and political perceptions of the group, not the cultural stuff of the community.⁸⁸ Selective cultural features, not all cultural differences or similarities, go into making and maintenance of the socio-cultural boundaries of the group.

The Soviet ethnographer Yu V Bromley's work, *Theoretical Ethnography* defines 'ethnos'⁸⁹ as a historically formed community of people who have common, relatively stable features of culture, and distinctive psychological traits, and the awareness of their unity and distinction from other similar communities.⁹⁰ To Bromley, the expression of 'ethnos' is so strong that it persists through generations and through a variety of social forms. He also acknowledges the importance of self-consciousness including awareness of opposition for the functioning of an ethnos. Thus, to Bromley, an ethnos combines both objective and subjective elements. Like Barth, he also stresses the importance of boundaries for the existence of an ethnos. "There can be no ethnos without boundaries separating it from other similar communities".⁹¹ The members of ethnic communities are aware of their distinctive features as well as their ethnic affiliation. In other words, it is in ethnic interactions

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁸⁹ The closest word for the word 'ethnos' is people denoting communities of people having their own self-identification. For detail, see Yu V Bromley, *Theoretical Ethnography*, General Editorial Board for Foreign Publication, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1984.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

that one's ethnic identity gets consolidated. Bromley approach is often classified as a primordialist perspective. But it needs to be made clear that Bromley does take the cognizance of the effects of the prevailing economic and political conditions on the character and nature of the ethnos. Shanin, commenting on the significance of Bromley's work, says that it has been able to explain the persistence of ethnic or cultural distinctiveness in the Soviet Union, which is supposed to have withered away in the face of rational socialist planning.⁹²

Thomas Hylland Eriksen has highlighted the relational and situational nature of ethnicity in his work, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*.⁹³ According to T H Eriksen, ethnicity presupposes minimum contact between different cultural groups. Ethnicity is socially constructed in situations of cultural encounters and through people's way of coping with the demands and challenges of life.⁹⁴ Ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group. Not cultural differences that are presumed to be 'actually there', but features which are viewed as socially relevant, that are more important for understanding of ethnic relations. Thus to Eriksen, aspects of relationship between ethnic groups is based on a distinction between 'they' and 'we.' He sees ethnic categorizations as fluid, negotiable and manipulable.⁹⁵

Ernest Gellner, in his theory of nationalism, highlights the temporal aspects of social transformation in nineteenth century Europe. He posits three stages of human history viz. hunter-gatherer, the agro-literate and the industrial – in which the

⁹² Cited in D V Kumar, *Modernization and Ethnicity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p. 65.

⁹³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Pluto Press, London, 1993.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 19.

industrial stage with its high cultural development is feasible for the rise of nationalism. Thus, to Gellner, modern nations are the result of the transition of societies from agrarian to industrial system, which gives rise to increase in literacy and mobility. Nations as understood in the contemporary world, argues Ernest Gellner,⁹⁶ do not have deep roots, but are modern in origin. Gellner calls ethnic background of nations as irrelevant. They are like navels, which do not have much significance to the understanding of origins of nations. For him, nationalism invents nations even where they did not exist.

In contrast,⁹⁷ Ethno-symbolism approach, advocated by scholars John Armstrong,⁹⁸ Anthony D Smith, and John Hutchinson, holds the view that historical and / or sociological explanations are necessary for understanding the continuing emotional attachment of people to their primordial ethnic ties / past. Ethno-symbolism approach emerges from the theoretical critique of modernist approaches, as well as from a different reading of the historical records. As Anthony D Smith⁹⁹ put it, ethno-symbolism emerged in response to systemic failure to accord any weight to the pre-existing cultures and ethnic ties of the nations that emerged in the modern epoch, thereby precluding any understanding of the popular roots and widespread appeal of nationalism. This failure stems from serious inadequacies in the social constructionism and instrumentalism that underpin their modernism, in providing convincing accounts of cultural and political phenomena like nations and nationalism. Smith further pointed out three limitations of modernism: i) a failure to distinguish

⁹⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell Publishers Limited, Oxford, 1983, p. 15.

⁹⁷ For comparative reading on Gellner and Smith, refer, Huseyin ISIKSAL, 'Two Perspectives on the Relationship of Ethnicity to Nationality: Comparing Gellner and Smith', in *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol.1, No.1, Spring 2002, pp. 1-15.

⁹⁸ John Armstrong, 'Nation before Nationalism', in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), 1994, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-147.

⁹⁹ Anthony D Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 9.

genuine constructs from long-term processes and structures in which successive generations have been socialized; ii) a concentration on elite actions at the expense of popular beliefs and actions; and iii) a neglect of the powerful effective dimensions of nations and nationalism. While ethnic communities are composed of individuals, there is much more to these collective identities in terms of their shared values and norms, memories and symbols.¹⁰⁰ Ethno-symbolists sees power of ethnicity / nationalism in the modern world in the rediscovery and reinterpretation of popular living past such as myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages by modern nationalist intelligentsia. These cultural and historical elements form the bases for competing claims to territory, patrimony, and resources. They provide motives for conflicts as well as solidarity. They are not simply pretexts by which the atavistic emotions of the masses are manipulated, nor are they simply invented traditions as claimed by Eric Hobsbawm to channel and control the energies of the newly mobilized and enfranchised masses. History and culture form integral parts of the fabric of popular visions, and of the social structures and processes in which the designated populations are embedded and through which their elite must forge their strategies.¹⁰¹ In short, ethno-symbolist scholars seek to overcome the limitations of instrumentalist versions, while acknowledging the modernist insights of nationalism.

Critiquing Smith's definition of 'ethnie,' T K Oommen writes that it equally fits the definition of nation.¹⁰² In *Citizenship, Nationality, and Ethnicity*, T K Oommen views ethnicity as an ongoing process, which emerges as a result of conquest, colonization, and immigration and the consequent disengagement between

¹⁰⁰ Anthony D Smith, 2001, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ Anthony D Smith, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰² T K Oommen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

culture and territory.¹⁰³ He views ethnies as aliens in their own homeland. Moreover, most of them are deprived collectivities both in symbolic and material terms. He also conceives of ethnicity as interactional, rather than attributional one. As identity seekers, human search for identities will continue even in the face of modernization. Disappearance of old identities would see emergence of new ones to fulfill the social, cultural, and political needs of the people concerned. Oommen also believes that an ethnie can transform itself into a nation and vice versa. As he says, language is common to both nation and ethnie. When an ethnie identifies itself with a common homeland, which they can claim as their own, it becomes a nation. Thus, to Oommen, nation is a territorial entity to which the people have emotional attachment. It is the fusion of territory and language. An emotional attachment to a common homeland is the critical minimum for the existence of a nation. When nation dissociate itself with its homeland, they become an ethnie.¹⁰⁴

Oommen has identified six processes of 'ethnification', a process through which the link between territory and culture is attenuated and the possibility of a nation sustaining its integrity is put into jeopardy. First, a nation may continue to be in its ancestral or adopted homeland and yet, it may be ethnified by the colonizing or native dominant collectivity. According to Oommen, this process can take place under three circumstances: (a) Transforming the original inhabitants of a territory into a minority and marginalized collectivity. Oommen cites the case of natives of the First World. In the context of India, he cites the case of Tripura where the indigenous people were compelled to be ethnic communities in their homeland. (b) Wrong categorization of certain collectivity especially by analysts so as to imply that they

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-22.

have no moral rights over its ancestral or adopted homeland. Oommen includes the Muslims of Bosnia, the Hindus of the Kashmir valley and the Jews in Europe as 'ethnified' collectivities that have been created by wrong labeling. (c) Ethnification process, which arises because of division of their ancestral homeland into two or more state territories, thereby endangering their integrity as nations, eg. Nagas, Mizos, Kurds. Secondly, ethnification processes can also occur when an immigrant collectivity is denied complete economic and political participation in their adopted new homeland. Oommen takes the case of the Figians of Indian origins and the Jews under the Nazi regime.¹⁰⁵ Thirdly, ethnification process takes place due to the continued identification of immigrant people with their ancestral homeland even after several years or decades. Fourthly, ethnification occurs when a state attempts to 'integrate' and homogenize different nations in its territory into one people. Fifth, even though people who migrated to alien lands are eligible to basic human and citizenship rights, they are not allowed to enjoy them. They are ethnified in that they are treated as strangers and outsiders. Finally, ethnification also occurs when immigrants do not want to identify with the identity of the host society even when they are accepted as co-nationals by the host society. These people might even wish to return to their homeland. In all the above processes, the relationship between territory and culture are relatively weak.¹⁰⁶

In *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Paul R Brass¹⁰⁷ defines an ethnic group as group of people dissimilar from other group in terms of objective cultural criteria such as language or dialect, distinctive dress or diet or customs, religion or race and containing within its membership elements for a

¹⁰⁵ Frederick Hertz, cited in *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ T K Oommen, *ibid.*, pp. 13-22.

¹⁰⁷ Paul R Brass, 1991, *op. cit.*

complete division of labor and for reproduction.¹⁰⁸ The subjective, symbolic or emblematic use of objective cultural markers creates internal cohesion and differentiates one ethnic group from other ethnic groups. Paul R Brass not only points out the role of objective cultural criteria in the making of ethnic feelings, but also highlights the role of other groups. He recognizes the permeability of the defining objective markers. Like Oommen, Brass also believes that an ethnic group can transform itself into community and nationality. However, his approach is different from that of Oommen. To Brass, objective cultural markers are essential, but they do not provide sufficient impetus for ethnic transformation to begin.¹⁰⁹ Only when a group becomes politically conscious of its cultural identity and further uses them for achieving group solidarity and interest, the group becomes a subjectively self-conscious (political) community.

According to Brass, formation of nationality out of ethnic category involves three stages. The first stage involves the movement from ethnic category to community, which entails creation of a self-conscious language community out of a group of related speakers, the formation of a caste (ethnic)¹¹⁰ association, or a community of believers from the followers of a particular religious leader. Brass relates this phenomenon with the early stages of modernization in multiethnic societies where languages have not yet become standardized, where religious groups have not become highly structured and compartmentalized, and where social fragmentation is prevalent. Brass believe that the movement from ethnic group to community is a transition that some groups never made, that others made initially in modern times, and still others undergo repeatedly at different points in time. The

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p, 19.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p, 63.

¹¹⁰ Inside bracket is mine.

second stage in the transformation of ethnic groups, according to Brass, involves articulation and acquisition of social, economic, and political rights for members of the group or for the group as a whole. At this stage, the demands of the group in question (may) range from a relatively modest civil, educational, and political rights to / and opportunities for individual members of the group or for recognition of the group's corporate existence as a political body or nationality. Brass believes that ethnicity also involves a claim to status and recognition either as superior or equal to other groups. If an ethnic group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political action and political mobilization, it has gone beyond ethnicity to establish itself as a nationality.¹¹¹ To Brass, the politicized ethnic elite, who constitute the most articulate and dominant sections of the community, becomes the social agents of identity construction.

Benedict Anderson propounded his 'imagined community theory' in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.¹¹² Anderson perceives nation as an imagined political community, which is inherently limited and sovereign. A nation is imagined because the members of the nation never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. The imagined character of the nation differentiates one nation from another. The nation is *limited* as it is bounded by boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. It is sovereign because the concept comes into maturity at a stage of human history where the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm was destroyed. Nations dreams of being free from pre-national religious forces and the stamp of this freedom is the sovereign state.

¹¹¹ Paul R Brass, *ibid*, pp. 22-23.

¹¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

Finally, a nation is imagined as a *community*, as it is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. This fraternity makes people willing to die for such limited imaginings.¹¹³ Prior to the emergence of national culture was the dominant religious culture. National culture replaced the predominant religious culture, and this transformation was facilitated by the development of print capitalism. The development of print capitalism, which was the central theme of his theory was responsible for the development of nations. Print-capitalism made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.¹¹⁴ To Anderson, the development of print languages, which owed much of its success to print-capitalism, laid the bases for national consciousnesses in three distinct ways. They created unified fields of exchange and communication above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of the diverse dialects / languages were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which helped build image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. The printed book kept a permanent form, capable of reproducibility and dissemination. Third, print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were 'closer' to each print-language and dominated their final forms. Their disadvantaged cousins, still assimilable to the emerging print: language, lost caste, above all because they were unsuccessful (or only relatively successful) in insisting on their own print-form.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57

The 'invention of tradition' thesis is associated with Eric Hobsbawm.¹¹⁶ Hobsbawm does not believe in the natural origin of nation or the essential role of history. Instead, he sees national consciousness as a modern phenomenon constructed around the ruins of the past. It is a forced consciousness constructed by a particular group of people, an intelligentsia of some nebulous design. Hobsbawm identified the nineteenth century, around the time of the French Revolution as the period of emergence of nationalist ideas. Nationalism often arise from confrontation with others, an increasingly common experience as 19th and 20th century Europe saw increasing contact with others from differing ethnicities and religions as the world economy promoted large population movements and novel information about others.

Hobsbawm central arguments on the emergence of nationalism and national consciousness rest on his belief that many of the traditions which were considered as very ancient in their origins were in fact invented comparatively recently. He based his analysis on process of invention or creation of Welsh and Scottish 'national culture'; the elaboration of British royal rituals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the origins of imperial rituals in British India and Africa. By emphasizing on the constructed nature of nationalism Hobsbawm, in fact presented a complex linkages between past and present, thereby, deepening our understanding of communities and nationalities cherished myths.

Various theories of ethnicity discussed above have highlighted different aspects of the nature and dynamics of ethnic communities and the politics of identity formation. The availability of diverse approaches or theories on ethnicity indicates

¹¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 (first edited 1983).

that no single theory can explain all aspects of ethnicity. Primordialists emphasize on passion and self-sacrifice emanating from 'primordial' attributes such as language, religion, territory, and kinship. Primordialists talked about close relation between ethnicity and kinships and ethnicity and territory. They also explained the way in which such primordial attachments can generate powerful sentiments of collective belonging.¹¹⁷ However, their accounts give little information on the activities and role of individuals who are taking the lead in all ethnic movement and identity assertion. This gap is filled by the explanation given by the instrumentalist scholars, which clearly shows that ethnic feelings can be constructed among members of ethnic communities through the actions of the ethnic elites. Some of the constructed identities in the world are readily accepted by the group concern because they contain certain elements, which are viewed as sacred by the concerned community.¹¹⁸ In contemporary societies, most people share strong attachment based on primordial features that have emotive significance, that remain with them and get reflected either consciously or unconsciously in their daily life activities.¹¹⁹ Even social scientists who are instrumentalists or constructionists recognize the presence of objective cultural 'givens' which are manipulated by the ethnic community or elites. Primordialists at the same time cannot ignore that the identities are contextual, situational and fluid. In spite of the fact that some of the modernist scholars have demonstrated a sort of arbitrary 'invention' and manipulation of traditions which were frequently almost imposed and / or used as instruments of political manipulation, they also very often strike a code in the minds of the people as modernist scholars like Hobsbawm has conceded in his study. Despite great diversity in cultural distinctiveness among ethnic

¹¹⁷ Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 223.

¹¹⁸ T K Oommen, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Benjamin B Ringer and Elinor R Lawless, 'The We-They Character of Race and Ethnicity', in Harry Goulbourne (ed.), *Race and Ethnicity*, Routledge, London, New York, Vol. 1, 2001, p. 54.

groups, it is evident that each ethnic group has at the very centre of its values and beliefs a cluster of 'truth,' which justifies the group's existence.¹²⁰ Previous traditions were revived, reformulated and continuously adapted by communities aspiring to national status and to meet various social, political, and cultural challenges. It is in this context that the ethno-symbolists approach becomes relevant. Smith discusses the power of ethnicity and the continuing emotional attachment of people to their ethnic roots and pre-existing ethnic ties. A community of people engaged in the search for identity usually traces their origins and ethnic pasts in order to legitimize their claim.¹²¹ Ethnic beliefs and myths become a rallying point for marginalized and submerged communities aspiring to national status and territorial recognition.¹²² In his other work entitled *Nationalism and Modernism*,¹²³ Smith maintain that in-spite of great cultural changes in the contemporary world the key identifying features of an ethnies have been maintained and reproduced for centuries by intelligentsia. Smith says what modernist theories systematically overlook is the persistence of ethnic ties and cultural sentiments in many parts of the world, and their continuing significance for large numbers of people. In fact, ethno-symbolist approach synthesizes both the primordialist and instrumentalist / modernist approaches by acknowledging their insights, while at the same time pointing out their limitations. In the absence of written records (which is the case with many of the indigenous communities of India's northeast), it is difficult to ascertain how old these traditions and ethnic beliefs are. Nevertheless, the continuing relevance of ethnic pasts and roots to many of the contemporary indigenous tribal communities shows dynamics interactions between

¹²⁰ *Op. cit.*

¹²¹ Anthony D. Smith, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹²³ Anthony D Smith, 1998, *op. cit.*

the people influenced ‘primordial sentiments’ and its mutual maneuvering by the community and their leaders / elites in the name of community interests.

The review of different theories of ethnicity and different perspectives on construction of identities clearly show that no single theory is adequate to explain the different inter-related issues such as development of ethnic community, nature and dynamics of the ethnic elites, politics of boundary making, role of language and literature, and the relevance or irrelevance of the memories of the past in the construction of identities that the research study sought to understand. Therefore, the study relies on scholarly insights of Paul R Brass, Benedict Anderson, Anthony D Smith and Eric Hobsbawm for understanding and analyzing dynamics of Paite elites and their role in construction of Paite and Zomi identities.

Concepts, Meaning and Working Definitions

As the research study revolves around ethnicity and role of ethnic elites in the identity discourse of a community of people, it is imperative to present the working definitions of / the meanings assigned to the key terms used in the research study such as ethnicity, ethnic community, ethnic elites, identity, and other related terms. Ethnicity has been perceived both from the subjective feelings of the community as well as the objective conditions that facilitate or obstruct the communities’ perceptions of themselves. Ethnic community is a politicized cultural group already drawn into the vortex of modernity, but falls short of attaining the status of a nationality. Any group of people, which uses cultural symbols to create internal cohesion and to differentiate themselves from others, is a subjectively self-conscious

political community.¹²⁴ An ethnic community is different from a tribe as they are already drawn into the process of modernization. Many of the communities, which were labeled as tribes in India, had become politically conscious of their status and their rights. As such, many of the communities, which are officially recognized as tribes have indeed, become ethnic communities.¹²⁵ Today in northeast India, we hardly find primitive tribes untouched by modernity. Although the communities still follow many traditional tribal practices, in economic and political sense they have already emerged as ethnic communities, conscious of their rights and their role in the Indian national polity and economy. A single or a group of ethnic communities sharing the same culture, common myths and same political aspirations, and inhabiting contiguous geographic area forms a nationality. By the expression, 'smaller ethnic communities', we refer to numerically smaller and politically and economically weaker ethnic communities in the designated region.

In the study, ethnic identity refers to ethnic self-awareness on the part of people as belonging to a particular ethnic community.¹²⁶ It includes principles of 'inclusiveness' and 'exclusiveness', carried out by distinction between 'us' and 'them.'¹²⁷ The collective ethnic identity consciousness evolves out of the communities' desire to safeguard their social, cultural and political rights and satisfy certain basic and universal human needs such as recognition, security, autonomy, etc.¹²⁸ In situations where different ethnic groups live together, one or more groups

¹²⁴ Paul R Brass, 1991, *op. cit.*, p.19.

¹²⁵ This understanding of evolution of human society /community undergoing different stages of development has been subscribed by many prominent scholars like Paul Brass, Gellner, etc.

¹²⁶ Yu V Bromley, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹²⁷ Thomas Paster and Eric Liang Zephing, 'Immigrant Minorities in Europe - Some Theoretical Remarks', <http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a9509708/unitext.html> (accessed on January 24, 2005)

¹²⁸ Louis Kriesberg, "us" versus "them", http://www.beyondintractability.org/m/identity_issues.jsp, (accessed on April 18, 2005).

may attempt to consolidate and strengthen their group identity. They may also strive to secure their social, political and economic rights and interests for the advancement of the community. Such assertion of ethnic identity by one or more groups may lead to conflicts between the different ethnic groups or even with the state. The term ethnicity basically explains the complicated nature and processes determining the relations between the ethnic communities.¹²⁹

Ethnic elites refer to the individuals within the community who take the lead in educating, organizing, and mobilizing its members in pursuit of the interest of the ethnic community.¹³⁰ As society and social values change, the nature of the elites also changes. For the present study, it will be suffice to say that the term elite refer to ethnic community elites who emerge within the community and are organically linked to it. The ethnic elites comprise of a broad spectrum of influential people within the ethnic community, such as traditional chiefs, church leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, intelligentsia and students / youth leaders. The ethnic elites directly or indirectly play an important role in the construction and consolidation of ethnic identity consciousness. They take the lead in constructing the political identity of a community and works towards building internal cohesion and solidarity by making use of certain ethnic markers.

The ethnic community tends to develop organizations through which collective feelings and collective identities are pursued. Ethnic organizations reinforce community solidarity either through the ethnic goals they pursue or through the

¹²⁹ H Srikanth, 'Understanding of Ethnic Conflicts in Northeast India', in Girin Phukon (ed.), *Ethnicity and Polity in South Asia*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, pp. 195-207.

¹³⁰ Malcolm Yapp, 'Language, Religion and Political Identity: A General Framework', in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia*, Curzon Press, London, 1979, p. 17.

homogeneity of the ethnic membership. As communities become more conscious of their rights and identity, the ethnic organizations come into existence to articulate their interests inside and outside the ethnic boundaries. Besides the efficient pursuit of collective interests, ethnic organizations also serve as one important markers of the group with its homogeneous membership and also serve the important function of making visible the broader unity of the community.¹³¹ The ethnic elites make use of ethnic based organizations to generate political consciousness among the community members, and through them propagate and articulate the interests and values essential for the survival of the community.

Methodology, Collection of Data and Analysis

The research study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary sources include materials collected from central and state government records, census reports, NSS data, minutes of meeting proceedings, documents and literature of different Paite and Zomi organizations, memoranda and petitions, autobiographies and other writings of prominent Paite-Zomi elites that provide first hand information on the identity issues and politics of the community.

Secondary data are drawn from academic works available in the form of books, articles in relevant journals, magazines and newspapers and relevant theses and dissertations.

In addition to the above, in-depth interviews were undertaken with a cross section of the Paite elites with the purpose of getting firsthand information about their

¹³¹ Benjamin B Ringer and Elinor R Lawless, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

socio-economic background and for understanding their role in the construction of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite. For this purpose, initially a list of hundred active Paite elites in Churachandpur district,¹³² playing significant roles in politics, business, bureaucracy, church, students and youth wings, and also in the fields of literature, academics and journalism was prepared. For preparing the list of Paite elites, the scholar took the help of Paite newspapers such as *The Lamka Post*, *Manipur Express* of several years, referred to Paite history and literature and discussed with members of different Paite organizations.

The list so prepared includes the names of important surviving traditional chiefs, church leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, intelligentsia, and students and youth leaders, who have played important roles in political and social life of Paite community. The list is broadly classified into five categories – i) the politicians,¹³³ ii) the intellectuals,¹³⁴ iii) the bureaucrats and businessmen,¹³⁵ iv) students and youth leaders,¹³⁶ and v) the traditional and church leaders.¹³⁷

Using stratified random sampling method, five members are chosen from each category at random through a lot and a sample of twenty-five persons was identified for the purpose of interview. Taking into consideration the size of Paite population and the compact area they occupy, the sample size of twenty-five Paite elites was considered as representative. The structured schedules were administered to these

¹³² We choose Churachandpur (Lamka) district as our area of survey as more than ninety percent of Paite of Manipur resided in the district.

¹³³ Politicians include MPs, MLAs, sitting and former state ministers and party leaders belonging to the community, and MDCs.

¹³⁴ Intellectuals include teachers, journalists, editors, etc.

¹³⁵ Under bureaucrats and businessmen category, only those persons playing active role in public life of the Paite community are taken into consideration.

¹³⁶ Student and youth leaders are those persons active in the Paite organizations.

¹³⁷ We are aware that some individuals can be placed in more than one category. But for the purpose of survey, we took into considerations how the individual would like to identity themselves.

members to secure data on their social, economic, and ideological background. Efforts are made to crosscheck the claims made by the informants through empirical observation of their movable and immovable properties and also by talking to others who have knowledge of the persons included in the sample.

In-depth interviews were also undertaken with the Paite elites so chosen to examine their perceptions about Paite and Zomi identities and to understand the roles played by them in their respective domains for advancement of the cause of Paite and Zomi interests.

Based on the data collected, the study sought to understand different inter-related issues such as the development of ethnic community, nature and dynamics of the ethnic elites, politics of boundary making, role of language and literature, and the relevance or irrelevance of the memories of the past in construction of identities. As we found that no single theory is adequate to explain all issues that we sought to understand, to interpret and analyze the data, the study relied on theoretical insights of different thinkers such as Paul R Brass, Benedict Anderson, Fredrik Barth, Anthony D Smith, and Eric Hobsbawm.

The findings of the study are discussed in the subsequent chapters. Chapter II discusses the emergence and growth of modern Paite elites and studies the socio-political changes and development that had influenced the emergence of indigenous elites among the tribal communities in Manipur. Forces that had shaped the political orientation and the growing influence of the indigenous modern elites were also discussed. Chapter III analyses the socio-economic background of Paite elites and their perceptions on community issues and their role in Paite politics. Their ideological orientation, political affiliation, nature of voting, and political identity are

also discussed in the third chapter. In chapter IV, the study focuses on the construction of Paite identity by throwing light on the contributions of the indigenous elites to the development of Paite script and language, formation of different Paite organizations, the role they played in the movement for official recognition of the tribe and in codification of Paite customary laws. The language politics of the Paite elites for strengthening the identity base of the community are also captured in the chapter. Chapter V examines development of Zomi consciousness among the Paite. Apart from identifying forces and factors that generated Zo / Zomi consciousness, the study emphasizes on the controversy over the common nomenclature among the Zo communities in Manipur, the question of indigenous name vis-à-vis imposed nomenclature, the politics of Zomi movements, the fall out of Kuki-Naga and thereafter Kuki-Zomi conflicts. Contribution of indigenous intelligentsia to Zomi identity and Zomi consciousness as represented in vernacular songs and lyrics are also the main emphasis of the chapter. The concluding chapter sums up the major theoretical and empirical findings of the study and draws some conclusions and observations based on the research findings.

Chapter II

EMERGENCE OF MODERN PAITE ELITES IN MANIPUR: SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

At what point of time Paite as a community name originated in the trans-border area of India and Myanmar is not known. Some literary records suggest that the name Paite was not of local origin. According to George A Grierson, the Lusei called them Paite based on the ways in which they dress up their hair. Grierson writes, 'the Lusei called all the hill tribes who wear their hair in a knot upon the top of the head Poi or Pai.'¹ To Vumson, a native scholar from Burma, Paite is a name given by the Lusei and Pawi (Lai) to people living in Tedim, in the southern and eastern parts of Manipur district and in the Somra Tract.² To some, they were first called as 'Paihte' by the Lushais and Pawis / Pois (Falam Chins), which is a derogatory term, meaning 'thrown away'. In course of time, the people so designated called themselves as Paite by omitting the letter 'h'.³ The people living in Tedim area in Chin State of Myanmar who disclaimed the term preferred to be called Tedim. According to Kamkhenthang, even for the people on the Indian side, it took some time for all to accept the name Paite. He further writes, a Paite is a Paite as long as he is in India, if he goes to Burma he becomes Tedim people and vice-versa.⁴

¹ George A Grierson, *Languages of North Eastern India*, Vol. II, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995 (reprint), pp. 574-579.

² Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh*, published by the author, Aizawl, 1987, p. 74.

³ Nangkhanpau Hauzel, 'History and Culture of the Paite', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1987, pp. 5-6; H Kamkhenthang, 'Paite / Tedim Chin Pau leh Lai Thu', *Siamsin Thugousiah*, Vol. III, Siamsinpawlpai Shillong Branch Publications, Shillong, 2001, pp. 18-22:

⁴ H Kamkhenthang, *The Paite: A Transborder Tribe of India and Burma*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 8-9.

Some writers and scholars consider that the name 'Paite' is of recent origin. Scholars who subscribe to this view argue their case by giving a literal interpretation of the term. According to them, Paite denotes 'people on the move' for 'Pai' means go or on the move and 'te' is a plural suffix indicating many or in big number. Subscribing to this view, some native scholars such as T Liankhohau, Nangkhanpau Hauzel writes, "those people who entered India are called Paite by their relatives in Burma, and, thus, the name Paite came to be applied to those who went to India".⁵ The original constitution of the Paite National Council (PNC), which was adopted on June 27, 1949, also defined Paite in this manner.⁶ This kind of interpretation seems to denote their history of migration.

Whatever differences of opinion may be there on the origin and meaning of the term 'Paite', it is certain that no outsiders gave them their dialect and their sense of identity. In India, the Paite are recognized Scheduled Tribe (ST) community in Manipur and Mizoram. In Manipur they are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur district. They are found in substantial numbers in Jiribam sub-division and the Imphal municipality areas of Imphal district. In the state of Mizoram, the Paite are found in Champhai and Aizawl districts. The people claiming to be Paite are there in other northeastern states as well.

The language spoken by the Paite people is '*Paite Pau*' (Zokam). The language has no script of its own and the Paite use the Roman script.⁷ In the

⁵ T Liankhohau, *Social, Cultural, Economic and Religious Life of a Transformed Community: A Study of Paite Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 5; Nangkhanpau Hauzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

⁶ See *Original Constitution of Paite National Council (PNC)* adopted on June 27, 1949. Hereafter cited as *Original Constitution of PNC 1949*.

⁷ Naorem Saratchandra Singh, *A Grammar of Paite*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006.

introductory note on *The Paite Customary Laws, 1986*,⁸ the PNC makes mention of ten Paite dialect / accent groups. These are Bukpi, Dapzal, Khothak, Lamzang, Lousau, Ngenning, Tedim, Teizang, Tuichiap, and Val. Liangkhaia from Mizoram also made mention of thirteen dialect / accent groups among the Paite.⁹ The Paite claimed Ciimnuai, located in Burma to be their first place of settlement.¹⁰ Singkhawkhai speculates the probable date of the Ciimnuai settlement to be the early part of the sixteenth century.¹¹ Like in many other tribal communities of the region, a chief who exercised absolute power over his subjects headed the traditional Paite village. Earlier accounts referred them by the names of their ruling chiefs.¹² Before they embraced Christianity, the Paite were animists worshiping various spirits, which they believed to have dwelt in different places like precipice, water, woods, rocks and spirits of the ancestors elsewhere.¹³ They came under the influence of Christianity since the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, the community is cent percent Christians.

The Paite society is patrilineal and patriarchal. The eldest son (i.e. first born male) inherits the property of the family. The brothers stay together in their father's house until they build a family of their own. The customary practice among the

⁸ G Thangchinlian and T Jamkhanthang (compilers), *The Paite Customary Laws, 1986*, Paite National Council, Lamka, 1986, see introductory note.

⁹ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, LTL, Aizawl, 2002 (reprint), p. 21.

¹⁰ *Memorandum of the Paite National Council demanding recognition of Paite as a Scheduled Tribe of India*, submitted to the Government of India on November 18, 1955. Here after cited as *PNC Memorandum 1955*.

¹¹ The exact date and year of Ciimnuai establishment are shrouded in mystery. One is not sure whether it is a myth or history. But the Paite and other Zo tribes project it as a historical events. See Ciimnuai Chronology, Appendix-II, in Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*, Lamka, Manipur, 1995, p. 71.

¹² M C Goswami and H Kamkhenhang, 'Clan among the Paite', *Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology*, Vol. IV, Gauhati University, 1975, p. 22.

¹³ Refer, G Khamkam, 'Family Worship', in Naorem Sanajaoba, *Manipur: Past and Present*, Vol. 3, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 295-301.

community was that the eldest brother's sibling has to perform '*Tou Sagoh*'¹⁴ ceremony in the house of their eldest brother (i.e. in father's house). It is obligatory on the part of the younger brother to perform this ceremony. This ceremony was performed by married couples as a sign or mark of respect shown to their '*Tou*'. Until and unless the couple performs '*Tou Sagoh*' ceremony, all the material possessed and owned by them is considered as that of the first-born male. Even though the observance of '*Tou Sagoh*' ceremony is gradually losing its significance in contemporary Paite society, it is still observed by some family with reverence. Another significant feature of the Paite community is that every married couple (or every household) has to constitute institution of *Indongta*. According to H Kamkhenthang, the English equivalent term for *Indongta* is 'Household Council'.¹⁵ The *Indongta* comprises of select familial relatives. Inclusion into *Indongta* is considered as an honor by the appointees.¹⁶ For every family, there are sets of *Indongta* with corresponding set of duties and responsibilities tied with rights and privileges. The institution supports and protects the family be it in times of celebrations and also in times of troubles.¹⁷ Paite families are socially, culturally, economically, and structurally inter-related, and dependent on one another through this institution. Generally, *Indongta* is constituted under the supervision of the '*Tou*'. Customarily, a married couple can have *Indongta* of their own only after they perform '*Tou Sagoh*' ceremony. Through the institution of *Indongta*, the personal laws relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, etc. are normally administered. The

¹⁴ '*Tou*', which means 'Lord' refers to the first-born son in the family, '*Sagoh*', means killing animal. '*Tou Sagoh*' thus stands for 'killing animal for *Tou*'.

¹⁵ Refer, H Kamkhenthang, 1988, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Sing Khaw Khai, *op. cit.*, p.150.

¹⁷ Refer, V Dongzathang, 'The Indongta System: Is it Relevant for Our Changing Society', *Siamsin Thugousiah*, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-103.

Indongta also decides cases of civil and criminal offences. The institution of *Indongta* plays a very important role in the Paite society even today.¹⁸

Traditional Political Society and Emergence of Modern Paite Elites

The traditional political institutions of the Paite are in many ways similar to those of other Zo communities like the Lusei, Thadou, Hmar, etc. In the past, each village of the Zo people was under the control of its own traditional chief. In the absence of common political administration, feuds and infighting between the clans / villages were common. Customary laws governed the social and political activities of the villages. The only institution that could be called political in nature was the institution of chieftainship. As in the case of many tribal communities of the region, the traditional Paite polity was confined to village level. Therefore, for understanding the nature of traditional elite in Paite society, it becomes important to analyze in brief the structure and organization of the traditional Paite village administration.

Traditional Paite villages were composed of three categories of people viz. the chief (*Hausa*), the chief nominated Council of Elders (*Hausa Upa*), and the commoners (the villagers). Although different villages under their respective chiefs could follow different practices, the system of village administration was considerably similar in pattern. Generally, the social, economic and political activities of traditional Paite people revolved round the village chief, to which all the legal authority was attached. The chief was supreme in his own village. Matters relating to civil and criminal cases were tried and enforced in the chief's court. It was the responsibility of

¹⁸ For a brief discussion on the organisation, functions and other related issues concerning *Indongta*, see H Kamkhenthang, 1988, *op. cit.*

the chief to protect the life and property of the villages; to distribute lands to the villagers for cultivation; and to administer justice based on customary laws. In view of the responsibilities that he undertakes, the chief enjoyed different rights and privileges. The chief owned the village land. As such, he had the right to confiscate house or land of the villagers. When any members of the village leave the village without the consent of the chief, his property automatically become that of the chief. The chief imposed a sort of taxes called *Buhsun* or *Tangseu* in the form of annual tribute of paddy produced from field from the villagers. The chief claimed *Saliang* i.e. the right hind leg of any game killed by whatsoever means. The house of the chief was constructed by the villagers free of cost.

In the traditional society where inter and intra tribal wars were common, the strength and safety of the village largely rested on the strength of the youth. In their villages, the Paite had an institution called bachelor dormitory (*Ham* or *Sawm* in Paite). The *Ham / Sawm* was located in the house of the chief or some person of importance and influence. It was in this institution that the village youth learned the fundamental principles of discipline, social etiquette, cooperation, respect of elder and also the art of warfare.¹⁹

Although the Paite chief used to collect rent from persons cultivating his land, the villagers used to see him a benefactor who distributed lands to the villagers for their maintenance.²⁰ The chief's court was the place where the villagers could take refuge and shelter. The chief had the power to pardon and forgive any person accused

¹⁹ T Jamkothang and H Kamkhenthang, 'A Brief Introduction to the Language and Culture of the Paites (Tedim Chins)', in K B Singh (ed.), *An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur*, Manipur State Kala Akademi, Imphal, 1976, pp. 119-120.

²⁰ J N Das, *A Study of Land System of Manipur*, Law Research Institute Eastern Region, Gauhati High Court, Gauhati, 1985, p. 45.

of committing a crime. Disputes or crimes in the village were tried in the chief's court, which was usually the chief's house. For initiating any case, the accused had to bring *zubel* (rice-beer) to the house of the chief. The accused also (may) pay court fee as prescribed by the chiefs. If a person was convicted or found guilty, the accused had to arrange *sasat* (feast) besides other fines and penalties. *Sasat* involves the killing of four-footed animal for (the eating of) the chief and his elders. The head and heart of the killed animal goes to the chief and the legs (fore) go to the village crier.

As stated earlier, the chief also had council of elders (*Hausa Upa*) to support and assist him in carrying out his duties. The chief himself nominated the *Hausa Upa*. The *Upas* enjoyed certain privileges viz. i) they were exempted from payment of *Buhsun / Tangseu*; ii) they were exempted from forced labor; iii) they could select jhuming field every year (before the villagers made their choice); and iv) they participated in eating of *sasat*.

Besides his council of elders, the village chief used to appoint a village *siampu* (priest), *siksek* (blacksmith) and *tangau / tangkou* (village crier). The village priest performed all religious rituals and sacrifices on behalf of the villagers. The blacksmith made necessary tools and implements such as hoe, dao, axe and other materials for the use of the villagers. The village crier went round the village normally after dark, shouting out the chief's orders. These three officials of the chiefs generally received donation from each house in return of their services.

Even though the chief's court acted as the custodian of the villager's life and property, it will be an exaggeration to conclude that the institution of chieftainship had always lived up to the expectations of people in the villages. The chief had

powers to drive out any recalcitrant villagers who defied or disobeyed him. In extreme cases, where the relation between a villager and the chiefs was not cordial, the former had no other choice but to leave the village.²¹ The traditional political structure and power relations remained unchallenged and intact until the emergence of modern Paite elites from within the community members.

Colonial Intervention

The hill areas inhabited by the Nagas and Zo tribes also came under the British suzerainty when the British took control of the administration of Manipur. Initially, the British government did not give much importance to the administration of the hill areas of Manipur. They followed the policy of indirect administration of the hill tribes. Their administrative policies were largely guided by their colonial political and economic interests. The British government introduced hill house tax of three rupees per annum in the hill areas. To further their colonial interests, the British government followed a policy of aligning themselves with tribal chiefs in the hill areas. In the year 1906, they gave boundary documents to all village chiefs in the hill areas and upheld the traditional social hierarchy.²² Due to their privileged social and economic status, the traditional elite enjoy every luxury.

The traditional economy of the Zo people was based on subsistence agriculture. In the traditional economy, money played a little or even no role. For circulation of goods and services, a system of barter of locally produced elements

²¹ For detail information on the traditional village chiefs and its various aspects, see G Thangchinlian and T Jamkhanthang (compilers), *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10; Chinkholian Guite, 'The Guite Chiefs of Manipur: A Study of Churachandpur District', M. Phil Dissertation, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1989.

²² L Chinzakham Ngaihte, *Tribal Agrarian System of Manipur, A Study of Zomi*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 116.

such as food grains, maize, etc. prevailed. The system itself was simple, compelled more by necessity rather than the desire for gain. All economic transactions were carried out in kind. The annual tribute (a sort of taxes) that the village chiefs collected from the villagers was also rendered in kind. After colonization, money became the medium of exchange for goods and services. However, for a community, which relied heavily on agricultural produced and jhum cultivation for their livelihood, the importance of money in their life was limited, except to pay the annual house-tax.²³ In general, the economic and social conditions of the Paite people before the advent of Christianity was poor. Money was not easily available to the people. As such, it had become a burden for most of the hill tribes to pay hill house tax in cash.²⁴ As G Khamkam wrote, “before they (read Paite) became Christian, there were very few people who could pay the annual house-tax levied by the Government”.²⁵ As there was no transport and market facilities, their agricultural produced had no commercial value. In such a social condition, traditional system of barter continued to be used by the indigenous tribal communities for quite sometime.

Evangelization and Modern Education: The Prime Agent of Social Change

The traditional social structure, which was mostly intact for centuries, began to experience a steady change under the influence of the Christian missionaries and the progress of evangelization and modern education. Christianity did not take long to uproot the tradition and culture of the hill tribes. This was also true in the case of the Paite of Manipur. The first Christian missionary to reach the people of Churachandpur was Watkin Robert. He entered Senvon village (a village located on the Manipur-

²³ H Chin Khenthang, *Against all Odds (An Autobiography)*, Shillong, 2006, p. 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁵ G Khamkam, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

Mizoram border) from Aizawl on May 7, 1910. Two native Christians Pu Thangchingpuia and Pu Vanzika and local converts like Pu Lungpau, Pu Thangkhai and Pu Savawma accompanied Watkin Robert from Lushai Hills. In Senvon village, they set up their first centre, and in course of time, the missionaries extended their activities to other villages and areas of Churachandpur (and beyond). The Christian missionaries began their evangelizing mission among the Zo people of Churachandpur in Lusei language. For quite sometime, the hymnbooks and the Bible written in Lusei language were used in church and mission schools.

As in other parts of the region, the missionaries made efforts to educate the Zo people by opening up mission schools.²⁶ The missionaries also carried out humanitarian activities for social upliftment of the hill tribes. As the missionary activities progressed, different villages came to be influenced by the mission activities. One of the earliest Paite converted to Christianity was Pu Thangvung Guite from Phaitong village. He set up a sort of Christian school in March 3, 1915 at Phaitong village. Total number of Christian workers among Paite in 1915 was twenty-two.²⁷ The number of Paite Christians increased gradually.

In the year 1930, the mission field headquarters was shifted from Lakhimpur (in Cachar) to old Churachand (also known as Mission Compound). The Maharaja of Manipur gave permission to North-East India General Mission (NEIGM) to occupy Mission Compound on the condition that only one English men should be there and

²⁶Most of the educational institutions run by the missionaries were primary school with the objectives of imparting the art of reading and writing so that the people would be able to read especially the Bible and songs.

²⁷ *Evangelical Baptist Convention Tangthu*, EBC Secretariat Dorcas Hall, Convention Press, Lamka, Manipur, 1998, p. 6.

they should not preach Christianity among the Meitei.²⁸ The mission compound was temporarily abandoned during the Second World War due to the advancing Japanese soldiers. After the end of the war, the NEIGM compound was reoccupied. The mission workers resumed their work. Church, school, hostels and houses were also reconstructed.²⁹ The NEIGM compound became the centre of evangelization and literate culture in southern Manipur. In the early part of 1946 NEIGM had more than forty village schools (mostly primary schools) located in the area and their teachers numbering more than sixty. In addition to the Christians mission schools, there were also some lower primary schools established by the government.³⁰ After schooling, some even went to Imphal and other places to pursue higher studies. By the time India became independent, a considerable number of educated elites were there among the Paite people.

Tradition-Modernity Divide and the Triumph of Modern Forces

The spread of Christianity and formal education initiated new changes in the Paite society. The attitudes and ethos of the people came to be molded by the ideas and beliefs of the church. The church became the centre of social gathering for the newly converted Christians. Persons connected with the mission emerged as a new elite in the Paite society. Some of these emerging elites were even employed by the

²⁸Pu H H Coleman met the Assam Governor at Shillong and with his permission requested the Maharaja of Manipur to allot space for NEIGM headquarters. Refer K M Singh, *History of the Christian Missions in Manipur and Neighbouring States*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 322-328.

²⁹ H Nengzachin, *He Leads Me (An Autograph Anecdote)*, trans T Gwite, Imphal, 2003; Luai Chin Thang, 'A History of the Evangelical Baptist Convention among the Paite Tribe in North East India', Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson Mississippi, August 2000, p. 3.

³⁰ T Gwite, *Our Thanlon Times: Vignettes of Childhood Reminiscences*, Imphal, 2007, pp. 41-49.

British to help in their administrative activities.³¹ By the time of India's independence, the emerging Paite leaders / elites were convinced about the need for western education for the uplift of their community.

The spread of Christianity and modern ideas had far-reaching impact on social interactions and power relations within the Paite tribe. The emergence of a new group of people created dual leadership situations: the traditional elites represented by the chiefs and his council of elders on the one side and the newly emerging Christianized modern elites on the other side. In other words, missionary activities created a definite rift between the newly converted Christians and non-Christians. To put it in the words of J H Hutton, the evangelizing process essentially drove a 'sword of dissension'.³² In such a social situation, it was but natural that the converts met stiff resistance especially from the influential traditional chiefs. As the traditional elites saw a threat to their authority and status they were determined to stop their villagers from becoming Christians. The traditional elites stood for maintaining the status quo as far as traditional socio-political structure was concerned. There were many instances of persecution faced by the newly converted Christians from non-Christians and the traditional Chiefs.³³ The Christians were mocked, insulted and tortured by non-Christians. Some had their houses burnt or pulled down.³⁴ For instance, the Christians fled from Sialbu village to different villages to avoid persecution by the chief. These Christians spread Christianity to the villages where they fled. As H Nengzachin put it, "just as the persecution intensified, the number of Christians multiplied".³⁵

³¹ Thangkhopao Ngaihte, *My Memoirs*, Imphal, 2001, p. 2.

³² J H Hutton, 'Wild Men of Assam', *JASD*, No. 2, New Series, 1931, p. viii.

³³ See, T Gouzanang, 'Vuite Kual Khantouhna: Pupa Sabiak leh Pathian Thu Hong Lut Dan', *Siamsinpawlpi Annual Magazine, Twenty Fifth Year of Publication*, Lamka, 1987, pp. 1-8.

³⁴ Chinkholian Guite, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

³⁵ H Nengzachin, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

For the church and the newly converted Christians, everything that was associated with traditional practices was viewed as something opposed to Christianity. The Christians believed that they had nothing to lose, and that they would only gain from the rejection of traditional practices. As such, the newly converted Christians began viewing drinking rice beer, worshiping of evil spirits, performing sacrifices and rituals, etc as taboos.³⁶ The native Christians found in the missionaries their friends and supporters. As such, they rallied behind the missionaries. The evidence of this point can be seen in an incident that took place in Songtal village in 1942. On April 13, 1942, the people of Songtal village observed traditional sacrificial rites called *Kosah*.³⁷ The Christians of Songtal were fined for not participating and contributing to the traditional rituals. The Christian wrote a complaint letter to Paul Rostad (NEIGM missionary at that time), wherein, they stated that they were even ready to move out of their village.³⁸ Paul Rostad referred the matter to the President of the Manipur State Durbar. The President of the Manipur State Durbar soon issued the following instructions: "A Christian cannot be compelled to sacrifice to demons or to contribute specially to the expenses of such a sacrifice; nor can a non-Christian be compelled to stop sacrificing to demons".³⁹

Even though there was stiff resistance from the chiefs and elders to the new faith and modern ideas, the traditional forces could not stand against the new forces in the long run. With the fast growth in number of Christians converts, the non-Christians had become minority in most of the Paite villages. The gradual increase of

³⁶ Refer, D Khaizalian, *Tangthupha Tunma leh Tunning Thu*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1986.

³⁷ *Kosah* ritual involves killing of animal. Part of the killed animal was buried together with the dead man's body. It was believed that the spirit of the buried animal (*Kosah ken*) follow or guide the spirit of the dead man and thus respected by *Sahnu*, which in turn opened the gate of death. 'Sahnu' was believed to have power to cause harm or misery to people. The ritual was believed to make the *Sahnu* happy - appease *Sahnu*. Refer T Gouzanang, *op. cit.*, pp.1-8.

³⁸ Cited in K M Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 403-404.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

the number of Christians discouraged the traditional chiefs from openly opposing Christianity. Moreover, with the emergence of new institutions and leaders some of the erstwhile traditional tribal leaders chose to swim with the new current. It was a painful experience especially for the chiefs and elders as it affected their traditional status and authority.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the traditional chiefs continued to enjoy the privileges that the institution of chieftainship bestowed on them. Despite the challenges that the new forces posed to traditions and customs of Paite, there appears to be some kind of compromise between tradition and modernity, with chiefs themselves converting to Christianity in course of time. Yet, it needs to say that the growth of modern forces could not completely eliminate customary practices. In a study of the Paite tribe, T Liankhohau has mentioned five cultural practices that the Paite people retained even after they became Christian. They are i) The traditional pattern of cultivation has been retained largely. No food habit has changed; ii) Kinship practices such as taking bride, formation of household council (*Indongta*) are not touched; iii) Bride price is retained with no fixed rate. Along with it, *moutam* and *sialkhumsa* are also retained; iv) *Tousa* is retained; v) Killing of domestic animals during *Laangkhet* ritual is replaced by offer of tea as a Christian practice.⁴¹

Development of Paite Print Language during Colonial Era

Scholars like Benedict Anderson, Adrian Hastings, Paul R Brass have acknowledge the crucial role of language and literature in the emergence of conscious ethnic community. One of Anderson's thesis about people's ability to imagine

⁴⁰ Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1988, p. 110.

⁴¹ T Liankhohau, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

themselves as members of a community (even nation) centered around the role of language, especially print language that became prominent with the arrival of print capitalism. Anderson says that print-capitalism made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and to relate themselves to others in a profoundly new ways.⁴² Adrian Hastings considers literary development of a spoken vernacular as (almost) certainly the most influential and widespread single internal factor in shaping community consciousness.⁴³ To Paul Brass, creation of a self-conscious language community out of a group of related speakers is the first stages in the development of conscious political community. Even though forces of modernization such as typewriter, print technology could transform oral language or dialects into script language, print technology and language by themselves are the objects. They become instruments and political tools for the community when emerging elites or intellectuals within the society intervene. Among the indigenous tribal societies of Africa, Asia, including northeast India, intervention of modern educated elites or intellectuals in the political discourses of community life is usually associated with the arrival of modernization.⁴⁴ In northeast India, the emerging indigenous elites or intellectuals transformed the spoken dialects of the indigenous communities into script language. Most of these intellectuals were outsiders such as Christian missionaries or European anthropologists. The local emerging elites or intellectuals were also intimately involved in the process and worked hand in hand with their European counterparts as well. As L Lam Khan Piang pointed out in his work, *Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the*

⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983, p. 52.

⁴³ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Leroy Vail, 'The Creation of Ethnicity in South Africa', in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 229-235.

Zo, the introduction of print culture transformed various dialects of the Zo people into print language and the language so developed became the anchor, which led to development of distinct group identities among the Zo communities. Having the Bible translated in their dialects became the social confirmation of their assertion of separate identity, of the distinctiveness of the tribe.⁴⁵ In this connection, the remark made by Andrian Hastings on the impact of script in shaping the consciousness of communities hitherto untouched by printing is worth noting. Hasting writes, “the effect of a relatively small increase in the number of books in a community which has, hitherto, had none or very few is far greater than people in a world used to a surfeit of books can easily realize, and it extends far beyond the literate. Thus, the impact of a vernacular literature in shaping the consciousness of communities hitherto untouched by printing could be enormous”.⁴⁶

Within the Paite, the emerging elites soon consolidated their hold over the society by occupying positions of importance and influence. As they were educated, they began to command respect from the fellow village folks.⁴⁷ The arrival of Christianity and formal education initiated the desire to read and write especially the scripture and hymns. It aroused the desire to have a written script and literature among Paite. In 1903 with the assistance of Rev. David E Jones, one T Vialphung of Kaihlam village in Manipur who was attending the school at Aizawl in those days produced ‘*Paite Bulbul*’, Paite Primer in Roman script.⁴⁸ In 1904 G A Grierson’s Survey of different languages of northeastern India made reference to the language

⁴⁵ L Lam Khan Piang, ‘Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the Zo’, Ph. D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 129-143.

⁴⁶ Adrian Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 31. Also, see Donald Horowitz, ‘Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Status’, in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-291.

⁴⁷ During those days people who had passed class eight were considered as highly educated and those who had little education were also respected and feared. H Chin Khenthang, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁴⁸ David E Jones was a Christian missionary in Lushai Hills. T Liankhohau, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

specimen of the Paite. In the year 1942, the first *Paite Khristian Labu* (Paite Hymn book) in India was published in Manipur. Nengzachin also translated portions of the Bible in Paite. Growth of script language and the availability of some portions of the Bible and songbooks in Paite language contributed to the rapid progress of the community.⁴⁹

The development of scripts and books in Paite was followed by formation of Paite centric organizations in the state. The first organization formed was *Siamsinpawlp* (formerly known as Paite Students Association). It was formed on January 13, 1947 at Mission Compound (NEIGM headquarters). As the organization was meant for the student community, it was placed under the charge of the students themselves. In course of time, organizations such as Paite National Council (1949), Manipur Christian Convention (1950), Paite Literature Society (1950), Young Paite Association (1953), etc., emerged one after another. The formation of organizations marked another important period in the historic development of the Paite community in Manipur. It initiated the emergence of students and youth leaders among the community. Several important elites of the community have had their association with one or more of such organizations.

Status of Hill Areas on the Eve of Indian Independence

Neither the Maharaja nor the State Durbar had any direct control over the administration of the hills areas of Manipur. When the British took over control of the princely state of Manipur in 1891, they created separate sets of administration for the plains and the hills. On May 15, 1907 the British revived the Manipur Durbar to

⁴⁹ Th Lamboi Vaiphei, 'Advent of Christian Mission: A Case Study of its Impact on the Tribals in Manipur', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1986, p. 76.

accelerate direct participation of the people in public affairs. However, the draft scheme made the position of the Maharaja and his Durbar subordinate to the imperial interests. The scheme was also silent about the representation of the hill tribes in the Durbar. Except that the Vice-President (usually British ICS officers) was given charge of the hill tribes, little was mentioned of the whole scheme.⁵⁰

Manipur, being a princely state, was outside the purview of the Government of India Act, 1935. Nevertheless, there was a proposal to bring Manipur under the federation scheme under the Government of India Act, 1935. When the question was being discussed, the Political Agent of Manipur suggested to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam to retain control over the Hills if the Maharaja decided to accede to the Federation on the ground that “if the state takes over the Hills, it will both neglect and oppress the hill men”.⁵¹ The question of Manipur joining Burma upon its becoming separate Dominion was also discussed in the official circles. The Government of India readily agreed that, “If His Highness wishes strongly to leave India and join Burma, there is no objection to his putting forward the request”.⁵² However, the Maharaja never made such a request as he thought it unwise to de-link himself from British India, which had provided unfettered protection.⁵³ The advent of the Second World War kept the federal scheme at abeyance.

Towards the end of 1944, the indigenous tribal communities showed a great amount of political consciousness. To evolve some form of self-government for the

⁵⁰ T Thangholim Haokip, ‘The Kuki Chiefship and Its Changing Dimensions’, Ph. D Thesis, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1995, p. 139.

⁵¹ Cited in Bimal J Dev and Dilip K Lahari, *Manipur: Culture and Politics*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1987, p. 51 and 103.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.104.

tribals, the British government proposed to set up a Manipur Hill Tribes Committee for promoting inter-tribal fellowship and ensuring the material and social progress of the hill tribes. At the insistence of the Governor of Assam, the Maharaja agreed that the hill people should be allowed to exercise some system of local self-government in a form suitable to their local conditions. However, the Political Agent was of the opinion that since the hill tribes of Manipur are intermingled far more than elsewhere, a territorial rather than a tribal organization was the best solution. Accordingly, the President of the Manipur State Durbar made a plan to set up village and circle councils in hill areas to which the administration of hills could be gradually delegated.⁵⁴

Though the concept of hill state did not take shape, the hill-valley cleavage surfaced at the time of transfer of power. Yet, the hill tribes displayed divergent responses to the political development. In June 1946, the Mao Nagas made it known that “the people would feel humiliated if the British Officers made them to step in Manipur state and their administration is put directly under the Manipur State Durbar”.⁵⁵ The Tangkhuls were emphatic that on no account did they wish to be handed over to the Maharaja, but wished the existing arrangements to continue. Jessami, an Angami village also expressed their reluctance to be put under the Maharaja. The hill communities in the southern part of the state preferred to remain under state administration ‘with safeguards’. The Kukis were not averse to live together with the plain people under an agreed settlement.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

With the failure of the plan to merge the hill tribes of Manipur with other hill tribes of Assam and Burma, it was considered desirable to evolve appropriate means whereby all powers exercised by the President of the State Durbar would be returned to the Maharaja by specifying safeguards against the exploitation of the hill people.⁵⁷ For this purpose, the President of the State Durbar favored simultaneous introduction of constitutional government in Manipur along with strengthening the base of self-government in the hills. Any idea of possible integration of the state with independent India was then ruled out, but the trump card of keeping the hill tribes separated from the mainstream of Manipur was retained.⁵⁸ On the eve of India's independence, the Maharaja of Manipur formally inaugurated the Manipur State Constitution Making Committee on March 10, 1947. It consisted of two sub-committees, one to draft the State Constitution Act, 1947 and the other to draft Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947. The latter sought to ensure local self-government for the hill areas. Even then, some of the hill leaders continued to express their reservations.

Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 and Hill Tribes

With the passing of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 Manipur became a constitutional monarchy. The constitution brought the hills and plains of Manipur into the fold of common administrative framework. The Manipur State Constitution Act was extended to the whole of the state, except in areas which were under the provisions of the Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947. The constitution consisted of eleven chapters. Chapter III and IV of the constitution dealt

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

with the powers, position and nature of the executive body (Council of Ministers) and the State Assembly respectively. According to the provisions of the constitution, the Council of Ministers was to consist of seven members- Chief Minister and other six ministers. Out of the seven seats, two are reserved for representatives from the hills. The members of the Council of Ministers are to be elected by the members of the State Assembly. The State Assembly members are to be elected by the people for a period of three years. The members are to be elected based on adult franchise and on the principle of 'joint electorate'.

As the British departure became imminent, the Maharaja abolished the Manipur State Durbar on July 1, 1947. An interim government known as the State Council of Ministry was formed on August 14, 1947. The Council took over the responsibility of administration of the state from the British after their departure. This Interim Council lasted until October 7, 1948. It may be noted that the state political parties were not happy with the way the government i.e. Interim Council was formed. They desired to establish a responsible government. Under pressure from the people and political parties, the Maharaja made an official announcement on November 10, 1947 that full responsible government would be installed by April 1948.⁵⁹

On November 14, 1947, Franchise Sub-Committee was formed to look after all election matters.⁶⁰ The committee prepared electoral rules and electoral roll. The committee resolved to follow single constituency system in the election. The committee also divided the state into a number of assembly constituencies. The valley area was divided into twenty-nine assembly constituencies. The whole hill area was

⁵⁹ Naorem Joykumar Singh, *Colonialism to Democracy: A History of Manipur, 1819 – 1972*, Spectrum Publications, Delhi, 2002, p. 186.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-193.

divided into eighteen assembly constituencies. The first State Assembly election based on adult franchise was held on June 11, 1948. As no party could secure absolute majority, a coalition ministry was formed with Maharaja Kukar Priyabrata Singh as the first elected Chief Minister. The other members of the ministry were Major R Khathing, Arambam Ibotomcha Singh, Dr. Ningthoujam Leiren Singh, Ayekpam Gourabhdhu Singh, Teba Kilong, T C Tiangkham (first Speaker), and Bokul Singh (Deputy Speaker). With the formal inauguration of the maiden session of the Assembly by the Maharaja on October 18, 1948, the first Manipur Legislative Assembly under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 was formed.

For administration of the hill areas, the Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 was passed. This Act gave the administration of hill areas to the Maharaja in Council and the power was exercised in accordance with the Constitution Act, 1947 of the State and the provisions of the Hill Peoples' Regulation Act, 1947. The hill areas were placed under a minister who was in-charge of hill affairs. Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 did not give self-government in the hill areas. It only created statutory local authorities in the form of village authorities. Under the provision of the Act, village authority can be constituted in any village if there are twenty tax-paying houses. After the enactment of this Act, village authority was constituted in most of the hill areas. The Act did not have any effect on the position of the chief. The chief still enjoyed the traditional power of nominating members in the village authorities. The members of the village authority were nominated in accordance with the tradition and customs of the village. As such, it consisted of the village chief and his council of elders. The primary function of the village authority was the maintenance of law and order within its

jurisdiction. In that capacity, it was responsible for the administration of justice. In the discharge of its judicial functions, the village authority was guided by customary laws / practices of the village. The Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act created a four-tier structure of administration of justice in civil and criminal cases. These are court of village authority at the village level, court of circle authorities for a group of villages, a hill-bench at Imphal, and a chief court⁶¹ stationed at the capital of the state. At village level, the village chief along with the village authority functioned as the village court.⁶²

For the purpose of administration, the Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 also envisaged a higher authority called Circle Authority. According to the provisions of the Act, all villages in the hill areas were grouped into nine circles and sub-divisions. For each circle, a Circle Authority was constituted. The Circle Authority was the highest authority with regard to administration and maintenance of law and order within the circle. It consisted of a Circle Officer and a Council of five members. The village authorities falling within the Circle elected the members. This for the first time introduced democratic elements at the village level. The elections to Circle Authority were not carried out on the principle of adult franchise. Instead, the number of tax-paying houses in a village determined the number of voters. For every village with twenty to fifty tax-paying houses, the number of vote was fixed at one. If the tax-paying houses number more than fifty but less than hundred, the village can have two votes. According to clause 12 of the Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947, the Circle Authority was responsible

⁶¹ The Chief Court means the chief court of Manipur State as constituted under the Manipur State Courts Act 1947 for the trial of cases or suits to which hill people are a party.

⁶² Ksh. Bimola Devi, 'Administrative Changes in the Hill Areas of Manipur', in M Horam (ed.), *The Rising Manipur*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 169-183.

for the administration of lower and primary education, construction and the maintenance of all bridle paths and bridges, the maintenance of land records, collection of taxes on lands and other immovable property, etc. It also had the power to hear appeals against the decisions of the village authorities. The over all administration of each Circle Authority was placed in the hands of Sub-Divisional Officer, who had the final authority in matters concerning the election and constitution of the Circle Authority. The hill areas of the state were administered in accordance with the provisions of the Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947 until 1949, the year Manipur merged into the Indian Union.

Merger of Manipur with Indian Union and Its Impact on Hill Tribes

Manipur merged with the Indian Union in the year 1949⁶³ and the state became a Part C State administered by the Union Government through the Chief Commissioner (under Articles 239-42, Part IX of the Constitution of India). The Legislative Assembly formed under the Manipur Constitution Act, 1947 was dissolved and a provision for the Legislature and a Council of Ministers was made under the Part C States laws. It may be noted that even after Manipur merged with India the administrative system under the Hill People's Act remained in force for some time. The hill bench and the hill courts were abolished in 1950 and the circle bench in 1955. The political arrangements under the aegis of Part-C States continued until the First General Election of India in 1952, wherein the people of the state also participated to elect two representatives – one for Inner Manipur Parliamentary constituency and the other for Outer Manipur Parliamentary constituency. For

⁶³ The merger agreement was signed between the Maharaja of Manipur, Bodh Chandra and the Governor General of India at Shillong on September 21, 1949.

election to the state legislature, an electoral college of thirty members was constituted. In the year 1957 the Territorial Council formed under the Territorial Council Act, 1956 replaced the electoral college.⁶⁴ Manipur became a full-fledged state of India on February 1, 1972 and the strength of the Legislative Assembly was raised to sixty.

An analysis of the various legislations passed and adopted by the Indian parliament and Manipur state legislature will be useful to understand the political setting in which the modern Paite elites in particular and the hill communities in general engaged.

Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act, 1956

The Indian Parliament passed Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 for the administration of the hill areas of the state. The Act that came into effect from 1957 replaced the Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947. The Act introduced new chapters in the administration of the hill areas. One important change that came out of it was the introduction of democracy at the grass root level. Unlike the Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act of 1947 where the chiefs based on the customs and traditions of the village nominated the members of the Village Authority, the new Act provided for creation of elected Village Authority. All the members of the Village Authority were to be elected based on adult franchise. According to the provisions of the Act, the strength and composition of Village Authority depended on the number of tax paying households. A village that had twenty to sixty tax paying houses can have five member Village Authorities. In a village of sixty to hundred tax-paying houses, the village can have seven members.

⁶⁴ B Pakem, *Coalition Politics in North East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p. 86.

For hundred to one hundred and fifty, the strength of Village Authority was ten. The Act made the traditional village chief the ex-officio chairman of the elected Village Authority. The main function of the Village Authority was to maintain law and order.

The Act of 1956 also provided for the setting up of separate Village Courts. It authorized the head of the state to appoint two or more members of the Village Authority to act as the Village Court. Earlier the chief along with the Village Authority functioned as the Village Court. Under the new Act, if the chief was not a member of the court he could not preside over it. The Village Court had jurisdiction both in civil and criminal cases as specified in the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898 and the Code of Civil Procedure of 1908.⁶⁵

Even though traditional institution of chieftainship continued to exist in the hill areas of Manipur with the enforcement of Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 it places certain restrictions on the powers of the chief. The introduction of election process certainly robbed away the chief's overriding or unquestioned prerogative of nominating any one of his villagers to be his councilors.⁶⁶ The judicial and administrative powers of the chiefs were also transferred to the elected Village Authority.

Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960

Another significant legislative measure which has an important bearing on the hill people and land relations in the state of Manipur was the passing of Manipur Land

⁶⁵ Lal Dena, 'The Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 vis-à-vis the Hill Areas of Manipur', in M Horam (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.161-168.

⁶⁶ L Chinzakham Ngaihte, 'Land Use and Ownership System: Churachanpur District', in *ibid.*, pp. 249-260.

Revenue and Land Reforms Act (in short, MLR&LR Act,) 1960. The passing of the Act could be considered as an attempt by the government to introduce agrarian reform in the state. The MLR&LR Act, 1960 has been implemented only in the plain areas of the state. The government, however, can extend the whole or any part or any section of the Act to any hill areas of Manipur by invoking section 2 (i) of the Act. According to section 2 (i) of the Act the term 'hill areas' means such areas in the hill-tracts of the state of Manipur as the state government may by notification in the official gazette declare to be hill areas.⁶⁷ As a result, a hill area does not simply constitute a 'hill area' by virtue of its being located in the hill districts. It requires declaration by notification in the official gazette. By invoking the said section of the Act, the state government applied the MLR&LR Act, 1960 to about six hundred sixty five villages (as of 1983). Out of the six hundred sixty five villages, five hundred fifty villages are situated in the plain districts and the rest one hundred and five in the hill districts.⁶⁸ In Lamka (Churachandpur) sub-division the said Act was extended to eighty-nine villages in 1962 vide notification No. 142/12/60-M on 22/2/62.⁶⁹ These villages are located in the fringe of Manipur valley of the Churachandpur sub-division.

The Act also contained 'Special Provision Regarding Scheduled Tribes' of the state under section 158. This section deals with transfer of land by the hill tribes. It prohibits the hill communities to transfer land to non-tribal people. If any non-tribal desires to acquire or buy land in the hill areas they have to get permission from the Deputy Commissioner. Before giving such permission, the Deputy Commissioner has

⁶⁷ Refer P Binodini Devi, *Tribal Land System of Manipur*, Centre for Manipur Studies and Akansha, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 83-105.

⁶⁸ K C Guite, 'MLR&LR Act, 1960 and Sixth Schedule in Relation to Hill Areas', in M Horam (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 235-248.

⁶⁹ J N Das, *op. cit.*, p, 30.

to secure the consent of the members of the concerned District Council. However, clause (c) of the same section allows the mortgage or transfer of land to a cooperative.

As the MLR&LR Act, 1960 is not extended to cover all the hill areas in the state, the government could not carry out land survey. Any attempt on the part of the government to extend the Act in the hill areas met with stiff resistance especially from the village chiefs. There has been an apprehension among the hill communities of the state that application of the Act in the hill districts would dispossess them of whatever productive assets they have to the plain people who are politically and economically superior to them. The hill communities are aware of their weak and unenviable economic position vis-à-vis the plain people. They are also aware of their numerical disadvantage.⁷⁰ It is feared that if the Act is implemented in the hill areas, the lands that had hitherto been protected from the outsiders would become purchasable commodity. Such arrangement in the end might result in the total displacement of the Zo communities from their own lands. The apprehension is quite deep rooted and widespread among all the Zo people of Manipur.⁷¹

Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act, 1967

In 1947 the people of Tedim area in the Chin Hills, Burma launched an agitation for the abolition of chiefship. The government of Burma responded by appointing a Commission of enquiry in February 1948. The Commission recommended the abolition of chiefship and prescribed the scale of compensation to be paid to the chiefs. Towards the end of British rule the feeling of resentment against

⁷⁰ P Binodini Devi, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁷¹ G Chinkholian, 'Manipur Singtangmite Kivaihawmna', in *Siamsinpawlpī Annual Magazine, Golden Jubilee Issue*, Lamka, 1996, pp. 300-304.

the chiefs started gaining ground all over the Lushai Hills as well. Finally, the Assam government on August 16, 1954 abolished the chiefship in Lushai Hills. The abolition of institution of chiefship in the then Lushai Hills was possible because of mass based political movement of the Mizos against their chiefs. In Manipur, also discontentment against chiefship by certain section of Zo people can be seen since the time of India's independence. They were influenced by the development that took place in the Chin Hills and the then Lushai hills.⁷² There were instances where the villagers not only declined to pay taxes to the chiefs, but also refused to work for them. In 1948 in Lungthul village in Singngat sub-division of Churachandpur one person named Lungchinpau refused to give *saliang* (meat tax i.e. fore leg of wild animal killed) to Liankhomang, the chief of the village. The chief filed a court case against Lungchinpau wherein the chief claimed one mithun and also the cost be paid to him by the defendant for failing to give *saliang*. The Circle Officer ordered for payment of the claim to the plaintiff by the defendant. The chiefs also brought the case to the notice of the government. As a result, the Chief Commissioner of Manipur issued an order stating that payment of the dues (i.e. *Buhsun* and *Saliang* to the chiefs as the case may be) would continue at the existing rate until further orders. However, about confiscation of houses, gardens and other properties of villagers by the chief when the villagers migrated to another village and the building of the houses of chiefs using forced labor were kept in abeyance.⁷³ In spite of the orders issued by the government, the village chiefs in most of the villages turned a deaf ear to the order of the government and court verdicts. Moreover, the executive also did not show any interest in enforcing those orders. Even though several cases of non-payment of taxes by the people to the chiefs were witnessed among the hill communities, the kind of popular

⁷² T Thangholim Haokip, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁷³ Chinkholian Guite, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

political offensive as was witnessed in the then Lushai Hills was absent in the hills of Manipur.

There were political attempts to abolish institution of chiefship in the state. In the year 1949, the State Congress Committee of Manipur resolved to abolish the customary rights of the chiefs and passed a resolution to that effect.⁷⁴ In spite of the Congress resolution the institution of chiefship continue to survive. Another attempt to abolish chiefship on the part of the government through legislation was seen in the year 1967. When the government attempted to extend the MLR&LR Act, 1960 to the hill districts, it realized the problems created by the existence of institution of chieftainship. According to the customs of the Zo communities, all land in the village belonged to the village chief.⁷⁵ Because of this, the chiefs had challenged the application of the MLR&LR Act, 1960 in the hill districts of the state on the ground that the government encroaches upon the land of the hill communities. It was legally not tenable to extend the Act to the hill areas without first abolishing the ownership rights of the chiefs.

Realizing the legal problems created by the existence of chieftainship (that stood in the way of implementing MLR&LR Act, 1960 in the hill areas) the government of Manipur made an attempt to abolish the traditional institution of chieftainship in the hill areas. With this objective, the government passed Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act, 1967. The Act acknowledged the existing rights of the chiefs. The objective of this bill was to acquire the rights and

⁷⁴ Asok Kumar Ray, 'The Kuki National Assembly: Its Social Base and Working in Manipur', in L S Gassah (ed.), *Regional Political Parties in North East India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 188.

⁷⁵ For a discussion on problems of extension of the Act, see J N Das, *op. cit.*

title of the chiefs in and over land in the hill areas by offering compensation to the chiefs. Another objective of the Act was to introduce land reforms with a view to distribute land to the tillers. Through the Act, the government purported to root out communal or chief ownership over the land and introduce individual ownership rights.⁷⁶ The main argument in favour of the Act was that the existing land tenure system in the state (read as hill) hinders achieving progressive / socialistic goals. The existing mode of cultivation with its ownership structure appears to have no longer sustained the economy of the people. The cultivators have no permanent rights over the land they cultivated. The tenants-at-will also paid a part of their produce to the chief as rent. The mode of cultivation in the hill areas leaves no incentive for the cultivators / people to develop the land.⁷⁷ Adopting individual ownership rights over the land may be more in tune with production and productivity in the long run. Such a permanent ownership may strengthen the economic base of the poor cultivators.

Even though the Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act, 1967 bill was passed, the government could not enforce it till today due to certain inherent problems in the Act. As one scholar put it, "Implementation of the Act had to be kept in abeyance because of intricacies involved in the matter of land ownership and the possible displacement of traditional loyalty structure".⁷⁸

Although some of the hill people supported the move of the state government, many were against it. The hill communities look at the Act as an attempt on the part of the government to take away the land of the hill communities. They see it as a

⁷⁶ Among the Naga tribes the community owns the land while among the Zo people (Kuki-Zomi) land belongs to the chiefs.

⁷⁷ P Binodini Devi, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-107.

⁷⁸ T Thangkhohim Haokip, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

political attempt by the dominant Meitei community to abolish the traditional institution of chieftainship. They are afraid of losing their traditional land and along with it their security and identity. As land in the hill areas of the state belongs to the indigenous tribal communities, abolition of chieftainship would tantamount to loss of the rights to claim land as theirs. Chinkholian, a Zomi scholar states, “The safety of our land till today was due to our institution of chieftainship.”⁷⁹ He further says that it may not be good to have the institution of chieftainship forever. However, before chieftainship is abolished, the hill districts should first be brought under Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The existing rule (i.e. District Council Act, 1971) which govern the five-hill districts in the state have not, in the true sense, protect the customs, tradition, culture, identity and interest of the hill tribes.⁸⁰ Another important reason for non-implementation of the Act was due to its discriminatory nature. The Chief Minister of Manipur pointed this out in a meeting of the Deputy Commissioners on 1983. As the Chief Minister pointed out the provisions of the said Act, 1967, as it stood at the moment were applicable only to the non-Nagas communities of the state. He then asked the Revenue Department to make suitable amendment to make the same applicable to all chiefs of other tribes also, otherwise, the provisions of the Act would be discriminatory and it would be difficult to enforce it.⁸¹

Due to non-implementation of the Act, the institution of chieftainship continues to exist in the hills. However, its status and authority has been reduced largely. The contemporary chief of the ‘Zo people’ no longer enjoys special position. The chiefs remain the village chiefs. They also acted as the ex-officio chairmen of the Village Authority. However, the chief no longer enjoys special powers. Nevertheless,

⁷⁹ G Chinkholian, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-304.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 300-304.

⁸¹ Cited in J N Das, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

the institution ensured that the provision of the Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act, 1967 and the MLR&LR Act, 1960 also could not be implemented in the hill areas of Manipur.

Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971

Another significant political development in the state of Manipur relevant to the hill communities was the passing of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act in 1971 by the Indian Parliament. This Act was a package deal for the entire hill areas of Manipur. The Act made provisions for the establishment of District Council in the hill areas. The District Council Rules were framed in the year 1972, which came into effect from August 1973. The Act divided the hill areas into six Autonomous Districts each with a District Council. According to the provisions of the Act, each District Council consists of eighteen elected and two nominated members. The term of the District Council was fixed for five years. The elections to the District Council were based on adult franchise.

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 bestowed several responsibilities and functions to these District Councils. In the executive field, the District Council has been given the powers to manage matters like maintenance and management of property- movable and immovable and institutions as may be transferred to the Council by the administrator; the construction, repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, canals and buildings; the establishment, management and maintenance of primary schools, dispensaries, ponds, markets and fairs; the preservation, protection and improvement of livestock and prevention of animal

diseases, public health and sanitation; the management of any forest except the reserved forest; the regulation of the practice of jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation, etc.⁸²

In the legislative field, the District Council enjoys limited powers. Its power has been in the nature of recommendation. In that capacity, the District Council can make recommendation on matters, which concern members of the schedule tribes such as succession and appointment of chiefs, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, and social customs.

In the field of finance, the District Council has been given the powers to raise its own council funds. They are given exclusive powers to levy taxes on different professions, trades, jobs; on animals and vehicles and boats; on the entry of goods into market for the sale therein and tolls on passengers and goods carried on ferries; maintenance of schools, dispensaries, roads and any other tax falling under List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India which the legislature of the state, may, by law, empower the District Council to levy. The District Council may also fix and levy schools fees and fees for the use of or benefit derived from any of the works done or service rendered under paragraph 29 of the Act.

The first elections to the District Councils were held in 1973 in the state. In this election, the indigenous tribal communities participated with enthusiasm. It may

⁸² The District Council in Manipur enjoys lesser powers than those District Council established under the Sixth Scheduled of the Indian Constitution. For detailed discussion on the powers and jurisdiction of the District Councils in Manipur see, Rajendra Kshetri, *District Council in Manipur: Formation and Functioning*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006; Ashok Kumar Ray and H Kamkhenthang, 'District Council in Manipur vis-à-vis the Sixth Schedule and a Note on Draft on Modality', in L S Gassah (ed.), *The Autonomous District Council*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 243-254; Ashok Kumar Ray, 'The Sixth Schedule - A Case for Manipur Hills', in *Ibid.*, pp. 255-266.

however be noted that the provisions of the District Council were not up to the expectations of the hill communities. Different ethnic communities and student organizations of the state have been demanding that the administration of the hill areas of Manipur should be brought under Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. As a part of the demand for administration of the hill districts of Manipur under the provisions of the Sixth schedule of the Indian constitution, the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee, Manipur (SSDCM) boycotted elections to the District Councils in the year 1984. Elections, which was not held since then, was conducted again in May 2010 amid protest and boycott from the indigenous hill communities.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is evident that a number of factors and forces have contributed to the emergence and growth of modern Paite elites. In one sense, the modern Paite elites are the products of the onset of modernization, especially Christianity and modern education in the early part of the twentieth century. Prior to the coming of Christianity, the traditional elites occupied dominant position in the society in social, political and cultural life of the people. Under the impact of Christianity and modern education, a new group of people emerged within the society. Consequently, the traditional social values and system, which was mostly intact for centuries, began to experience a steady change. Churches and schools became new centres of social gathering for the newly converted Christians, thus, replacing the traditional institutions.

The newly emerging Paite elites began to command respect from the fellow village folks. They soon consolidated their hold over the society by occupying positions of importance and influence. Despite the challenges that the new forces posed to traditions and customs of Paite, there appears to be some kind of compromise between tradition and modernity, with chiefs themselves converting to Christianity in course of time. Moreover, modern forces could not completely eliminate customary practices.

By the time India became independent, a considerable number of modern elites had emerged among the Paite. Under their leadership and initiatives, vernacular language and literature in Paite began to grow. Language consciousness, the growth of print media and spread of Christianity saw the gradual progress of the community. The modern Paite elites were also instrumental in the formation of different Paite centric organizations, which played an important role in the development of the Paite community in Manipur and contributed to the emergence of students and youth leaders among the Paite.

Apart from the structural changes mentioned above, the changing political situation in the hills of Manipur since India's independence also influenced the political outlook and dynamics of the modern Paite elites. This political transformation of the state from hereditary monarchy to constitutional monarchy saw the induction of the indigenous tribal communities in the political administration of the state. The subsequent transformation of the state from constitutional monarchy to democratic form of government under the Indian Union further increased political participation of the hill people and led to the emergence of modern political elite

among the hill communities of the state. As parliamentary democratic form of government demands sending representatives to the Union Government and to the State Legislature, hither traditional communities also began to view it as a matter of prestige to have their community members represented in the house. This resulted in competition for political power between different ethnic communities or elites. The government Acts such as Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960, and Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 etc., shaped the ethnic political dynamics of the indigenous hill communities, including that of the Paite.

Chapter III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF PAITE ELITES IN CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT

Churachandpur (the local populace calls it Lamka) is one of the hill districts in Manipur.¹ The district occupies an area of 4, 570 square kms. According to 2001 census, the district has a population of 2, 28, 707, which is 9.57 percent of the total state population. The literacy rate of the district is 74.67 percent. According to 1981 Census, out of the 56, 964 working population in the district, 78.31 percent are cultivators. The total land under jhum cultivation during 1987-1988 was 58 percent.² This has declined to 34 percent in 2008.³ The district is 62 kilometers away from Imphal. Most of the important business centers, government offices and institutions are located within the district headquarters. Roadways are the only means of transport in the district. The district is connected with Imphal by Tedim road (National Highway 150). Tedim road was expanded as part of the British war efforts to connect Imphal with the Burmese town of Tedim during World War II. Tipaimukh road that connects the district headquarters with Mizoram state is also one important road in the district. Another important road that connects Lamka with Mizoram is the Guite road.

More than ninety percent of the inhabitants of the district are Christians. Majority of the Christians in the district are Baptist and Presbyterian. The district has seven theological Bible colleges. Grace Bible College and Dinwiddie Bible College

¹ Refer Tualchin Neihzial, *This is Lamka: A Historical Account of the Fastest Growing Town of Manipur Hills*, Zogam Book Centre and Library, Lamka, 1996, p. 8.

² P Binodini Devi, *Tribal Land System of Manipur*, Centre for Manipur Studies and Akansha, New Delhi, 2006, p. 7.

³ *The Telegraph*, Friday, May 9, 2008, p. 19.

are the two important Bible colleges in the district. The district headquarters also house several of the important educational institutions of learning. There are two government colleges, five private colleges, five higher secondary, and quite a number of government and private schools. Compared to the government high schools in the district, private educational institutions offer quality education. Some of the private schools which have made excellent contribution to the educational standards of Churachandpur districts are Donbosco School, St. Mary's School, Sielmat Christian Hr. Sec. School, St. Paul's Institute, Blue Star Academy, Rayburn School, Radhakrishnan Foundation School, Lalpuithluaii Foundation School, Young Learners School, and Ebenezer Academy. The district has one government hospital, one private hospital and a number of care centers and rehabilitation centers.

The other significant development that has taken place in the district is in the field of press and media. Since 1970s, vernacular daily newspapers are published from the district.⁴ The first daily newspaper in Paite known as *Lamka Bazaar* was circulated in 1975.⁵ Another newspaper in Paite named *Manipur Express* has been in circulation since 1981.⁶ *Manipur Express* is presently the most widely circulated and read newspaper in the district. Other newspapers circulated from the district include *The Lamka Post* (Paite), *Sikni-Eng* (Hmar), *Thuhiltu* (Vaiphei), etc. Some of the monthly magazines published from the district are *Tongluang* (Paite), *Khristian Thukizakna* (Paite), *Thutak aw* (Paite), *Gamdaai a Kikou Aw* (Paite), *Zingdaitui* (Paite), *Ruth Messenger* (Paite), *Chollha* (Thadou-Kuki), *Lungdamna Aw* (Paite), etc.

⁴ Some Paite vernacular monthly news magazines were available in the district since the time of India's independence. However, regular daily newspapers appeared during the 1970s.

⁵ *Lamka Bazar* started on August 13, 1975 with G Thangvung as its editor. Today the newspaper is no longer published.

⁶ *Manipur Express* has been in circulation since May 30, 1981. Its editor is L Chinkhanlian.

Another important development in the district is the introduction of information and broadcasting network. The gradual expansion of markets during the 1980s led to increase in private investment. Two-movie theatres (cinema halls) were established during the 1980s.⁷ But the coming of video and cable networks during the later part of 1980s saw the decline of movie theatres in the district. At present five private / local cable networks are operating from Lamka town viz. Hornbill Cable Network, Laizom, Angel's Vision, Thangboi Cable Network, Zasanga Recording Studio, and Uptown. News reading, religious programmes, songs and other entertainment items are the regular features of the TV cable networks.⁸ The inauguration of local radio station of Churachandpur with Paite as the link language on April 13, 2010 has been another important development in the district.⁹

The growth of urbanization led to expansion of communication network, modern facilities, modern political system, and market economy. All these opened up new opportunities and avenues for employment at the district, state, and beyond the state boundaries of the country. As more and more persons became educated among the Paite, vernacular newspapers, magazines, and books in Paite language began to flourish. According to the Bibliography published in 1985 by the Paite Literature Society, there were two hundred and twenty seven books in Paite.¹⁰ The number of printed books in Paite in 1992 has increased to seven hundred and fifty.¹¹ As the Paite society gradually progressed in the economic, political and educational aspects, the Paite people began to get employment in various fields of administration and trades in

⁷ The two movie houses in the district are no longer functioning.

⁸ For further reading refer, '*Crossroads*' A Document of Churachandpur, A Publication of District Administration, Churachandpur, 2008.

⁹ The local radio station of Churachandpur was inaugurated by O Ibobi Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur.

¹⁰ Cited in Naorem Saratchandra Singh, *A Grammar of Paite*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p. XV-XXI.

¹¹ Tualchin Neihzial, *Paite / Tedim Pau a Laibu Neihzah Suina*, Paite Literature Society, Lamka, 1992.

the state and beyond. All these have facilitated the growth of modern Paite elites. It resulted in the emergence of indigenous Paite elites - intellectuals, bureaucrats and businessmen.

Tradition-Modernity Dichotomy

Churachandpur is primarily inhabited by the Zo communities. Meitei also live in the district, apart from some Nepalese, Malwaris, who came from other parts of India for business and for employment purpose. The district has been one of the centres of evangelization and literature culture in the hills of Manipur since the coming of Christian missionaries in the first part of the twentieth century. The district has been the political centre of different Zo communities in Manipur. Different Zo organizations such as Zomi Council, Zomi Youth Association, Zomi Students' Federation, Hmar Inpui, Kuki Students Organization, Paite Tribe Council, Siamsinpawlpi, etc., have their headquarters in the district.

Prior to the emergence of modern Paite elites, the traditional elite played dominant role in the society, be it in cultural, social and political life of the community. They were the most influential persons in the society or within the village by virtue of the position they occupy. Their power emanated from the customary laws and traditions of the community. However, coming under the influence of Christianity and modern education, the Paite society began to change in the latter part of the twentieth century. Since then, Christianity and modern education gradually transformed the society by altering the social, economic, political and religious structures of the community and by creating a new group of educated Christianized

elites. Subsequently, the introduction of parliamentary form of government and the opening up of newer opportunities and avenues for employment further intensified the growth of modern elites among the Paite. The growth of new values and forces within the society had an adverse impact on the traditional political institutions and paved the way for gradual decline of their power and influence.

Due to the contradictory social bases and worldviews, one could see clear difference between traditional and modern elites. But subsequent political developments in the hills of Manipur, especially after they were integrated with the Indian Union, the distinction between them apparently narrowed down because of various factors. Far from acting as opposites, tradition and modernity began to influence each other in such a way that tradition-modernity gap has narrowed down gradually. The need for competing with other tribal and non-tribal communities compelled the Paite people to retain some of their traditional customs and practices, but that did not stop the Paite community responding positively to the modernization process. The traditional elite themselves began to change, while modern elites stopped targeting the traditional elite. Political compulsions compelled both traditional and modern elites to work together for the sake of community. The educated and other stratum of Paite elites have grown in sizes and complexity as well. Even though it is still possible to identify elements of traditional norms and practices in the society,¹² the contemporary Paite society has integrated politically and economically with Indian mainstream. No section of the society is able to remain outside the influence of modernization. The community upheld ideas of modernization and associated

¹² One glaring example is the survival of the institution of chiefship.

themselves with modern system of administration. The community as a whole has become politically conscious of their status, identity and their rights.

Socio-Economic Status of Modern Paite Elites

Social status and political attitudes and orientations of the community elites are dependent on several factors. Some studies on elites suggested that high levels of education, higher incomes and high standards of living, job security, wider exposure, etc. are important attributes of leaders / elites.¹³ There has not been any empirical work to prove whether these assumptions are true in case of the Paite elites as well. Hence, a survey is undertaken in the district of Churachandpur to comprehend the social, economic and ideological position of modern Paite elites and understand their role in construction of Paite identity and Zomi conscious among the Paite in Manipur. Churachandpur district is chosen for survey as more than ninety percent of Paite of Manipur resides in the district. Paite organizations have their base in the district, and important personalities, leaders, or elites of the community lives in the district. The selection of samples and other aspects related to methodology were done as already explained in the first chapter. The schedule administered to the select Paite elites included queries concerning their socio-economic background and their perceptions on community issues and their role in Paite politics. For information on the general socio-economic background questions concerning age and marital status; sex; educational qualification; occupation; father's occupation; nature and size of family; inter-community marriage; family monthly income, sources and expenses; and material possession are asked. To understand the elites' role in community issues,

¹³ See the work K C Kaistha, 'Measuring Social Mobility through Occupational Prestige', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1987, pp. 81-91; P K Bandyopadhyay, *Leadership among the Mizos*, B R Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985.

queries related to elites participation or involvement in church activities, organizations, public meetings and demonstration are analyzed. Finally, to assess their role in politics, questions concerning their ideological orientation, political affiliation, nature of voting, and political identity are asked. Efforts are made to crosscheck the claims made by the informants through empirical observation of their movable and immovable properties and also by talking to others who have knowledge of the persons included in the sample.

General Background of Elites

Age Distribution of the Respondents

For meaningful analysis, the respondents are divided into three age groups viz. young age group, middle age group and old age group. Those elites whose ages are within the range of eighteen to forty years are placed under young age group. Those who are forty-one years and above but have not crossed sixty are grouped under middle age group, and those who are sixty one years and above are placed under old age group. Data shown in Table 1 gives age distribution of twenty-five elites included in this study. The data reveals that elites are found in different age groups. They do not come from a particular age group. However, it is evident that an overwhelming number of respondents belong to middle and old age groups. There are eleven respondents in the middle age group, and ten in the old age group. In the young age group, we have only four respondents. Four traditional and church leaders, three intellectuals, and two political elites represent the middle age group. Bureaucrats and businessmen and students / youth leaders also have one respondent each in the middle

age group. In the old age group, four are from bureaucrats and businessmen categories and two each from politicians and intellectuals. Among the traditional and church leaders and students / youth leaders, only one respondent each can be categorized as old. Only one politician and three students / youth leaders represent the young age group.

Table 1

Age Distribution of Respondents

Elites→ Age groups↓	Poli- ticians	Intell- ectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church leaders	Sub- total
Young age (18-40)	1	-	-	3	-	4
Middle age (41-60)	2	3	1	1	4	11
Old age (61 and above)	2	2	4	1	1	10
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25

Gender Distribution

The study reveals high degree of gender inequality in terms of participation in community affairs. The Table 2 shows predominant representation of male elites.

Table 2

Representation of Respondents in terms of Gender

Elites→ Sex↓	Politicians	Intellectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church leaders	Total
Male	5	5	5	5	4	24
Female	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25

To substantiate the findings, further investigation was carried out on this particular issue by examining participation of Paite women in different Paite / Zomi organizations.¹⁴ It is found out that only in Siamsinpawlpi (students' association) and church organizations, women participation was noticed. Even in these organizations, women generally occupy lower rungs of hierarchy.

The contemporary Paite women have made significant progress in the field of education and other walks of life. Some of them have occupied high administrative posts in both central and state governments.¹⁵ In spite of the achievements they have made, when it comes to community affairs and politics, women's role and participation is found to be minimal. The predominant position of men in political decision-making process may be related to the patriarchal traditions and customs of the community. However, marginal participation of women is not a peculiar feature of the Paite society alone; it is phenomenon found in many communities as shown by other studies.¹⁶

Educational Qualification

For meaningful analysis, educational level of the elites is grouped into two categories: i) under graduate and ii) graduate and above. The latter category is further divided into three sub-categories viz. a) Graduate and Post-graduate in humanities and social sciences, b) Professionals such as engineers, doctors, and advocates, and

¹⁴ Organisations such as Zomi Mothers' Association and others where membership is mean only for women are not considered.

¹⁵ For details, refer *Siamsinpawlpi Annual Magazine Twenty Fifth Year of Publication*, Lamka, 1987, pp. s (1) - s (xxxv)

¹⁶ For instance see Sheo Kumar Lal, *The Urban Elite*, Thomson (India), Delhi, 1974; S P Guru, *Political Socialisation of the Urban Political Elites*, Discovery Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

c) M. Phil / Ph. D degree holders. Table 3 shows educational qualification of the elites.

The data in the Table 3 shows the absence of illiterate among the members of elites. It is seen that only two of them have higher secondary qualifications – one among them is a student / youth leader and the other one a church worker. The rest are graduate and above. Thirteen members of elites have education up to graduate or post-graduate level. Six members of elites are M. Phil / Ph. D degrees holders. The rest four elites are professional degree holders.

Table 3

Educational Qualification of Respondents

Elites→		Politicians	Intellectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church leaders	Sub-total
Educational level↓							
Under-graduate	Under Matric	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Higher Secondary	-	-	-	1	1	2
Graduate and above	Graduate and Post-graduate	4	2	4	2	1	13
	Professional degrees (Engineers, doctors, advocates)	-	1	1	2	-	4
	M. Phil / Ph. D	1	2	-	-	3	6

Two intellectuals and three church leaders possess Ph. D degrees. Three of them had obtained Ph. D degrees from secular streams while two from theology. One from politician category possesses M. Phil degree. Among those who have

professional degree two elites are from students / youth leaders category and one respondent each are from intellectuals and bureaucrats and businessmen category.

Occupation

Occupation of the elites are broadly divided into four categories viz. cultivators, employed in government and semi-government, employed in private institutions, self-employed professionals, and others. Under government and semi-government employees, we have included academicians, bureaucrats, medical doctor, engineers working for government, managers, etc. If elites are working in private institutions and NGOs, they are taken as employees of private institutions. If elites are found to earn their living by doing business, and through institution run by them, they are counted as self-employed. The other occupational group consists of pensioners and social workers. From Table 4 it is seen that elites comprises of people from different walks of life.

Table 4

Occupation of Respondents

Elites→ Occupational groups↓	Politi- cians	Intelle- ctuals	Bureaucrats & Business- men	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total	
Cultivators	-	-	-	-	-	0	
Employed in Government and Semi-government	1	3	1	3	1	9	
Employed in private institutions	1	-	-	-	3	4	
Self-employed professionals	-	-	-	1	-	1	
Others	Pensioners*	-	2	4	-	1	7
	Social workers	3	-	-	1	-	4
Total						25	

* Most of the pensioners (with the exception of one) are from government services and they are still drawing regular pension salary.

Out of twenty-five elites surveyed, none of the respondents is engaged in cultivation for their livelihood. Nine members of elites are reported to be employees of government / semi-government services and four members of elites are employees of private institutions. Seven among them are retired persons drawing pensions and four are social workers.

Among pensioners, four elites are from bureaucrats and businessmen category, two from intellectual category and one from church background. From the survey, it is found out that two pensioners are engaged in work (even) after their retirement from active government service. One is working in college as a principal and the other as an advocate. Three claiming to be social worker are from politician category and one respondent from student / youth leader category.

Father's Occupation

To understand whether the occupations of the modern Paite elites are different from their forefathers, the survey looked at their parents' occupation. Table 5 shows that significant numbers of the fathers of these elites were cultivators and government employees. While thirteen of the fathers were found to have agriculture background, ten were found to be government employees. It is also seen that father of one respondent is a self-employed and father of another was a politician.

A comparison study of Table 4 and Table 5 shows, although the parents of more than half of the respondents were engaged in agriculture, none of the elites surveyed engage in agriculture for their livelihood. This indicates that there has been a

marked change in the occupational background of the Paite elites - a shift from agriculture to modern activities.

Table 5

Occupation of the Fathers

Elites→ Father's designation↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Tradi- tional & Church leaders	Sub- total
Cultivators	3	3	3	1	3	13
Government employees including pensioners	1	1	2	4	2	10
Politician	1	-	-	-	-	1
Self-employed	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total						25

Nature and Size of Family

In order to understand their family background, the survey attempted to examine whether they come from joint family or nuclear families or extended nuclear families. Data regarding nature of family suggest high incidence of joint families among the respondents. Table 6.1 shows that thirteen out of twenty-five surveyed elites are members of joint families as against nine from nuclear families and three from extended nuclear families.

All five respondents from students / youth leaders are from joint families. Three respondents each from politicians and intellectuals categories have joint families. Joint family is found to be least among the respondents from bureaucrats and church leaders. Only one each from the two categories claimed to have joint family

background. The high incidence of joint families could be probably explained from the fact that being still young and economically not fully self-reliance, the students / youth leaders live with their families.

Table 6.1

Nature of Respondents' Family

Elites→ Nature of Family↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church leaders	Total
Joint Family	3	3	1	5	1	13
Nuclear Family	1	2	2	-	4	9
Extended Nuclear Family	1	-	2	-	-	3

Nuclear family background is highest among the traditional and church leaders with four respondents. This is followed by two each from intellectuals, and bureaucrats and businessmen category. Among the political elite, only one respondent has nuclear family. Only one member of political elite and two from bureaucrats and businessmen category claimed to have belonged to extended nuclear family. Table 6.1 also shows that elites belonging to politicians and bureaucrats and businessmen have representation in all the three family backgrounds. We find both joint and nuclear families among the intellectuals and traditional and church leaders.

Data in Table 6.2 shows the family size of each respondent and average size of family in each elite category. As seen from the Table 6.2, sizes of family are grouped into three viz. small, medium and large. A family of one to five members is considered as small and family members of six and above but less than ten is taken as medium. Again, a family having more than eleven members is counted as large.

Table 6.2

Number of Family Members

Elites↓	Sizes of family of the respondents			Family members of all respondents	Average family members in each family
	small (1-5)	medium (6-10)	large (11-15)		
Politicians	-	5	-	40	8
Intellectuals	1	4	-	34	6.8
Bureaucrats & Businessmen	1	3	1	40	8
Students / Youth Leaders	-	4	1	52	10.4
Traditional & Church Leaders	1	4	-	30	6
Total	3	20	2	196	39.2

The data presented in Table 6.2 gives high incidence of medium size family among the elites. Twenty respondents have medium size family as compared to three with small families and two with large families. The average size of families of students / youth leaders is 10.4. Families of politicians, and bureaucrats and businessmen have an average of eight members each. The average size of families from intellectuals is 6.8. Interestingly, families from traditional and church leaders have only an average of six members in family.

Inter-Community Marriage

Studying of incidence of inter-community marriage is one important way of understanding family background of elites and their attitude towards inter-community relations. The survey shows that incidence of inter-community marriage is not high among the community elites. As seen from Table 7, only seven members out of

twenty-five surveyed elites have reported of inter-community marriages in their families.



Table 7

Representation of Families of Elites in term of Inter-community Marriage ★

Elites↓	Number of inter-community marriages	Name of community
Politicians	-	-
Intellectuals	1	Gangte, Anal (from one family)
Bureaucrats & Businessmen	2	Thadou-Kuki, Malayali
Students / Youth Leaders	2	Hmar, Tangkhul-Naga
Traditional & Church Leaders	2	Lusei, Meitei
Total	7	-

In spite of the small number, it can still be inferred that the Paite are not averse to inter-community marriage as quite a few have married to diverse communities. The communities with which the seven elites are reported to have inter-community marriages in the families are Gangte, Anal, Thadou-Kuki, Hmar, Lusei, Malayali, and Tangkhul-Naga, Meitei. The first four communities are from within the Zo communities and the last three are outside the Zo communities.

Earning Members in the Family and Sources of Income

The survey report shows that the families of community elites have more than one member earning incomes. Together there are sixty earning members in the families of twenty-five surveyed elites. There are fifteen earners among the families of bureaucrats and businessmen category, twelve each from the families of

intellectuals and students / youth leaders. Families of traditional and church leaders together have eleven earners and for politicians, the number is ten.

Table 8.1

Number of Earning Members, Average and Percentage

Elites ↓	family members of all elites	Average family members in each family	Number of Earning members in each elite category	Average number of earning members	Percentage of family member earning income (%)
Politicians	40	8	10	2	25
Intellectuals	34	6.8	12	2.4	35.29
Bureaucrats & Businessmen	40	8	15	3	37.5
Students / Youth Leaders	52	10.4	12	2.4	23.08
Traditional & Church Leaders	30	6	11	2.2	36.67
Total	196	39.2	60	12	-

The average number of earners (as seen from Table 8.1) for each family ranges from two to three. The highest is three for bureaucrats and businessmen. Next to this come intellectuals and students / youth leaders with 2.4 each. For the traditional and church leaders the average is 2.2 and for the political elite is two. The percentage of family members earning income is highest for families of bureaucrats and businessmen category with 37.5 percent. This is followed by traditional and church leaders with 36.67 percent. For politician category, the percentage is twenty-five and for students / youth leaders, it is 23.08 percent.

Table 8.2 shows that the families did not depend only from one source, but from two or more different sources. The study shows that two families are dependent

on agriculture, and six on business, while twenty-three earn regular salary and twelve from pensions. And others is only two as compared to thirty-five salary and pensioners. This shows that salaries (regular and pensions) are the main source of earnings for majority of the families.

Table 8.2

Sources of Income of the Families

Elites↓	Sources of Family Income (in terms of money)				
	Agri-Culture	Business	Salaries*		others
			Salary	Pensioners	
Politicians	1	-	4	1	2
Intellectuals	-	-	5	2	
Bureaucrats & Businessmen	-	4	4	2	
Students / Youth Leaders	1	2	5	3	-
Traditional & Church Leaders	-	-	5	2	-
Total	2	6	23	12	2

* As most of the pensioners are retired government servants (with the exception of one) still drawing regular pension salary, they are included under salaries groups.

Monthly Income and Expenditure of Families

Through the analyses of the economic status of the Paite elite families, an attempt is made in the survey to study their monthly incomes and expenditures. The data collected is given in Table 9.1 and Table 9.2.

The data in Table 9.1 shows that nineteen families out of twenty-five have income above sixteen thousands. All five out of nineteen high-income families are from bureaucrats and businessmen category. Four respondents each from intellectuals,

students / youth leaders, and traditional and church leaders also earn more than sixteen thousands. The remaining two respondents are from the politicians' category.

Table 9.1

Family Monthly Income

Elites→ Monthly Income (in Rs) ↓	Politi- cians	Intell- ectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Tradi- tional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
Low (up to 10000)	1	-	-	-	1	2
Middle (between 10000 to 16000)	2	1	-	1	-	4
High (above 16000)	2	4	5	4	4	19

In the middle-income group, four families have income which ranges from ten thousand to sixteen thousands per month. Two families are from political elite and one each from intellectual and student / youth leader. The low income group is represented by only two families, one each from politician and traditional and church leaders.

Table 9.2 reveals that significant numbers of elite families have high monthly expenditure. Sixteen out of twenty-five families are reported to spend more than sixteen thousands in a month. The monthly expenditure of six families is found to be within the range of ten thousands to sixteen thousands. The remaining three families spend less than ten thousands per month.

Among the sixteen high expenditure families, all five families are from bureaucrats and businessmen and four families are from students / youth leaders. Three families each are from the intellectuals and traditional and church leaders. The

politicians have only one family with more than sixteen thousand expenditure per month.

Table 9.2

Family Monthly Expenses

Elites→ Monthly Expenditure (in Rs)↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- Total
Low (up to 10000)	2	-	-	-	1	3
Middle(between 10000-to 16000)	2	2	-	1	1	6
High (above 16000)	1	3	5	4	3	16

In the medium expenditure groups, two families each from politicians and intellectuals categories spend money, which ranges from ten thousand to sixteen thousand per month. Students / youth leaders and traditional and church leaders also have one family each in the medium expenditure group.

Only two elites represent a family whose expenditure is less than ten thousands per month from politicians and traditional and church leaders. The former category of elite has two families, while the latter has only one family.

A comparative analysis of Table 9.1 and Table 9.2 reveals that the data of income and expenditure of the families more or less coincide. From the study, it is clear that higher the family income, the higher would be their capacity to spend. This is a natural phenomenon as people with more wealth will have more resources to utilize or spend.

Household Items Owned

To determine the level of living in terms of material possessions, we surveyed household items that the elite possess in their houses. As can be observed from Table 10, the students / youth leaders appear to fare better than the rest of the elites while traditional and church leaders stood at the bottom.

Table 10

Household Items Owned

Items→ Elites↓	Telev- ision	Fridge	Washing Machine	Motor Vehicle*	Assam type / pucca house**
Politicians	5	5	3	5	5
Intellectuals	5	4	3	5	5
Bureaucrats & Businessmen	5	4	3	5	5
Students / Youth Leaders	5	5	5	5	5
Traditional & Church Leaders	4	4	3	4	5
Total	24	22	17	24	25

* Vehicles include two wheelers, three wheelers and four wheelers.

** The record of type of house was done through personal observation.

It is seen that out of twenty-five surveyed elites, only one family did not have television, three families are without fridge, eight families did not possess washing machine, and one family did not have vehicle. None of the elites own all items in full. The survey also reveals that cent percent of the respondents live in Assam type or pucca house. The study shows that the Paite elites enjoy comfortable standard of life and possess household items considered luxuries by the poorer sections.

Community Activities and Elites Participation

So far, we have worked at the general socio-economic status of the respondents. This section will now focus on participation of elites in community issues. This will be done mainly through an analysis of their participation in activities of different Paite / Zomi organizations.

Church Attendance

To understand the social engagement of the elites in respect of church service, each respondent was asked whether they participated in church activities and if yes, how often. It is learned that all elites participate in church activities.

As shown in Table 11, eighteen respondents said that they attend church services on all service days. All intellectuals and traditional and church leaders

Table 11

Representation of Respondents in term of Church Attendance

Elites→ Choices↓	Politi- cians	Intell- ectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
On all service days	3	5	4	1	5	18
Only on important occasions	1	-	1	4	-	6
Only on Sunday	1	-	1	2	-	4

* As some of the respondents claimed more than one choice, the number shown in the table does not tally with the number of surveyed elites.

participate in church activities on all service days. Four from bureaucrats and businessmen category and three from politician do the same, while it is only one for

students / youth leaders. The data also shows that six members of elites go to church services only on important occasions. Among them four are from students / youth leaders and one each are from politician and bureaucrats and businessmen category. Among the Sunday churchgoers, the sample has two students / youth leaders and one each from politician and bureaucrats and businessmen category.

Organizational Membership and Involvement

To understand the association of elites in organizations and their involvement in community affairs, the respondents were asked to tick their participation / involvement in organizations such as Paite Tribe Council, Young Paite Association, Siamsinpawlpi, Paite Literature Society, Church organizations, Zomi Re-unification Organization, Zomi Mothers' Association, Zomi Students' Federation, Zomi Youth Association, Zomi Council, and Churachandpur District Students Union. Except one respondent, all others responded to the query. Table 12 presents the summary of the response.

Table 12

Representation in Organizations

Elites→ Choices↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
Three or more than three organizations	3	4	3	4	-	14
Two organizations	-	1	-	-	3	4
Only one organization	1	-	2	1	2	6

The survey establishes that majority of the elites - fourteen in numbers are associated with three or more than three community organizations. While six are

associated with only one organization, four others claimed that they work for two organizations. The finding indicates the high involvement of the elites in community affairs. It also confirms the significant position occupied by ethnic organizations in community affairs.

Elites Participation in Meetings

Table 13.1 shows participation of elites in meetings. Of all categories of elites, intellectuals show greater interest in participating in meetings of different organizations regularly. Five elites each from politicians and students / youth leaders also do the same. Four elites from bureaucrats and businessmen category and three elites from traditional and church leaders also stated that they participate in the meetings regularly.

Table 13.1

Participation of Elites in Meetings

Elites→ Frequency of Elites participation↓	Politi- cians	Intell- ectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
Regularly	5	9	4	5	3	26
Sometimes / occasionally	7	5	5	11	6	34
Once a while	-	4	3	3	4	14

Table 13.2 shows the breakup of elites involvement in organizations for each elite category. For analysis, we will take up only the case of regular participants in meetings organized by the different organizations.

Table 13.2
Elites involvement in Meeting for each Elite Category

Elites →	Organizers →	Choices ↓	Politicians					Intellectuals					Bureaucrats & Businessmen					Students / Youth Leaders					Traditional & Church Leaders				
			Community Organizations	Literary Organizations	Church	Students / Youth	Political Parties	Community Organizations	Literary Organizations	Church	Students / Youth	Political Parties	Community Organizations	Literary Organizations	Church	Students / Youth	Political Parties	Community Organizations	Literary Organizations	Church	Students / Youth	Political Parties	Community Organizations	Literary Organizations	Church	Students / Youth	Political Parties
Regularly	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	5	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	
Sometimes / Occasionally	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	
Once a while	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	2	-	1	2	1	1	1	-	1	1	

From Table 13.2, it is seen that church meetings draw maximum number of regular participation by elites. Even among respondents under politician category, three claimed that they attend church meetings regularly. Only one from each category stated that they attend the meetings of political parties and community organizations regularly. From the intellectual category, all five elites claimed that they go to church meetings regularly. Meeting of community organizations also attracted two regular participants, while students / youth and literary organization draw one respondent each. Coming to bureaucrats and businessmen category, three respondents stated that they regularly attend the meetings organized by church, while only one stated that he attends meetings of community organizations regularly.

The statistics for students / youth leaders shows two elite each stated that they attend for the meetings organized by church and students / youth organizations regularly, and only one respondent chooses to attend the meetings of community organizations regularly. From traditional and church leaders, three respondents regularly participated in church meetings. It is the only elite category where regular participation of elite is found to be associated with just one organization.

Nature of Elites Participation in Public Meetings

After examining the involvement of elite in politics, social and community affairs, it is considered important to find out the nature of their participation in public meetings and demonstration / procession. The respondents were asked whether they participate in the meetings as organizers, special guests or as passive participants. Table 14 shows the nature of participation of elites in public meetings.

Table 14

Nature of Participation of Elites in Public Meetings

Elites→ Capacities ↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
As organizer only	4	1	2	3	2	12
As special guest only	2	2	1	2	3	10
To listen to what people say only	1	3	1	4	2	11

* The number given in the table does not tally with number of surveyed elites as some of the elites claimed that they participated in more than in one capacity.

It may be noted that one respondent from politicians and two elite from bureaucrats and businessmen category did not respond to this question. From Table 14 it is seen that twelve members of elites said that they involve actively in organizing and planning of public meetings, while eleven members of elites claimed that they go to public meeting just to listen to what leaders say. Ten members of elites stated that they usually participate in public meetings as special guests. Due to participation of some respondents in more than one organization, overlapping of roles was observed. They may be organizers in some, while participate as special guests or as passive participants in others.

Elites Participation in Demonstrations and Processions

Table 15 gives nature of participation of elites in demonstrations and processions. If the elite are responsible for organizing, planning and leading the demonstration, they are considered as leaders. If the elite actively take part in

demonstration, thus following the direction and instruction given by the leaders, they can be considered as active followers. If the elite take part in demonstrations rarely / once in a while, they are taken as casual participants.

Table 15

Nature of Participation of Elites in Demonstration

Elites→ Capacities↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- total
As leaders	4	-	-	2	2	6
As active followers	1	-	-	1	1	3
As a casual participant	2	1	1	2	-	6
Total	5	1	1	5	3	15
Non-participants	-	4	4	2	2	12

Note: As some of the elites claimed to have participated in more than one capacity, the figure shown in the table does not tally with the number of surveyed elites.

From the survey, it is seen that six members of elites take part in demonstration as leaders. The number of elite for casual participants is also six. The data also shows three elites as active followers. From the survey, it is also observed that most elites did not take part in demonstrations. Twelve member of elites claimed that they stay away from demonstrations.

The high non-participation of elites in demonstration may probably be related to their profession. We know from the earlier discussion that majority of the elites are from government employees background. The kind of work or the ethics of their work culture may have restricted them from participating in demonstrations or processions.

Ideological Orientation: Perceptions, Attitudes and Values of Paite Elites

This part has been mainly devoted to the study of ideological leanings of the Paite elites. In order to understand the nature of the elites, it is necessary to examine the ideals they cherish and the values that they hold and advocate. In what direction the community or society advances depends to a considerable extent on the ideological leanings of the elites. Hence, we need to study the ideological orientations of the Paite elites.

Ideology is identified with broad fundamental norms generally shared by the members of society or community.¹⁷ Ideology here refers to general ‘perceptions, attitudes and values’ held and applied in daily activities, in decision-making, in maintaining social relationships, and in performing their roles in different social and political organizations and institutions. Under ideological aspects, issues like political affiliation, nature of voting, political identity, are taken into consideration. Based on the information collected through questionnaire and schedule, we will be able to analyze the political preferences, identities and affiliations of the Paite elites.

Political Affiliation

One way of knowing the political ideals and values upheld by a person or group of individuals is to study his / her nature of participation and involvement in the political process. With this view in mind, the survey sought to understand political involvement of Paite elites. Table 16 presents political affiliation of the surveyed

¹⁷ Julius Gould and L William Kolb (eds.), *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, UNESCO, The Free Press, New York 1967, pp. 743-745.

Paite elites. The survey reveals insignificance of political parties in the political life of the respondents. It clearly highlights the general apathy towards political parties. This is evident from Table 16 where most respondents (nine members of elites) said that they were concerned with candidates, not with political parties.

Table 16

Political Party Preference of the Elites

Elites→ Choices↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Total
Congress	1	-	-	-	1	2
Regional Party	1	-	-	-	-	1
Lok Janshakti Party	1	-	-	-	-	1
Depends on the candidate	2	2	-	2	3	9
Not interested	1	3	5	2	1	12
Others	Nil					

* Figure in the Table 16 does not tally with the surveyed elites as one respondent chose more than one from the given choices.

The findings reveal that the tract record of parties and party manifestoes are not relevant to them. It also suggests that the respondents can always switch loyalty from one party to another. Only two members of the elite have political affiliation, one to the Congress party, one of the major political parties and another to Lok Janshakti Party, a regional party. The respondent who has affiliation to regional party, also, expressed that his preference for political affiliation is also determined by the person who contests in the elections.

The largest number of respondents numbering twelve, have expressed that they are not interested in political affiliations. All five respondents from bureaucrats

and businessmen category fall under this category. Among the rest, three are from intellectuals, two from students / youth leaders and one each from politicians, traditional and church leaders. One student / youth leader expressed that he does not have any political affiliation, as he is a government servant.

Participation in Election and Nature of Voting

Participation of Paite elites in election is shown in Table 17.1. The data reveals that almost half of the elites do not actively involve in the elections.

Table 17.1

Participation of Elites in Elections

Elites→ Do you take active part in Election↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- Total
Yes	5	3	1	1	3	13
No	-	2	4	4	2	12

Table 17.2 shows respondents' voting behavior in elections. It is seen that eighteen elites cast their vote in elections based on personal equation where as five

Table 17.2

Nature of Voting of Elites

Elites→ Voting Pattern / Behavior↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- Total
Party lines	2	1	1	1-	-	5
Community lines	-	1	-	-	-	1
Personal equations	3	4	2	4	5	18

respondents voted based on party lines. Two from bureaucrats and businessmen category and one from students / youth leader did not respond to the query. This only further confirms insignificance of political manifesto or party ideology in the political life of the elites.

Elites and Issue Preference

Understanding one's area of political interest is one way of knowing from where one derives the values and for what they spend their time and resources. In the survey when the respondents were asked whether they read newspaper regularly, all responded affirmatively. Since all respondents said that they read newspapers, we probed further to understand which issues interest them most. Cutting across the groups (Table 18), most of them, seventeen in all said that they are interested in community issues. Those who said national and international issues interest them the most are only four. Three said that they are interested in religion and cultural issues and only one said that he is interested in state politics.

Table 18

Political Interests of Elites

Elites→	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- Total
Issues of Interest ↓						
Community issues	2	3	4	4	4	17
National and international affairs	2	-	1	-	1	4
Religion and culture	1	2				3
State politics				1		1

A comparative study of elite categories will give us a clearer picture of choices made by the respondents. From Table 18, it is seen that four elites each from bureaucrats and businessmen, students / youth leaders, and traditional and church leaders claimed community issues as the issues that interest them the most. Three elites from intellectual category and two from politician category also fall in the group.

Issues concerning national and international affairs are the first preference of two politicians and one respondent each from bureaucrats and businessmen category and traditional and church leaders are most interested in religious activities. One politician and one intellectual also claimed that religious activities interest them most. Only one student / youth leader claimed that he was deeply interested in state politics.

Elites and Political Identity

In the survey, the elites were asked how they identify themselves politically. Twelve elites choose Paite as their first preference political identity while five elite have opted for Zomi. Seven identified themselves as Paite-Zomi. None of the elite have opted for Kuki or Manipuri as their first preference political identity.

Three elites each from politicians, intellectuals, and students / youth leaders preferred to be called Paite. One respondent from bureaucrats and businessmen category and two elites from traditional and church leaders also fall in the group.

Table 19

First Preference Ethnic Identity of Elites

Elites→ Identity choices↓	Politi- cians	Intel- lectuals	Bureaucrats & Businessmen	Students / Youth Leaders	Traditional & Church Leaders	Sub- Total
Paite	3	3	1	3	2	12
Zomi	1	-	2	2	-	5
Paite-Zomi	1	2	1	-	3	7
Kuki	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Paite, Zomi, Kuki, and Manipuri are the identity choices given to the respondents. However, some respondents mentioned Paite-Zomi. As such, Paite-Zomi is included in the identity choices.

One politician and two elite each from bureaucrats and businessmen and students / youth leaders preferred to be identified as Zomi. Among the elites who have chosen Paite-Zomi as their political identity, we have three elites from traditional and church leaders, two elites from intellectuals. One respondent each from politicians and bureaucrats and businessmen category also choose Paite-Zomi as their political identity.

Conclusion

The survey undertaken to study the socio-economic background and ideological orientation of Paite elites in Churachandpur gives us a clear picture of the nature and role of Paite elites in social, political, cultural domains. From the study, it is observed that an overwhelming number of Paite elites are above forty years of age. Eleven (forty-four percent) are in the middle age group (41-60) and ten (forty percent) in the old age (61 and above) group. There are only four (sixteen percent) in the young age group (14-40). Another interesting finding is on the unequal gender

representation in the affairs of the community. Only one member of the elite out of the twenty-five surveyed elites is a woman. Further investigation shows that only in student (Siamsinpawlpi) and church organizations, women participation was noticed. Even in these organizations, women generally occupy lower rungs of hierarchy. The finding clearly shows that male elites dominate the decision-making process in the community.

The study shows that one's educational and occupation status plays an important role in the making of elites. There are no illiterate elites among the respondents. All elites are educated and most of them have completed degree. Even though elites are drawn from different occupational backgrounds, most of them are salaried employees and have stable economic means.

Although some of their parents have agricultural background, none of the elites is found to be engaged in cultivation for their livelihood. This indicates total shift of elites from agriculture to modern activities and symbolizes the decline of traditional hold on the society.

It is observed that majority of the elites hail from joint family background (thirteen members of elites i.e. fifty-two percent are from joint family's background). The average size of family ranges from six to 10.4. The large size of families is explained by the presence of high incidence of joint families among the elites.

In respect to inter-community marriage, the finding is quite revealing. Although the incidences of inter-community marriage are not many, it is observed

that community elites are quite open and liberal when it comes to inter-community marriages.

Majority of the families have high incidence of high-income families. There is more than one earning member in the families of the respondents. Together there are sixty earning members in the families of twenty-five surveyed elites. The average number of earners in Paite elite family ranges from two to three. Even though the families depended from two or more different sources, salaries (ninety-two percent regular and forty-eight percent pensions) is concluded as the main source of earnings for majority of the families.

The majority of the Paite elites families surveyed have a decent income of over sixteen thousand per month. This is explained by the presence of large number of joint families among the families of the elites. It is also related to the existence of significant number of earning family members.

Out of the twenty-five surveyed elites, only one family (four percent) did not have television, three (twelve percent) families are without fridge, eight (thirty two percent) families did not possess washing machine, and one family (four percent) did not have vehicle. Even though none of the elites is found to possess all these household items, it is found that they enjoy comfortable standard life and possess households amenities considered luxuries by the poorer sections.

Another important finding is on the high involvement of elites in community affairs. It is observed that fourteen members of elites (fifty-six percent) out of the

twenty-five respondents are associated with three or more than three community organizations while six (twenty-four percent) are associated with only one organization. Four (sixteen percent) others claimed that they work for two organizations. The study also shows that twelve members of elites (forty-eight percent) are involved in organizing and planning of public meetings, while eleven members of elites (forty-four percent) are found to attend public meetings just to listen to what leaders say. Ten members of elites (forty percent) usually participate in public meetings as special guests. It is also observed that there is an overlapping of roles performed by the elites.

In contrast to the above, fourteen members of elites (fifty-six percent) stay away from political demonstrations and processions. This may be probably due to the professions and occupations of the elites. As majority of the elites are form government employees, the kind of work or the ethics of their work culture may have prevented them from participating in demonstration or profession.

It is observed that only two members of elites (eight percent) have affiliation to political parties. Twelve members of elites (forty-eight percent) expressed that they are not interested in political affiliation while nine members of elites (thirty-six percent) said that they are concerned with candidates, not with political parties. The finding clearly reveals the insignificant role of political parties in the political life of the elites. It also shows the general apathy of the Paite people towards political parties. Record of accomplishment of parties and party manifestoes are not relevant to them. It is then natural that they cast their votes without any consideration for political ideology and can easily switch their loyalty from one party to another.

From the survey, it is learned that all respondents read newspapers regularly. Seventeen (sixty-eight percent) of them reported that they are most interested on issues concerning community. The study established that news concerning community issues is the first preference of elites.

Finally, coming to the preferred ethnic identity choice of the elites, it is found out that most prefer to be called Paite, Zomi or Paite-Zomi. None of the respondents has opted for Kuki or Manipuri as their first preference political identity.

Chapter IV

CONSTRUCTION OF PAITE IDENTITY

For a community to exist, the group must have self-identification that differentiates it from other communities. In the first chapter it has been pointed out that community consciousness presupposes prior existence of 'self-identification' based on commonalities such as language, customs, culture, etc. which enable an ethnic group or community to view itself as a homogenous cultural entity. However, in the making of an ethnic community normally it is the socially relevant features, not cultural differences that are 'actually there', which are crucial. Select cultural commonalities are used to create and maintain socio-cultural boundaries of the group.¹ Many eminent scholars have recognized the crucial role of language and literature in the formation of ethnic political consciousness. As language is intrinsic to the expression of culture, any discussion on identity has to take into account the question of language in identity formation. As has been noted in chapter II, scholars like Benedict Anderson, Adrian Hastings, Paul R Brass and Mrinal Miri have identified language, especially print language as fundamental in the emergence of conscious political community. According to Anderson, the convergence of capitalism and print technology creates the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which sets the stage for the modern nation.² Adrian Hastings believes that translations of religious texts (such as Biblical texts) into a range of vernaculars

¹ Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1969, pp. 1-38.

² For details refer, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

significantly altered and extended the existing identities, and even created new ones.³ However, the mere evidence of translation of religious text does not establish the enhanced status of a written vernacular. Its social effects depend upon the extent to which the written vernacular impinges upon popular usage and becomes something of a recognized standard, a medium that ordinary people can respond to.⁴ According to Mrinal Miri, “A community which has not developed a literature has not realized itself”.⁵ Even Paul Brass has noted that the formation of community depends on factors like the growth of literacy, development of mass media especially newspapers, standardization of local language, existence of books in the local language, ability of leaders to communicate with the group members effectively, and finally the strategies pursued by the community leaders.⁶ In northeast India, manifestation of ethnic political consciousness and its subsequent collective articulation usually took place under the leadership of the most awakened sections of the society, the emerging elites. The emerging elites made use of materials and information provided by the past and highlighted one or more of its distinguishing features to differentiate themselves from others. By doing so, they nurtured the ideas of ‘they’ and ‘we’, which are essential to creation of a community. In the background of these general theoretical innovations, an attempt is made in this chapter to study the process of construction of Paite identity.

³ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵ Mrinal Miri, ‘Introduction’, in Mrinal Miri (ed.), *Linguistic Situation in North East India*, published for North East India Council for Social Science Research by Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 11-17.

⁶ Paul R Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 62-66.

Making of Paite Identity

It is still not clear at what point of time 'Paite' emerged as a community name. Some scholars and writers contend that their neighboring tribes gave the name Paite to them.⁷ Outsiders might have been responsible for identifying the people as a Paite, but they were not responsible for giving the people with a common identity and their language. Like all other communities of the northeast India, the Paite claim that they have customs, culture, language that is exclusively theirs, distinct from their neighbors.⁸ As already pointed out in the preceding chapters, the Lusei, Paite, Thadou, Hmar, etc, have many things in common and are very easily distinguishable from Nagas and Meitei.⁹ Despite the commonalities, each Zo community considers itself distinct from others. All of them zealously try to safeguard and promote their own language, literature and identities. As Paul R Brass stages of ethnic community formation suits the Paite as well, the analysis of Paite identity formation is based on the insights of Brass formulation.

Elites, Script Language and Paite Identity

According to Paul R Brass, creation of a self-conscious language community

⁷ Refer George A Grierson, *Languages of North Eastern India*, Vol. II, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995 (first published 1904), pp. 574-579; Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh*, published by the author, Aizawl, 1987; Nangkhanpau Hauzel, 'History and Culture of the Paite', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1987; H Kamkhenthang, 'Paite / Tedim Chin Pau leh Lai Thu', *Siamsin Thugousiah*, Vol. III, Siamsinpawpi Shillong Branch Publication, Shillong, 2001, pp. 18-22.

⁸ Refer *Memorandum of the Paite National Council demanding recognition of Paite as a Scheduled Tribe of India*, submitted to the Government of India on November 18, 1955. (Here after referred to as *PNC Memorandum 1955*). In a survey conducted by the author, several modern Paite elites pointed out customs, tradition, and language as distinct identity markers of the Paite.

⁹ For discussion on cultural and ethnic similarities of various Zo communities, see H Kamkhenthang, 'Groping for Identity', in *Prism of the Zo People*, Publication Board, 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration Committee of 2008 Lamka, 2008, pp. 219-228.

out of a group of related speakers, or a community of believers of common religion or faith, or the formation of caste organization (read ethnic organization), constitutes the first stage in the emergence of conscious ethnic community. In the year 1903, a Welsh Calvinistic Foreign Missionary Rev. David E Jones and T Vialphung (1889-1936) prepared Paite Primer.¹⁰ The following year, i.e. in 1904, Grierson's Linguistic Survey was published which referred to Paite language. In Tedim region in Chin state of Burma, Rev. J H Cope, a Christian missionary, who was also a linguist, prepared Chin Primers in Tedim (Paite) dialect in the year 1913. The New Testament of the Bible was published in Tedim in 1932.¹¹ Dr. Crozier, a North East India General Mission (NEIGM) missionary, went with Pu H Chinlang NEIGM worker-cum-headmaster and some other Paite to Tedim and brought the Primer, songbook and the New Testament of the Bible to Manipur.¹² Under Crozier's guidance, the Bible and songbooks prepared by the missionaries in Tedim were used in the mission schools run by NEIGM in Churachandpur, Manipur. The arrival of one H Nengzachin on the scene during the last part of the 1930s had set a new trend in the development of Paite language in India. H Nengzachin was a close associate of the missionaries of the NEIGM. He passed class X from Shillong in the year 1934. With the assistance of H H Coleman, the General Secretary of the Home Council in Philadelphia,¹³ H Nengzachin went to America to study in a Theological Seminary in the year 1936. After his return in 1939, he devoted his life to the activities of NEIGM. Being one

¹⁰ T Vialphung of Kaihlam village in Churachandpur district, Manipur went to Aizawl to attend mission school. It was during his stay in Aizawl that he prepared Paite Primer with the assistance of David E Jones. See T K Muana, 'Nominal Phrase in Paite and English: A Contrastive Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1998, p. 30.

¹¹ 'Tedim Kampau-in Biakna Laibu le Sang Laibu a Kibawlina', *Tedim BEHS* No. I, Golden Jubilee Commemorative Magazine (1948-1998), Tedim, 1998, pp. 31-52.

¹² Tualchin Neihzial (ed.), *Paite Late leh Thute (An Anthology of Paite Prose and Poetry)*, Paite Literature Society, Lamka, Manipur, 2004, p. 145.

¹³ The Home Council in Philadelphia supported and funded NEIGM.

amongst the first educated Paite of India, he could easily influence his community members.

H Nengzachin was a strong defender of Paite identity. At the cost of incurring the displeasure of the missionaries in charge of NEIGM, he often attended meetings of the tribal leaders and stoutly defended the distinctive identity of the Paite tribe.¹⁴ In *He Leads Me (An Autograph Anecdote)*, H Nengzachin mentioned that he declined the British government's offer to join the British army. In the words of H Nengzachin, "It (the offer) will be good for me; and it will greatly help me in eking out a living. However, I was convinced that this was not the will of God, who had guided me this far. Therefore, I choose to remain with my people, write books on theology, and especially translate the whole Bible".¹⁵ It is important to mention here that H Nengzachin had a Remington typewriter, which he brought with him from America. He used his typewriter for translation of the Bible in Paite. H Nengzachin used to correspond with S T Haugo of Burma,¹⁶ as he believed in the unity of the Paite people living in India and Burma. In the year 1941, H Nengzachin wrote a hymnbook *Labupi*, which was later published by NEIGM. In 1944 Nengzachin started translation of the New Testament of the Bible with Psalms in Paite. It was written in his *He Leads Me (An Autograph Anecdote)* that he and his family fled from the NEIGM headquarters (mission compound) to Kaihlam village during the Second World War.¹⁷ It was during his stay in Kaihlam, he started translation of portion of the Bible in Paite. To use his words, "From this village (meaning Kaihlam), in the midst of my people, I started the work of the Lord God. When I look back, I began to wonder

¹⁴ V Dongzathang, 'Obituary', in H Nengzachin, *He Leads Me (An Autograph Anecdote)*, trans T Gwite IPS (Retd.), Imphal, 2003, pp. 19-24.

¹⁵ H Nengzachin, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ S T Haugo was one of the leading Paite-Tedim (Paitedim) / Zomi leaders of Burma.

¹⁷ All other mission workers also fled NEIGM headquarters, Mission Compound.

whether God had indeed brought about the Great War so that His work could start at the centre of the land of my people”.¹⁸ In the year 1945, H Nengzachin prepared Paite Primer *Sintung Bu*. Talking about it, he said, “To learn Paite, I wrote *Sintung Bu*”.¹⁹ Later H Nengzachin and H Chinlang, published another Hymnbook in the year 1950. H Nengzachin has thus laid the foundation for Paite literature on the Indian side.²⁰ According to T Gougin, “the entire Zomi of Manipur had acclaimed H Nengzachin’s service as a missionary. H Nengzachin had awakened the Zomi and turned them towards the Gospel. He used his intelligence, caliber and energy for the upliftment of an illiterate masses”.²¹ In addition to the works of H Nengzachin, some of the early books in Paite are *English-Paite-Manipuri Words Book* (1948) and *English-Hindustani-Paite Primer* (1950) written by T C Tiankham and T Gougin respectively. T C Tiankham was a contemporary of H Nengzachin. He graduated in the year 1944 and was the first graduate among the Paite-Zomi of India. He became a member of Manipur State Constitution Making Body 1947. T Gougin became trendsetter of Zomi politics in Manipur. His contributions will be discussed in the next chapter.

As different persons were involved in developing the script for the Paite, one could see differences in spelling and writing. Although songs, poems, folklores and folktales of the Paite are same, one can see differences in script. Differences in scripts can be compared to that of American English and British English. In this connection, the view of John Deng, former President of Paite Literature Society is worth noting. He writes, “In Tedim, Rev. J H Cope prepared Paite-Tedim primer using Roman alphabets, and in 1925 it was taught in school in Tedim sub-division up to class IV.

¹⁸ H Nengzachin, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰ Tualchin Neihzial (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²¹ T Gougin, ‘Forward’, in H Nengzachin, *op. cit.*, pp. ii-iii.

Dr. Crozier and some local youth brought the Primer and *Reader*²² texts from Tedim to be used in mission schools run by NEIGM in Churachandpur, Manipur. After 1940, H Nengzachin prepared *Sintung Bu*. During that time, some people say to H Nengzachin whether they cannot use and depend / rely on those texts and books that they have in Tedim. As a result of this, there is (spelling) difference in writing which almost make us two different people (sic)²³. To overcome these limitations, the Paite elites made efforts to develop uniform script. Notwithstanding such limitations in the script, the very development of a print language had a positive impact in arousing community consciousness. To put it in the words of Adrian Hastings, “the impact of a relatively small increase in the number of books in a community which has hitherto, had none or very few could be enormous”.²⁴ Development of print media increases opportunities for people to communicate and share ideas with their community members and helps to mould community opinion. This in the process helps in construction of a sort of social boundary among the communicative people of the said community. Once a significant vernacular literature comes into existence with translation of the psalms, summaries of the gospels, it fulfills religious as well as secular needs of the people.²⁵ It creates a more conscious community and builds up an enhanced sense of historical and cultural awareness. In the case of Paite also, the development of Paite script became an instruments for strengthening their consciousness as a political community.

²² *Reader* is name of the textbook.

²³ When John Deng wrote this, he was the President of Paite Literature Society. See John Deng, ‘Paite Zoumite Laipau Thupi’, in S Ngulzadal (compiler), *Paite Zoumite Laipau (Paite Zoumi Literature)*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1999, pp. 238-244. Also see Khup Za Go and Thangchinlam, ‘Laigelhzia Tawmkhat’, in S Ngulzadal (compiler), *ibid.*, pp. 146-150.

²⁴ Adrian Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Elites, Organizations and Paite Identity

The emergence of formal and informal ethnic organizations reinforces community solidarity through the pursuit of ethnic goals. Success of any social or political movement requires (political) organization, skilled leadership and resources. Ethnic organizations seek to protect community against external political competition and ensure unity of the people by managing internal rivalries and differences.²⁶ The importance of community organizations grows as the communities become more conscious of their rights and identity. The community organizations articulate the interests of community both within and outside the social boundaries. Among the Paite people, one can see emergence of different Paite organizations having varied intentions in their endeavor.

Siamsinpawlpi (SSPP)

One of the first organizations formed by the emerging Paite elites was Siamsinpawlpi formerly known as Paite Students' Association.²⁷ It was formed on January 13, 1947. The founder members of the organization were H Nengzachin, T Thangkhai, H Tualvung, T C Tiankham, T Thangkhogin, Phungdal, Ngulthong and T Jamkhothang.²⁸ The desire to involve student community in the affairs of the community prompted the community leaders to form the student's organization. The other reason is to safeguard the identity of the Paite. The SSPP pledged to be non-

²⁶ Paul Brass, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁷ The Bukpi Conference of 1953 changed Paite Students' Association to Siamsinpawlpi (SSPP).

²⁸ The designations of the founder members are Rev H Nengzachin: matriculate, went to America in 1936, NEIGM pastor; T Thangkhai: village chief and NEIGM worker; T C Tiankham: graduate and became first speaker of Manipur Assembly; T Thangkhogin: NEIGM worker and teacher; T Jam Khothang: passed VII, later graduated, went to America and became one of the important church leaders of the community; H Tualvung, Phungdal, Ngulthong.

political and its stated objectives are social, economic, and academic in nature. The aims and objectives of the SSPP, as spelt out in the preamble to the constitution of the organization are, “to educate ourselves in various fields of learning; develop our skills; encourage ourselves towards manual work; train ourselves in various constructive games and sports; faith in behavior, laborious, truthful and God fearing; work for the good of the society; commit ourselves to the nation; cooperate with other student’s welfare organization; strive forward unitedly...(sic)”.²⁹ Some of the social agenda taken up by the SSPP include compulsory education for children and women, personal cleanliness and public hygiene in the villages. The SSPP holds annual conferences every year. The 1949 conference was held at Lamka. When the conference was over, the organization sent out volunteers to Paite villages. The volunteers conducted house-to-house campaign on issues related to public health and hygiene.³⁰ Debates, sports, singing competition, quiz, and social meets were some of the early activities and programmes of the SSPP. Annual magazines were brought out by the SSPP with contributions from different scholars, writers and activists. Other noteworthy activities of the association include free coaching class for students appearing the board examination, giving ‘meritorious awards’ to students and persons who have made commendable achievements especially in the fields of academics and education, running of a residential school in Lamka with financial assistance from the Government of India.³¹

²⁹ *Siamsinpawlpì Constitution - Ki-ukna Dan*, 2005 (eight amendment).

³⁰ S Chinzagin, ‘ Siamsinpawlpì Tangthu leh A Khantouhdan’, in *Siamsinpawlpì Annual Magazine Golden Jubilee Issue*, Vol. 33, 1996, pp. 235-239.

³¹ For more information on the activities of SSPP, refer SSPPnet.

Paite Tribe Council (PTC)

In 1949, Paite National Council (now called Paite Tribe Council) was founded at Tangnuam village, Lamka. The founder members of PNC were T Thangkhai, T C Tiankham, Rev Siamkung, Val Lalau, T Tualchin, L Nengzatun, Thangau, H Lianzamang, Thangzachin Tombing and some others. Initially, there were three opinions among the participants about the naming of the organization. The participants deliberated on what nomenclature they would adopt for their common identification. Choices before them were Chin, Guite or Paite. T Thangkhai, one of the participant wanted that they should call themselves Paite as the British officers had recognized them by that name.³² H Lianzamang of Bungmual village argued that they should adopt Guite, as Guite is believed to be their forefather, and moreover, the name (Guite) was recognized in Burma and Assam.³³ But it was not acceptable to others since Guite is just one clan among the Paite. Thangzachin Tombing of Tangnuam village on the other hand voiced his support for Chin. According to Thangzachin Tombing, as they all came from Chin Hills it is reasonable for the community to call themselves Chins.³⁴ The participants deliberated upon the matter for three days and the proposed names were put to vote. Finally, PNC was formed with T Thangkhai as the first President of the organization. In course of time, PNC emerged as the political platform of all Paite speaking people.³⁵ H Kamkhenthang writes that the official adoption of the name Paite with the formation of PNC was necessitated by a heavy pressure to include the Paite people under either Kuki or

³² Cited in H Mangchinkhup Paite, 'H Liangzamang leh Bungmual Khua', *Bungmual Weekly News Souvenir*, Young Paite Association, Bungmual Unit, Lamka, 2004, pp. 23-27.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ T Ljankhohau, *Social, Cultural, Economic and Religious Life of a Transformed Community: A study of Paite Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 10.

Lushai categories.³⁶ According to Thuamson Hangzo, the intention of emerging Paite leaders in forming PNC for the common platform of the Paite was to safeguard the distinct culture, customs, traditions and identity of the Paite.³⁷ V Dongzathang³⁸ writes, the leaders thought that it was fit to adopt the nomenclature Paite for the common identification of the people and for the common language. He further noted that the formation of PNC was to keep up the pressure and pursue the national interest.

According to the Constitution of PNC adopted on June 27, 1949 at Tangnuam village 'Pai' means to go, 'Te' is a plural suffix-equivalent to 's' added after a noun in English. 'Paite' therefore, means those who go or went. They are called so because they moved away from their kith and kin in their original home, Chin Hills, now in Myanmar. The term Paite, in the view of the PNC, included all communities in the state of Manipur and Mizoram minus the Meitei and the Nagas of Manipur and Lusei in the Lushai Hills. The argument for this was that they all come from Burma especially from Chin Hills. It further defined Paite as those inhabiting all parts of Chin Hills in Burma, some parts of Manipur and some parts of Lushai Hills.³⁹ This was the first known definition made by the indigenous Paite leaders. The definition reveals that the term Paite emerged as a result of their migration. Nevertheless, formation of PNC symbolizes the nature of political consciousness of Paite leaders and the intention to work for their community. This has been clearly seen from the

³⁶ H Kamkhenthang, *The Paite: A Trans-border Tribes of India and Burma*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p. 9.

³⁷ Thuamson Hangzo, 'Paite National Council', *Siamsinpawipi Annual Magazine*, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-349.

³⁸ V Dongzathang, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-24.

³⁹ *Original Constitution of Paite National Council* adopted on June 27, 1949. Here after referred to as *Original Constitution of PNC 1949*.

objectives of PNC as provided under article 3 (1), (2), (3) of the original constitution viz.,

- i) To resume or reorganize their Council as it was before the British rule;
- ii) To introduce or establish government of the people, by the people, for the people; and
- iii) To preserve and develop their culture, customs and usages and to achieve the betterment of their economic and political status.⁴⁰

Since its adoption in the year 1949, the constitution of PNC has been amended eleven times as on 2010. The PNC now has the following objectives,

- i) To reunify the Zo people under one political administration;
- ii) To introduce or establish government of the people, by the people, for the people;
- iii) To achieve social, economic and cultural Development;
- iv) To achieve the betterment of their political status for their land and the nation;
- v) To preserve and develop their culture, customs and usages and language and literature.
- vi) To strive unitedly with other cognate Zo communities for the development and security of the Zomi.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Refer, *Paite Tribe Council Ki-ukna Dan (11-vei puahphatna)*, 2004, Paite Tribe Council, Lamka, Manipur, 2005 (reprint).

Young Paite Association (YPA)

YPA came into existence on March 3, 1953. It is a voluntary and non-political social organization. Explaining about its objectives, role and activities, the preamble of the constitution of YPA states as follows: “We, the Paite Young People, having solemnly resolved to adopt and impart to ourselves and to our people the spirit of altruism in line with and in implementation of Sacrosanctity of Christian values; rural development and reconstruction; relief and rehabilitation; and creative utilization of leisure hereby constituted ourselves...(sic)”.⁴²

Paite Literature Society (PLS)

Paite Literature Society (PLS) is another important organization of the Paite people in Manipur. In fact, the history of PLS can be traced back to the pre-independence period. Paite Literature Fund founded on 1945 collected money from the Paite people for production of books. In the year 1953 Paite Literature Committee was formed which was later rechristened as PLS on May 10, 1954. The objectives of the PLS are “i) to adopt basically and as far as practicable Roman characters to write the Paite language and where necessary to adopt others characters and signs; ii) To cooperate with the government in production of Paite literature, and iii) to endeavor for the improvement of Paite literature”.⁴³ With the establishment of PLS, the language of the Paite was institutionalized. Since its formation, PLS has been working for the promotion and development of Paite language. The PLS is a representative body with twenty-five executive members headed by a President. The Board of

⁴² *YPA Ki-ukna Daan Bupi (The Constitution of the Young Paite Association)*, Manipur, 2003 (amended).

⁴³ *Paite Literature Society Limited Bye-law*, Lamka, Manipur, December 12, 1992, p. 3.

Directors of PLS consists of ten members viz. President of Paite Tribe Council, President of Young Paite Association, President of SSPP, representative from Evangelical Baptist Church, one editor of daily Paite newspaper, two editors of monthly Paite magazines, and four others from the executive members of PLS.⁴⁴

The emergence of such organizations reflects the intentions and desires of Paite leaders to promote and strengthen the identity of the Paite. With the exception of PLS, the other organizations have their units in different localities and areas in Manipur as well as outside the political boundaries of Manipur where the Paite people inhabit. Each organization has its own organizational set up and objectives, nevertheless, they all work together on issues related to social, economic and political life of the community. These organizations become platforms through which Paite leaders / elites articulated and propagated the identity and interests of the Paite community. Besides the desire to uphold and safeguard the identity of their community, PNC leaders aspire to secure economic development and political status for the community. PNC leaders also envisaged Paite as an overarching identity and they imagined Paite as a 'nation' or at least, aspired to make it into one. Hence, they added the expression 'National' to their organization's name. The use of the term 'nation' by the tribal communities of Manipur gives us the impression that they are either ignorant of the meaning and connotation of the word 'nation' as interpreted by political scientists.⁴⁵ Or, despite their awareness of the real meaning of the term, by using the expression, "nation", they are showing their desire to project themselves as independent people.

⁴⁴ Based on the composition of PLS, Board of Directors for 2008-2011.

⁴⁵ Siamkhum Guite, 'A Study of the Changing Faces of Paite Community', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, 1989, p. 295.

Development in NEIGM: Birth of Church Denomination

After Christianity was introduced in Churachandpur in 1910, different Zo tribes (communities) began to worship together under the platform of NEIGM. Initially there were no separate church denominations based on dialect / community lines. This was possible, as they could understand each other's tongue / dialect. NEIGM in its General Assembly held at Parbung village, Manipur in 1947 proposed to divide the NEIGM into five regional based presbyteries (Resolution 31 of General Assembly, 1947). The decision regarding this matter was later endorsed in the next General Assembly held at Lungthulian in the year 1948. It appeared that the Paite speaking delegates opposed the proposal. The Paite leaders were afraid that they would not be able to manage alone as they had a very few workers and no money. Moreover, majority of the tribe were yet to be evangelized.⁴⁶ They appealed to Rev. Paul Rostad, the resident missionary of NEIGM, not to divide. However, when the proposal was put to vote, the Paite delegates, who were in minority, were sidelined.⁴⁷ Accordingly, NEIGM was sub-divided into five regional based presbyteries, namely Simsak Presbytery, Simkhang Presbytery, Hmarsak Presbytery, Hmarkhang Presbytery, Vangai Presbytery. The General Assembly also appointed Chairman and Secretary for each presbytery. The Assembly further resolved that the decision would be again ratified (final resolution be taken) in the year 1949.

The stated reason for division of NEIGM was administrative convenience. However, the Paite delegates felt that the real motive behind this division was the other tribes' intentions to use funds for their respective tribes. One Paite Church

⁴⁶ Luaizakham, *Nidanglai Hinkhua leh Tuni 1989*, Lamka Printing Press, Churachandpur, 1991, p. 125.

⁴⁷ Gouzakap Hatlang, 'Evangelical Convention Church', *Siamsinpawlpi Annual Magazine, op. cit.*, pp. 352-355.

leader, T Jam Khothang, openly expressed this point. According to him, earlier as majority of the Paite tribe were yet to be evangelized, they used to get a large percentage of the NEIGM fund. Other tribes that resented this arrangement were behind the idea of dividing the mission.⁴⁸ Although such arguments were quite appealing to the Paite, it appears that the decision was motivated more by practical consideration of running the mission. With the expansion of the mission activities, conducting services in their own tongue seem to be more convenient for the people. As the people started becoming conscious of their respective ethnic identities, the feelings of 'they' and 'we' began to grow among the NEIGM members. Lal Dena pointed out that as in-group consciousness became stronger, each and every community, how-so-ever, small it might be, began to think that one's mother tongue was the best means by which one could worship, read and study the Bible.⁴⁹ An examination of the people that constitute each presbytery makes it clear that the division was carried out, keeping in account the community background of the people. The Simsak Presbytery consisted of the Paite speaking people, Simkhang Presbytery the Vaiphei, Hmarsak Presbytery the Hmar and so on. The NEIGM missionaries seemed to endorse the step taken by the mission. When the matter was referred to H H Coleman, the General Secretary of the Home Council placed in Philadelphia, he readily affirmed that he would not bother about the expenditure, if worship in every tongue would contribute to the speedier growth of churches among different communities.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ T Jam Khothang, 'Evanzilikal Konvenson Saptuam', in *Tangthupha Gen Mite Kalsuan (The Footsteps of the Preachers of the Gospel)*, ECC Silver Jubilee Souvenir, January 1974, pp. 19-42.

⁴⁹ Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1988, p. 65.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

The Paite delegates were the first to oppose the move to divide the NEIGM into different presbyteries and they were also the first to form their separate church organization. The perception of the Paite leaders was that as the NEIGM was subdivided, they would not participate in the 1949 NEIGM conference. Their position further hardened when the NEIGM leaders changed the venue for the 1949 General Assembly from Pherzawl to Saikot village.⁵¹ When the Paite leaders came to know about the change of venue by NEIGM leaders, they called an emergency meeting at Sialbu village in Thanlon sub-division from March 5-7, 1948. In the meeting, they decided not to participate in the Saikot conference. Instead, they decided to organize their conference at Kaihlam village in the year 1949. At Kaihlam conference, they constituted an Executive Committee (it was later called Standing Committee). Again, in 1950, they held their conference at Songtal village and decided to organize themselves as Manipur Christian Convention. To quote H Nengzachin, “our faction, so to say, led by U Nengthawn, Pu Vungthawn, Goukholian and Goihpum called a conference at Songtal in 1950 and there we decided to organize ourselves as the Manipur Christian Convention (MCC)”.⁵² Today, MCC is known as Evangelical Baptist Convention (EBC) with its headquarters at Lamka, Manipur. Some other church organizations that operate among the Paite-Zomi apart from EBC are Chin Baptist Association, Presbyterian Church of India (Reformed), Zomi Baptist Church, Khris Saptuam.

⁵¹ Initially, it was resolved by the NEIGM General Assembly that 1949 conference would be held at Pherzawl village. The reason for the change of venue was to enable the Rostads to attend the conference.

⁵² H Nengzachin, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Demand for Tribe Recognition

According to Paul R Brass, the second stage in the political formation of community involves articulation and acquisition of social, economic, and political rights for the members of the group or for the group as a whole. The community claims status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. The demand of the community may range from a relatively modest civil, educational, and political rights and opportunities for the individual members of the group to that of the recognition of the group's corporate existence as a political body or nationality. The nature and degree of demands is dependent upon the perceived needs and demands of the group, its size and distribution, its relations with other groups, and the political context.⁵³

The Paite demanded their rightful place in the political system and claim official recognition of the community as a distinct scheduled tribe in India. To achieve that goal, they formed PNC as the official political platform for the Paite speaking people. The first and foremost task of PNC was to achieve constitutional recognition of the Paite as one of the scheduled tribes of India.⁵⁴ It may be pointed out that in 1951 the President declared India's scheduled tribe list as authorized by the Constitution. The President order categorized the tribes of Manipur as any Naga tribes, any Kuki tribes, and any Lushai tribes. The same year in 1951 India conducted her first General Elections (Parliamentary Elections). The PNC nominated T Thangkhai, a village chief cum church leader to contest the elections as Paite from

⁵³ Paul R Brass, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Doutluang Valte, cited in Lianhnun Guite, 'A Study of the Village Administration among the Paite with Special Reference to that of the Paites of Manipur', M. Phil Dissertation, Manipur University, Imphal, 1991, p. 203.

Outer-Manipur constituency, which was reserved for the scheduled hill tribes of the state. However, his candidature was rejected by M N Phukan, a Returning Officer on the ground that the tribe to which he claimed he belonged to was not in the scheduled list of tribes recognized by the Government of India. Hence, to avoid disqualification, the candidate was advised to declare himself as a Kuki or Lushai or Naga. But the candidate declared that a Paite was neither a Kuki nor a Naga nor a Lushai but a distinct tribe. Thence, his candidature was rejected. The Paite leaders felt offended and disappointed at this development. They viewed rejection of their candidate as denial of Indian citizenship to the Paite community.⁵⁵ This incident made all the Paite to unite and work for the interest of the Paite.⁵⁶

To achieve political recognition of Paite as a distinct tribe of India, Paite leaders and PNC initiated peaceful and democratic means. In the year 1951 when Manipur Industrial and Cultural Exhibition was held at Lamka, PNC not only helped the government in organizing the programme, but also displayed Paite dances and songs on this occasion. PNC also helped the government in maintaining law and order by assisting them in collecting unlicensed arms. Impressed by the support and cooperation of the Paite, H Singh, Chief Commissioner of Manipur wrote to PNC, "The Paite National Council of Churachandpur gave an excellent display of Paite dances and songs in Manipur Industrial and Cultural exhibition of 1951 and also exhibited a few interesting articles of local manufacture such as handloom products, baskets, weapons, etc. I warmly congratulate Tualchin and Thangkhai for the successful organization of these activities and wish the Paite every prosperity. The Paite tribe has been most loyal and helpful to the Government and I have no doubt,

⁵⁵ See *PNC Memorandum 1955, op, cit.*

⁵⁶ L Jeyaseelan, 'Christianity and its Impact: Socio-Political and Economic with Special reference to Churachandpur District of Manipur', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1993, p. 336.

they can always be relied upon”.⁵⁷ In the year 1953 Kaka Kalelkar (MP), Chairman of the Backward Classes and Tribes Commission of the Government of India, visited Imphal. In the public meeting held at Adim Jati Shiksha Ashram in Imphal on November 22, 1953 where Kaka Kalelkar was also present, Paite students in Imphal displayed Paite dances and songs. Kaka Kalelkar remarked, “I am very glad to see the dances of the students of the Paite community this morning at Adim Jati Shiksha Ashram, Imphal. The dances showed both grace and vigor. I congratulate the Paite community”.⁵⁸ Recalling the event after four decades, Rev. T Jam Khothang, one of the participants in the dance wrote in 2007, “My memory goes back to my college days in the 1950s when we demanded recognition of our tribe in India. I wrote a letter to the editor of one of the national newspapers against the nefarious practice of imposing designations to any communities, which the community itself never accepted. I also took part in performing *Zangtalam*⁵⁹ dance at Imphal. The Zomi students at Imphal at that time were very few in number, we did not have enough girls to perform the dances. So, we dressed up the fairer skinned and more presentable boys as girls. We did well and indeed drew an ovation from the viewers. I love my make-up whiskers even now! Why such a show? We wanted tribe recognition. Though our consciousness (identity) was sharp, it was the beginning”.⁶⁰

To keep up pressure on the government, PNC presented a memorandum to the Government of India in the year 1955. Pu Van Lalau of Pearsonmun village, Lamka was the President of PNC at that time. The memorandum demanded recognition of Paite as a distinct community (tribe) of India. The memorandum stated that Paite have

⁵⁷ Cited in *PNC Memorandum 1955, op. cit.*

⁵⁸ Cited in *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Zangtalam* is one traditional dance of Paite-Zomi.

⁶⁰ T Jam Khothang, ‘Self-Control’, in *51st Zomi Namni '99 Souvenir*, Department of Information and Publicity, Zomi Nam Ni Organizing Committee, Lamka, 1999. pp. 4-5.

their own customs, language and literature, and identity different from the Kuki, Lushai, the Meitei and the Nagas. The PNC's memorandum asserted that "the Paite cannot be dubbed as Kukis, Nagas or Lushai; the Paite is a distinct community".⁶¹ The memorandum sought promotion of Paite culture, customs, and language and demanded all benefits and safeguards be guaranteed to the tribes under the Indian Constitution. It further pleaded to the government to rectify its earlier policy of not permitting the Paite to contest elections as Paite. The concluding paragraph of the memorandum read, "...Hence, our request and demand is a kind reply of recognition of the Paite as a distinct tribe in time for the next general election of India, otherwise, the Paite will take it for granted that they are not wanted to be an integral part of India, and, therefore, can join any other government which will give them due recognition, and they cannot be blamed for that if the order, dated 8-12-1951 of the Returning Officer, Outer-Manipur Parliamentary Constituency is to prevail (sic)".⁶² It may be noted that at that time, the Paite were the only community in Manipur that had submitted a memorandum to the Government of India demanding political recognition. Ultimately, in the year 1956 as a result of their continued pressure tactics, the Paite was recognized as distinct scheduled tribe of India.

Codification of Paite Customary Laws

The Paite leaders made an effort to codify all customary laws and practices of the community. As the book *Paite Pupa Ngeina Dante, 1986 (The Paite Customary*

⁶¹ *PNC Memorandum 1955, op. cit.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

Laws, 1986)⁶³ published by PNC stated that the codification became necessary for the following reasons:

- i) “Traditionally well-versed elders on whom we depend for legal advice are dying out and the society has now been dominated by a new young generation, which is ignorant of the customary laws and practices. A person can be a carefree and unconcerned for the customary laws and practices so long as he/she is buoyant without any problem. But it is inevitable to resort to customary laws and practices whenever one is in a crisis as fallen leaves resort to the base of the tree.
- ii) The government also recognized the importance of tribal customary laws for the administration of justice amongst the tribesman themselves. As such, the Gauhati High Court has been studying and researching the various customary laws of the tribes of North East India under the sponsorship of North Eastern Council. Preliminary studies on the Paite community had been done for reference of the High Court by the High Court itself.
- iii) The Indian Penal Code is not always applicable to the tribals who have distinct and diversified customary laws of their own. It has now been recognised that cases dealing with the tribals can be settled easier by application of tribal customary laws (sic)”.⁶⁴

PNC at its 1985 Annual General Assembly held at Sinjawl village set up a two-man commission comprising G Thangchinlian and T Jamkhanthang to compile and codify the usages and practices of the Paite customary laws. The Commission

⁶³ G Thangchinlian and T Jamkhanthang (compilers), *Paite Pupa Ngeina Dante, 1986 (The Paite Customary Laws, 1986)*, Paite National Council, Lamka, 1986.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. Forward.

consulted twelve persons who are conversant with the customary practices of the Paite. In the year 1986, three Block level conferences of PNC were held at Moleikot village. In this conference, the Commission submitted its first draft of the customary laws before the delegates for review. It was later referred to the joint meeting of the Young Paite Association, Siamsinpawlpi, Paite Literature Society, and church leaders. The draft was finally accepted and published in the year 1986. Prior to 1986, the customary practices of the Paite were unwritten and there were variations in interpretations of the laws across time and place. The codification of Paite customary laws made it possible for application of common and uniform laws in dealings with cases, which concern the Paite. As laid down in the book, the provisions of the code may be applied to any person belonging to Paite tribe. It can be invoked through the *Indongta*, the village authority, Paite Tribe Council Court and any court of law set up by the government. In the year 2007, the Paite Tribe Council Court took up seventeen cases based on the customary laws of the Paite. Out of the seventeen cases, the court could settled fourteen cases.⁶⁵ The codification of customary laws and practices and its acceptance by the community as a whole furthered the process of strengthening the Paite identity.

Elites and Language Politics of the Paite

Language and literature has been one of the focuses of a cultural movement among the Paite. In fact, development of Paite language and literature has positive impact on the growth and development of Paite identity. A number of Paite writers have noted the importance of language and literature for strengthening the identity

⁶⁵ *Manipur Express*, Lamka, January 23, 2008.

base of the community. One native writer Khamkhokam Guite writes in his article ‘Literature: Mihing Khutsuak Thil Hoih leh Etlom (A Layman’s Rumbling),’⁶⁶ that literature is the index and mirror of community and is crucial for the survival of a community. A community with rich literature has the advantage of asserting their views and ideology over others. Therefore, one should not think of his / her present generation, but should think for the survival of the generation to come and work for the preservation of his / her language and literature.⁶⁷ In another instance, Khamkhokam Guite says that it is necessary that every one (read every Paite-Zomi) should contribute in every possible way for the development and promotion of Paite language and literature.⁶⁸ Language and literature is not a living organism, but the people who speak the language can promote it. The more a community develops, the more it has to adapt to the times. Using borrowed words from other communities does not tantamount to changing one’s language and literature. Instead, it enriches the language and literature of the community. It is a well-known fact that English literature has become the richest literature in the world due to its adaptability and its open use of many borrowed words and vocabularies from other languages. Another Paite writer Tualchin Neihsial writes that language and literature are the markers of a community and a communicative group with no literature can never be considered as a developed community. Therefore, it is important to develop, promote, propagate and preserve ‘our’ (read Paite) language and literature.⁶⁹ For development and growth of

⁶⁶ Khamkhokam Guite, ‘Literature: Mihing Khutsuak Thil Hoih Leh Etlom (A Layman’s Rumbling),’ December 1, 2008, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4973&Itemid=211 (accessed on January 14, 2009).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ ‘Zogam Laigelhsiamte- G Khamkhokam’, July 14, 2008, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5133 (accessed on January 14, 2009).

⁶⁹ ‘Zogam Laigelhsiamte- Tualchin Neihsial’, July 24, 2008, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5133 (assessed on January 14, 2009).

Paite language and literature, Tualchin Neihzial made three suggestions. They are i) organizing seminars, symposiums, workshops at regular intervals, ii) undertaking public campaigns on the importance of literature, iii) encouraging the people to buy books and value all literary works, and iv) providing incentives and recognition to Paite writers in the form of awards.⁷⁰

The Paite, like many other communities, seeks to use its language and literature to promote its ethnic identity. Apart from making efforts to develop common scripts for all Paite-Zomi speakers of India and Burma, the Paite elites led a movement for introduction of Paite as vernacular subject in schools in Manipur. Different Paite organizations presented a number of memorandums to the Government of Manipur. Initially, Paite vernacular was introduced in 1975 from class I to class V in Manipur.⁷¹ Since the academic year 2004-2005, Paite vernacular paper under Major India Language (MIL) has been introduced as a subject at college level also. This achievement has been considered by many Paite as one remarkable event in the history of Paite.⁷² The community has regarded inauguration of local radio station of Lamka (Churachandpur) with Paite as link language by O Ibobi Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur on April 13, 2010 as another significant achievement. Official recognition to a language gives status to the language, and enhances its social standing. This not only provides ample scope for its further development, but also safeguards the language and the people who speak that language.

⁷⁰ For more views, opinion, and discussion on Paite-Zomi language, literature and related articles, refer <http://www.zogam.com/> and <http://www.zogamonline.com/>

⁷¹ Paite vernacular for Classed 1-V was introduced in the year 1975 (vide Government letter No. 18/6/73-SE (Pt), dated 15-10-74 and 27-7-1975).

⁷² In a survey conducted by the author, quite a number of Paite elites mentioned introduction of Paite vernacular paper as one remarkable event in the history of Paite-Zomi.

Many contemporary Paite writers have come out strongly advocating 'common literature' for all Paite-Zomi community. In his article 'Paite Nam Lailam Politics', John K Ngaihte, present President of PLS says that 'common literature' is an easy thing to achieve, it does not go against anybody's laws, it needs no boundary, no government on earth can oppose it, and the day when the people agreed to say yes and adopt, one can say is the day we achieve uniformity of writing Paite.⁷³ Tualchin Neihzial in his article, 'Common Writing System Mainawtna', writes, "Whether we live in north and south, in Lamka and in Tedim county, all our poetic expressions are same. Even the root of our language is same; there are some differences in word formation. We cannot say that one is correct while the other one is wrong".⁷⁴ Rev. T Jam Khothang, one prominent Paite Church leader thinks that language and literature can be developed further. While preserving the existing terms and words, new words and vocabularies need to be explored to make the language rich and adequate to the needs of the time they live in. Language keep on growing and the language speakers know what is best and acceptable to them.⁷⁵ In the year 1982, a joint meeting of different Paite organizations was organized by the PNC at Lamka on the theme "If the people do not follow their language they will become slaves?"⁷⁶ The meeting adopted certain resolutions. The meeting recognized the need for using common alphabets, if Paite speakers of India and the Zo people of Chin Hills of Burma were to have uniform writing. The participants unanimously agreed that all Paite should use uniform script. For this, the meeting entrusted PLS to prepare guidebook on 'Correct System of Writing Paite Language' (resolution 1). The meeting also entrusted the PLS

⁷³ John K Ngaihte, 'Paite Nam Lailam Politics', in S Ngulzadal (compiler), *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁷⁴ For details, refer, Tualchin Neihzial, 'Common Writing System Mainawtna', in *ibid.*, pp. 156-165.

⁷⁵ Cited in M Vumhau, 'My Observation about Pu Chinzam Tawmbing's Literature', August 13, 2008, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4973&Itemid=211 (accessed on January 14, 2009).

⁷⁶ Joint meeting of PNC, PLS, YPA, SSPP, dated October 2, October 30 and Nov 1, 1982, Lamka, cited in S Ngulzadal (compiler), *op. cit.*, pp. 17-37.

to work out on issues of common script with the Zo people of Chin Hills of Burma. Resolution 4 of the meeting states that in order to have uniformity in Paite script and to promote development of the language, it is agreed that any person who wants to write a book in Paite should first get the approval of PLS.⁷⁷ A joint meeting of Paite organizations was also held at YPA hall, Lamka on October 15, 1983. T Phungzathang, the then president of PNC chaired the meeting. Rev. T Jam Khothang one of the participants in the meetings said, “We are the best authority to develop good, correct and appropriate language and literature for ourself. In order to have common script with Tedim people of Burma, we should have ‘common goal’, discuss among ourselves, and come out with systematic script. Any means that will integrate our literature is good”. The meeting resolved that in order to have ‘common alphabets’ at the earliest possible time among the Paite (Zokam) speakers of Manipur and Mizoram and the Zo people of Burma, the meeting resolved to send representatives to the proposed joint seminar between PLS and the Zomi Christian Literature Society (ZCLS) of Burma. The proposed seminar was slated to be held in Moreh, Chandel district in 1984.⁷⁸ The PLS was given the responsibility to select delegates to attend the meeting (resolution 1). The joint meeting also accepted in principle *Paite (Tedim) Pau Gelh Dingdan*, a guidebook for correct writing of Paite language written by H Kamkhenthang (resolution 2). The guidebook was changed to *Zoulai Gelhdan* (meaning writing system of Zo language) in the year 1992 with the aim to make it more inclusive in its application.⁷⁹ The PLS and ZCLS joint seminar of 1984 came out with a resolution that came to be known as ‘Moreh Resolution’. One of the resolutions was that all Paite-Zomi writers should use twenty-six Roman

⁷⁷ S Ngulzadal (compiler), *ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

⁷⁸ Joint Literary Meeting-cum-Seminar between PLS, India and the Zomi Christian Literature Society (ZCLS), Burma, dated March 27, 1984, Moreh, Chandel district. Refer, *ibid.*, pp. 123-125.

⁷⁹ In the year 1994, the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur approved *Zoulai Gelhdan* as Paite grammar textbook for Class IX-X. *Ibid.*, pp. 31 and 73-74.

alphabet while writing Paite. They also agreed to promote the Primer for common use. As a result of this Moreh meeting, common school textbook for beginners was published. The title of the textbook was different but the contents of the book remained same. In Tedim, Myanmar, the book is known as *Zo Lai Sim Bu Tan Langh* and in India, it is *Laisimna Bu*.⁸⁰

In the year 1988 the PLS passed a resolution on issues related to the use of alphabet 'c' and 'ch'.⁸¹ Under resolution 3 (III) of November 6, 1988 the Board of Directors of PLS agreed to give freedom to Paite writers to use either 'c' or 'ch' depending on their personal choices. Students opting Paite vernacular paper were at liberty to use either of the two letters and this was even spelt out in the introductory note in Paite vernacular textbook. The SSPP also organized a two-day workshop on 'Harmonization of Paite Vernacular Language' at YPA Hall at Lamka between October 21-22, 2004. From time to time seminars, writers' conferences, and orientation courses for teachers were organized by PLS in collaboration with other organizations. The PLS has been issuing various guidelines and instructions to the native writers. Students of various schools in Manipur who have opted Paite subject were taught to write as per the guidelines laid down by the PLS. In a recently held meeting in November 2009, PLS took the decision to set up a Library and Research Centre. The meeting also decided to publish a quarterly journal. Sub-committees were constituted to follow up the decisions.⁸²

⁸⁰ John K Ngaihte, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁸¹ The use of alphabet 'c' and 'ch' becomes an issue as some writers prefer to use only 'c' while other prefer 'ch' as for instance in 'Chin' and 'Cin', 'Ching' and 'Cing', 'chiah' and 'chiah', etc.

⁸² 'Paite Literature Hahkat Sem Di'n Kisa', November 30, 2008, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4973&Itemid=211 (assessed on January 27, 2009).

Constructing Identity through Promotion of Vernacular Writings

Apart from the several initiatives taken by Paite leaders to promote Paite language and literature, the exposure of the community to typewriters, printing machine, computer and of late the internet further contributed to a gradual growth in vernacular writings, newspapers, magazines / periodicals. There are also books written and published by individual persons with their own resources, or with assistance from friends, NGOs and the government. A brief survey on development of print media and books among the Paite helps to understand the process of identity formation among the Paite.

Growth of Vernacular Writings: Religious Texts and Commentaries

The Christian missionaries played an important role in transformation of traditional oral culture of the Paite into modern print culture. In fact, most of the early vernacular works in Paite were religious texts, pamphlets and hymnbooks. In addition to hymnbooks and the Bible, different commentaries on the Bible were published. Apart from his rendition of the Bible in Paite, which was published by the Bible Society of India in 1950, Rev. H Nengzachin wrote more than ten Bible commentaries in Paite.⁸³ Rev. Dr. G Khamkam, who began writing since the early part of the 1960s contributed more than twenty-five Bible commentaries in Paite.⁸⁴ Other notable contribution of Rev. Dr. G Khamkam was his translation of Bible into Paite.⁸⁵ The contribution of Rev. T Jam Khothang, the Executive Secretary of Evangelical Baptist

⁸³ To see the number of commentaries written by H Nengzachin, refer Tualchin Neihzial (compiler), *Paite/Tedim Pau a Laibu Neihzah Suina*, Paite Literature Society, Lamka, 1992, pp. 29-31.

⁸⁴ For the number of commentaries written by G Khamkam, refer *ibid.*, pp. 18-21.

⁸⁵ G Khamkam translation of the Bible in Paite was released on December 7, 2008.

Convention (EBC) from 1975 to 1994 was also worth noting. He worked as the editor of *Kristian Thukizakna* for more than eighteen years. It is important to note that in the year 1966, EBC started a printing press. In 1975 during T Jam Khothang's tenure as Executive Secretary, EBC constructed its headquarters building 'Dorcas Hall' at New Lamka, Churachandpur. In the year 1980, the church started a mission school known as Ebenezer Academy. In 1977, EBC started Grace Bible Institute, which became Grace Bible College in the year 1981 with Rev. Dr. G Khamkam as the first Principal. Commenting on the role of the church, (L) T Thangthuam IPS wrote, "Dorcas Hall with its institution of learning at its vicinity becomes important place of learning and centre of missionary works. Because of God's blessings, it can be regarded as 'centre of civilization' for our (meaning Paite) community".⁸⁶ Another remarkable contribution of Rev. T Jam Khothang was in the translation of Bible into Paite with assistance from Bible International (BI), USA. In this work, Rev. Kamkhanthang Mangte, Rev. N Phungzapao and others, assisted Rev. T Jam Khothang. Printed in Korea, the Bible was released in February 2005 at Lamka, Manipur. Commenting on Rev. T Jam Khothang's rendition of this Paite Bible, Grace Singh writes, "Everyone knew that Pu Jam had problems and responsibilities that could have weighed him down;⁸⁷ instead he labored tirelessly to translate God's word for his people".⁸⁸ P Hantz Bernard, Division Director, BI, writes, "For nearly half a century brother Jam Khothang had desired to see an accurate, legible translation of God's word in his Paite language...he longed so much to hold a completed copy of the Paite Bible in his

⁸⁶ For details, refer, Lalremkung, *Toupa Khuta Om Ka Hi... (A Tribute to Upa (L) T Thangthuam IPS)*, Imphal, 2008, pp. 110-136.

⁸⁷ During this translation work, Jam Khothang was suffering from cancer.

⁸⁸ By 'weight him down' Singh probably meant 'cancer' that Rev T Jam Khothang was suffering from. Refer, Grace Singh, 'Thousands Gather for Paite Dedication', and P Hantz Bernard, 'With Paper and Ink', both in *The Quarterly Newsletter of Bibles International*, Baptist Mid-Missions' Translation, Publishing, and Literacy Services, Canada, Vol. 19, Issue 2, Spring 2005, pp. 1-3.

hands that he reserved a suit in a box, waiting for that special day of dedication”.⁸⁹ M Vumhau called Rev. T Jam Khothang as a man of vision and compared him with an oasis in the desert for the Paite people.⁹⁰ Other church leaders like Rev. Dr. Luai Chin Thang, Rev. L Kham Kholun, Rev. Dr. S Langzakham Ngaihte, Rev. Kamkhanthang Mangte, Rev. Khup Za Go, Rev. Paukhanmang Guite, etc. have also contributed to the vernacular religious literature of the community.

Development of Vernacular Print Media: Monthly Journals and Magazines

As written by H Kamkhenthang, John H Cope, an American missionary in Tedim sub-division, Chin State, Burma started the first Paite weekly journal *Tedim Thukizakna* in 1919.⁹¹ According to Tualchin Neihzial, in India the first Paite journal, *Voice of Churachandpur* was published in 1952.⁹² In the year 1963, the EBC started publishing *Kristian Thukizakna* the first monthly Paite Christian journal in Manipur. Today *Kristian Thukizakna* is the largest circulated vernacular Christian magazine published from the district. Other Paite monthly Christian journals published and distributed from Lamka (Churachandpur) are *Thutak aw*, *Gamdaai a Kikou Aw*, *Lungdamna Aw*, *Thuhilhna Dik*.⁹³ *Ruth Messenger* an inter-denominational magazines is another faith-based vernacular periodical distributed from Lamka.⁹⁴ All faith-based journals educate the general masses on the tenets of Christian principles. They also

⁸⁹ T Jam Khothang died in February 2004 and was not alive to see the dedication of Paite Bible that he initiated.

⁹⁰ M Vumhau, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ The weekly journal was published in Madras and the distribution was made in Tedim area, Burma. H Kamkhenthang, *op. cit.*, in *Siamsin Thugousiah*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-22.

⁹² The editor of the journal was Khatchin Dousel. The journal is no longer published. Tualchin Neihzial, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁹³ *Thutak aw* is the mouthpiece of Presbyterian Church of India (Reformed), *Gamdaai a Kikou Aw* is distributed by Jehovah Yahweh, *Lungdamna Aw* is published by Chin Baptist Association. The Church of Church distributes *Thuhilhna Dik*.

⁹⁴ *Ruth Messenger*, is the only Paite monthly journal managed and distributed by women.

disseminate information about the activities and performance of the Church(es) to the general public.

There are also vernacular journals started by different Paite with the objective of enriching Paite language and literature viz., *Tongluang*, *Zogam Tangkou* (*Tangkou*), *Zingdaitui*, *Suangmantam*.⁹⁵ In addition to them, there are periodicals brought out by Paite organizations from time to time. For instance, Lamka based student organization SSPP has been publishing annual magazine of the organization since 1960. The magazine saw its 44th volume when the SSPP celebrated Diamond Jubilee in 2008. The branches and / or Joint Headquarter of SSPP based at Delhi, Aizawl and Shillong also bring out their own magazines from time to time. Different native writers contribute articles on culture, politics, education, sports, etc. to these magazines and journals. Commemorative magazines published by different organizations and NGOs also help the communities in getting information on different places, personalities, peoples and associations that are crucial to Paite history and culture.⁹⁶

Development of Vernacular Newspapers

Coming to vernacular newspapers, the first Paite daily newspaper *Lamka Bazar* was published from Lamka with G Thangvung as the editor on August 13,

⁹⁵ *Tongluang* magazine was started by Eugene Chinzahao during the 1980s. *Zogam Tangkou* (*Tangkou*) was started by John K Ngaihte in the year 1990 and continues until June 1997. Other periodicals, which are no longer published are *Tangsam*, *Zokhankhual*, *Limlangh*.

⁹⁶ For instance, see *Zomi Namni Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1948-1998)*, Evening Post Publication, Lamka, 1998; *Bungmual Weekly News Souvenir (1984-2004)*, Young Paite Association, Bungmual Unit, Lamka, 2004. *Young Paite Association, New Lamka Unit, Souvenir*, YPA New Lamka, 2006.

1975.⁹⁷ In the year 1978, two daily newspapers *Thupuaktu* and *Thuzakna* were started from Lamka town.⁹⁸ Another Paite newspaper *Manipur Express* has been in circulation since May 30, 1981 with L Chinkhanlian as the editor. Today, *Manipur Express* is the most widely circulated and read newspaper in the district. *The Lamka Post* with Thangzalian as the editor is another newspaper published and circulated from the district. Besides daily newspapers, quite a number of local weekly newspapers are also there.⁹⁹ Local weekly newspapers are meant for a certain locality; as such, their area of distribution is limited. However, as some of them are posted on the net, people from other places also can have access to them.

Growth of Vernacular Writings on Socio-political and Cultural Issues

Over the years, several vernacular writings, which gives insights into the custom, traditions and culture of the Paite-Zomi were published. J Gin Za Tuang book *Pupa Ngeinate* written in 1951 describes the customary laws of the Paite (Tedim). It also contains information on the rules for village administration to be followed by the village chiefs.¹⁰⁰ The PNC's Memorandum of 1960 on *Reunification of the Chin People*, spoke about the political aspirations of the people and the traditional customary practices respectively.¹⁰¹ Other books by different authors are *Singtang Mite Khangthu* by Vung D Tombing,¹⁰² the works of Piangzathang, *Guite Khangthu*,

⁹⁷ This newspaper is no longer published.

⁹⁸ G Thangzalam was the editor of *Thupuaktu* and N K Thomte was the editor of *Thuzakna*. The two newspapers are no longer published.

⁹⁹ Some of the local weekly newspapers are *Voice of New Lamka*, *Bungmual Weekly*, *Pearson Bell*, *Nipi-pak*, *Phualva (Ka Thaitong)*, *Siamsin Bulletin*, *Zo-lawkta*.

¹⁰⁰ Cited in T K Muana, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Written in Paite and English. *PNC Memorandum 1955*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰² Vung D Tombing, *Singtang Mite Khangthu*, Paite Literature Society, Imphal, 1963.

Hausate Tangthu, and *Folks Songs of the Paite*,¹⁰³ H Kamkhenthang's *Paite Folktales*,¹⁰⁴ Nok Suan Lian's *Kam Hau Ngeina (The Customary Laws of Kam Hau)*,¹⁰⁵ *Paite Pupa Ngeina*, 1986.¹⁰⁶ T Liankhohau's *Paite Kalchar*,¹⁰⁷ G Zamzachin's *Paite Tanchin*, and the work of Sinkhokam *Pu-Pa Nun*.¹⁰⁸ All these works provide historical and anthropological accounts of Paite-Zomi.

In *Guite Kual a Luutna*¹⁰⁹ Tualchin Neihzial narrates migration of various clans and communities of the contemporary Zo people of India to areas / regions that came to be known as Guite Kual. Guite Kual, which means 'Guite circle / area', indicates the region under the suzerainty of Guite dynasty / chieftainship. The area is presently located in Churachandpur district. In 1987, Tualchin Neihzial wrote *Paite Ngeina Dan a Kimawlina leh Sabet Galbetdan*¹¹⁰ wherein he presented a brief account of the traditional games and sports of the Paite. In *Mangkang Gamkeekte Nuai a Zomite*,¹¹¹ Tualchin Neihzial narrates the encounters and status of the 'Zo people' under the imperialist British government. In 1986 D Khaizalian wrote *Tangthupha Tunma leh Tunnung*¹¹² that provides the social, cultural and political practices in the Paite society prior to the coming of Christianity and the impact of Christianity and modern education on the traditional social practices and lifestyles. Mention may also be made of introduction of Paite vernacular papers in schools and colleges in

¹⁰³ Piangzathang, *Guite Khangthu*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1982; Piangzathang, *Hausate Tangthu*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1988. Piangzathang, *Folks Songs of the Paite*, Directorate for Development of Tribal and Backward Classes, Imphal, 1989.

¹⁰⁴ K Kamkhenthang, *Paite Folktales (Paite and Meitei)*, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, 1983.

¹⁰⁵ Nok Suan Lian, *Kam Hau Ngeina (The Customary Laws of Kam Hau)*, Lamka Printing Press, Lamka, 1984.

¹⁰⁶ G Thangchinlian and T Jamkhanthang, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ T Liankhohau *Paite Kalchar*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1988.

¹⁰⁸ Sinkhokam, *Pu-Pa Nun*, Lamka, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Tualchin Neihzial, *Guite Kual a Luutna*, Convention Press, Lamka, Manipur, 1986.

¹¹⁰ Tualchin Neihzial, *Mangkang Gamkeekte Nuai a Zomite*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1987.

¹¹¹ Tualchin Neihzial, *Paite Ngeina Dan a Kimawlina leh Sabet Galbetdan*, L and R Printing Press, Lamka, 1991.

¹¹² D Khaizalian, *Tangthupha Tunma leh Tunnung*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1986.

Manipur. Paite vernacular school textbooks contain topics on Paite grammar, folktales and folksongs, poems and accounts of the Paite.

There are also some published books in the form of memoirs and bibliographies. For instance, the autobiographical work, *Leivui Panin*¹¹³ written by Rev. Khup Za Go gives an exhaustive account of the life history and work done by the author during his lifetime. It also contains various articles that the author has written and different places and meetings that he visited. From this book one can get to know the ideas and philosophy of the author. A tribute to Upa (L) T Thangthuam, IPS *Toupa Khuta Om Ka Hi...* published in 2008 by Mrs. Lalremkung, wife of the police officer contains articles, seminar papers, and songs written / composed by the police officer.

Publication of Dictionaries and Other Informative Books

J H Cope, American missionary wrote *Tual Lai Sintawmna* in 1910 and *Zolai Sin Bu* in 1922. These books gave instructions and rules for reading, writing and learning Paite.¹¹⁴ After two decades in 1945, *Sintung Bu* (a primer) was published by Nengzachin in India. In India, the first Paite dictionary appeared in 1948.¹¹⁵ Again, in 1950 T Gougin wrote *English-Hindustani-Paite Primer*.¹¹⁶ In the year 1961, the first enduring and systematic Paite dictionary *English-Paite Dictionary*¹¹⁷ was written by Chinzam Tawmbing. In appreciation of Chinzam Tawmbing's *English-Paite*

¹¹³ Khup Za Go, *Leivui Panin*, Christian Literature Centre, Guwahati, 2004.

¹¹⁴ Cited in T K Muana, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁵ T C Tiangkham, *op. cit.*.

¹¹⁶ T Gougin, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Chinzam Tawmbing, *English-Paite Dictionary*, Churachand Printing Press, Imphal, 1961 (revised and enlarged second edition 1993 and third in 2003).

Dictionary, the Lamka based Siamsinpawlpì gave him 'Appreciation Certificate' in the year 2006. The Siamsinpawl again gave him 'Honors Award' memento in the year 2007 in recognition of his 'distinguished service in literature'.

Another person worth noting is H Kamkhenthang. He wrote *English-Paite (Tedim) Chin Dictionary*¹¹⁸ in the year 1972. In the year 1990, he wrote a book *Lapau*,¹¹⁹ a sort of dictionary of Paite poetical words. Again, in 1993 H Kamkhenthang wrote *Paite Paunak*¹²⁰ a dictionary of Paite proverbs wherein various sayings and aphorisms of the Paite are explained. His book *Zoulai Gelhdan*,¹²¹ written in 1999 is remarkable as it provides guidelines for systematic writing of Zo language. Again, in the year 2000 he wrote Paite grammar and composition *Pau leh Lai Gelhdan*.¹²² *Paite Zoumite Laipau*,¹²³ a book compiled by S Ngulzadal contains minutes and proceedings of meetings of Paite organizations on issues related to literature. It also includes documents and papers presented in seminars by different Paite leaders. Persons like Vung D Tawmbing, K G Tungdim, Eugene Chinzahao, H Pau Za Cin, Dr Dallian, L T Ngaihte, Thangkhanlal Ngaihte, Kimbawi Pa, Pauzagin Tonsing, Haumuanlun Samte, Kam Khansiam Ngaihte, were some other prominent vernacular writers.

The writings on Paite vernacular have increased considerably both in the secular and non-secular domains. From the available vernacular literature, one comes to know the history, customs, traditions and culture, and history of the Paite.

¹¹⁸ H Kamkhenthang, *English-Paite (Tedim) Chin Dictionary*, ICI Press, Lamka, 1972. (Second enlarged edition published by Zomi Press, Lamka, 1983).

¹¹⁹ H Kamkhenthang, *Lapau* (a dictionary of poetical words), Chihoih Press, Imphal, 1990.

¹²⁰ H Kamkhenthang, *Paite Paunak*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1993.

¹²¹ H Kamkhenthang, *Zoulai Gelhdan*, Paite Literature Society, Lamka, 1999.

¹²² H Kamkhenthang, *Pau leh Lai Gelhdan*, Paite Literature Society, Imphal, 2000.

¹²³ S Ngulzadal, (compiler), *op. cit.*

Vernacular texts also speak of the dominating contemporary thoughts and ideas of the elites. As such, the development and growth of Paite vernacular writings serves as a link between the past and the present. In recent years, internet and personal blogs have also facilitated wider dissemination of ideas, which were earlier confined only to the scholars.

Conclusion

Community life or community interests are not determined by individual / personal choices. Objective material conditions in which they live determine the nature and dynamics of the community. In addition, certain leaders / elites, who emerge from within, lead major social, political, cultural / identity movements of the people with the support of the community members. The chapter shows that Paite elites played active roles as agents in the construction of Paite identity. The modern Paite elites facilitated the transformation of the spoken dialect of the Paite into a print language and the progress of Paite literature. The formation of different Paite organizations, which reinforced the social boundary of the community, became possible because of the crucial role played by the most awakened section of the community. In the process of constructing Paite identity, objective cultural markers such as language and literature were used by the community / leaders to distinguish themselves from others. Initially, the emerging Paite elites developed script for the community and gradually standardized it. The Paite community / leaders have also succeeded in achieving political recognition of the community. They also played important role in promoting their language and literature through the introduction of the language in schools and colleges in Manipur. All these initiatives and endeavor by

the Paite elites have been helping in strengthening and consolidating the identity base of the community.

In spite of the attempt made by Paite leaders to construct 'nation' out of Paite identity, the community leaders realized that Paite alone cannot become a nation. Consequently, the community leaders renamed Paite National Council as Paite Tribe Council. How this complex process of consciousness and / or realization took place in the case of the Paite will be discussed in detail in the next chapter highlighting the Paite's contribution to Zomi consciousness.

Chapter V

DEVELOPMENT OF ZOMI CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE PAITE

People's self-definition of their collective ethnic identity may be very different from the way outsiders define them. While there were instances of communities accepting the outsiders' imposed nomenclature, there are also cases of contestation and / or rejection of such imposed names. Zomi is one such name in the trans-border areas of India and Myanmar propagated by the Zo communities, which were opposed to accepting the externally imposed identities and sought for. Etymologically, the term Zomi is derived from two words 'Zo' and 'mi'. While the term 'mi' stands for 'people', the term 'Zo' is interpreted as the ancestor of Zo peoples.¹ Consequently, the Zomi are viewed as the descendants of Zo (that is *Zosuante / Zofate / Zatate*). In other words, Zomi are those linguistic and cultural groupings of people who believe in commonly inherited history, tradition and culture of the 'Zo' and Zomi as their collective name. Many Zo intellectuals argue that the Zo people have almost forgotten their 'Zo' primal identity because of the subjugation, segmentation, and division of their territory during the colonial period.² The Zo people who resided in the trans-border area of India and Burma are known in Burma as Chin and are called Kuki in India. Lushai took the place of Kuki for people of the Lushai Hills during the British rule. The hyphenated term

¹ Another interpretation of the term Zomi (Mizo) is Hillman or highlanders where the term 'Zo' is taken to denote hill and 'mi' stands for 'people'.

² For instance, refer, Thangkhangin Ngaihte, 'History of Zomi in Mizoram and Surrounding Area: Aspects of Pre-colonial Society', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1979; Neihzial Tualchin, 'History and Culture of the Zomis', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1993.

Chin-Kuki or Chin-Kuki-Lushai were used to refer to these culturally, linguistically, and ethnically related people. Even though the Zo communities accepted these names for sometimes, some started rejecting them even during the British times. As H Kamkhenthang noted, “at one time Kuki and Chin were used as a force of identity. People identified themselves willy-nilly either as Chin or Kuki or Lushai in order to be accepted in military services before India and Burma got independence”.³ The communities that have rejected outsiders’ given name asserted what the people called ‘their genuine and true identity’. In the hills of Manipur, rejecting outsider’s given names, the Zo communities such as Paite, Vaiphei, Zou, Simte, Mate, Kom, and other accepted the generic name Zomi.⁴ In ‘A Historical Study of the ‘Zo Struggle’, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2010 David Vumlallian Zou writes, “Though the etymology and precise meaning of ‘Zo’ or ‘Zomi’ still prove illusive within academic debate, that it is an indigenous or a ‘national’ ethnic name has been well accepted. It is quite a different matter that some local scholars question the inevitability of adopting an indigenous term than colonial names like Chin and Kuki”.⁵

Constructing Zo-ness

In Manipur, a number of scholars and writers have considered the dominant attitude of the Thadou speaking community as one reason for rejection of Kuki by the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Lusei, Kom, Anals, and others. In William Shaw’s book, *The Notes*

³ H Kamkhenthang, ‘Groping for Identity’, in H Kamkhenthang, S Prim Vaiphei, etal (eds.), *In Search of Identity*, Kuki-Chin Baptist Union, Imphal, 1986, pp. 1-16.

⁴ The people of the then Lushai Hills (present day Mizoram state) have also successfully refuted foreign ascripted Kuki-Chin-Lushai term by an indigenously evolved generic term Mizo.

⁵ David Vumlallian Zou, ‘A Historical Study of the ‘Zo Struggle’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLV, No. 14, April 3, 2010, p. 62.

on *Thadou Kukis*, published by the Asiatic Society in 1929, the writer propounded the supremacy of the Thadou over other Kuki tribes. Shaw's idea of Thadou dominance over other tribes appears to be based on Jamkinthang Sithlou's book, *Under the Wings of Thadou*.⁶ In the year 1942, chiefs of all Zo tribes held two meetings - one at Mongon village in June 26 and another one at Thanlon village in August (both in Churachandpur district). The participants strongly condemned the remark made by Shaw. Again, the Khuga Valley Chiefs' Conference of June 28, 1947 denounced the term Kuki on the ground that it was not their forefather's name.⁷ Writing about the prevailing situation of the time, Rev. S Prim Vaiphei in 'Who Are We / Who We Are?' states, "During the 1950s, while I was still a young boy, I heard that many social and political leaders tried to bring unity among these Kuki-Chin tribes and many new nomenclatures were proposed...Frankly speaking, all these names were proposed to oppose the name Kuki because the Thadou speaking group regard this name Kuki as their own. Some of the leaders even used the word 'Kuki Siki', Kuki-Makhai (pseudo Kuki, half Kuki) to refer the non-Thadou speaking community".⁸ According to Chinkholian Guite, different sub-tribes felt that they were being neglected and controlled and their leaders were always drawn from the dominant Thadou community. Moreover, the other smaller communities believed that the Thadou who are in majority enjoyed all privileges given to them by the government.⁹ In the words of Bhagat Oinam, the smaller other communities resented the

⁶ Cited in Bhagat Oinam, 'Patterns of Ethnic Conflict in the Northeast: A Study of Manipur', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 21, May 24-30, 2003, p. 2033.

⁷ Ashok Kumar Ray, 'The Kuki National Assembly: Its Social Base and Working in Manipur' in L S Gassah (ed.), *Regional Political Parties in North East India*, Omson Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 189.

⁸ S Prim Vaiphei, 'Who Are We / Who We Are?', in H Kamkhenthang, S Prim Vaiphei, et.al (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹ Chinkholian Guite, 'Politico-Economic Development of the Zomis of Manipur since Statehood', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1995, p. 42.

big brotherly attitude of the Thadous.¹⁰ Apart from the above factors, some other reasons also led to Zo consciousness.

Paite Elites and Politics of Zomi Unification

The British exercised some control over the hill areas of Manipur inhabited by various Naga and Zo tribes after the princely state of Manipur was taken over by the British in 1891. By 1890 the British took full control of the Chin-Lushai Hills and divided the territory into three units. The Chin Hills with headquarters at Falam was kept under the province of Burma. Initially the Lushai Hills was divided into two administrative units viz. North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills. While the North Lushai Hills with the headquarters at Aizawl was kept under the province of Assam, the South Lushai Hills with headquarters at Lunglei was kept under the province of Bengal administration through Chittagong. Later, the British thought of bringing the Chin and Lushai Hills under one administration when they realized that ethnologically the Chin and the Lushai were the same.¹¹ Subsequently the issues of governance and unification of all Zo people inhabited areas were discussed in the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Fort William in Calcutta from January 25-29, 1892.¹² However, no decision could be taken to bring together all ethnically and culturally related Zo tribes under one administrative

¹⁰ Bhagat Oinam, *op. cit.*, p. 2033. Also, see, Rajat Kanti Das, *Manipur Tribal Scene*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 15-23.

¹¹ L Lam Khan Piang, 'Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the Zo', Ph. D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2005, p. 198.

¹² For full text of the Chin-Lushai Conference held on January 29, 1892, refer Khup Za Go, *Zo Chronicles: A Documentary Study of History and Culture of the Kuki-Chin-Lushai Tribe*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 59-60.

umbrella. Yet, the Calcutta Conference of 1892 did help in rousing the political consciousness of the Zo people to initiate struggles in pursuit of the Zo unity.¹³

With the growth of Zomi identity assertions, a number of organizations clamoring for Zo solidarity have come up from time to time.¹⁴ In Manipur, Kuki National Assembly (KNA) formed in 1946 attempted to bring solidarity among the Zo communities such as Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, etc. However, KNA leaders failed in their pursuit as the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Koireng, Kom and others rejected to identify themselves as Kukis. Instead, recalling their common myth of origin from the mythical cave 'Khul',¹⁵ the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Kom, and others formed Khulmi National Union (KNU) in 1948. Though 'Khulmi' idea received popular support for some time, it could not survive long.¹⁶ Aheibam Koireng Singh writes that the unification process under the nomenclature 'Khulmi' received a fatal blow, as it was not granted recognition by the Government of India in 1951.¹⁷ According to Zarzolien, the main reason was the breaking away of the Paite and Hmar from the Union on the question of language.¹⁸ The breakdown of KNU was followed by the formation of independent and distinct ethnic political organizations by the communities. Each ethnic organization began to project their shade of distinctiveness in dialect, dress, dance, custom, culture and so on. Some of the communities even appended the term 'national' in their organization's name.

¹³ David Vumlallian Zou, 'Prologue', in Khup Za Go, *op.cit.*, pp. xv-xvii, and 59-60.

¹⁴ The first Zo people movement for a unified 'Zo nation' was witnessed in the then Lushai Hill (present Mizoram state in India) during the 1940s and during the 1960s.

¹⁵ The 'Khulmi' concept evolved out of their belief in their common origins from mythical cave named 'Khul'. The Lusei called this mythical cave as 'Chhinlung', and the Hmar named it 'Sinlung'.

¹⁶ The Thadou-Kuki did not join KNU.

¹⁷ Aheibam Koireng Singh, 'Kuki-Naga Conflict in Manipur (1990-2000)', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 2006, pp.55-56.

¹⁸ Zarzolien, *The U-Now People*, Lamka, Manipur, 1981, pp. 13-14.

During the last part of the 1950s, Paite National Council (PNC) adopted a resolution in favor of 'Chin Re-unification' and sought integration of various Zo people of India and Burma. The PNC Annual General Assembly held at Hanship village, Lamka on October 10-13, 1957 arrived at a political resolution to pursue 'Chin Re-unification' as the long-term objective of PNC.¹⁹ In pursuance of the resolution arrived at its General Assembly held at Mualnuam village from February 6-8, 1960, PNC submitted a memorandum to the Indian Government on May 30, 1960. The memorandum was entitled "Re-unification of the Chins of India, Burma and Pakistan under one Country".²⁰ The memorandum claimed that Chin include over thirty ethnically, culturally, linguistically related tribes inhabiting in trans-border areas of India and Myanmar and Kuki is only a sub-group of the Chin. The memorandum requested the Government of India to take initiative to bring in all Chin inhabited areas of India, Burma and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) within one country in order to safe-guard the socio-political, cultural and economic rights of the people.²¹ In 1959, Tunkhopum Baite of Panglian village, Lamka, Manipur formed Chin Liberation Army (CLA). L Lam Khan Piang noted that the CLA was synonymous with what Maloy Krishna Dhar mentioned as the Paite Liberation Front.²² To begin their activities, CLA attacked and captured the police stations in Sugnu, Lamka, and Singngat (all in Churachandpur district, Manipur) and hoisted their flag at each sub-divisional office in January 1963. Even though a number of Paite joined CLA, the PNC leaders in Manipur gradually distanced themselves from the

¹⁹ Refer, *Paite Tribe Council Ki-Ukna Dan (11 vei puahphatna)*, Paite Tribe Council, Lamka, Manipur, 2004, p. xii.

²⁰ The memorandum was submitted during the PNC's Presidentship of T Goukhenpau and its Chief Secretary then was S Vungkhom.

²¹ For details, refer *Memorandum of the Paite National Council for Re-unification of the Chins of India, Burma and Pakistan under one country*, submitted to the Prime Minister of India, May 30, 1960. Here after cited as *PNC Memorandum for Reunification 1960*.

²² Cited in L Lam Khan Piang, *op. cit.*, p. 212 (footnote).

activities of CLA. B K Dasgupta writes, “The Paite leaders are not much enthusiastic about the idea of ‘Chinhood’, ...Now the Paite leaders and the office bearers of the PNC tell us that they are not to be called ‘Chin’ or Kuki’”.²³ The community leaders feel that their interests would be better served by upholding their own group identity rather than by merging themselves with bigger and similar groups.

It is important to point out that during the same period in the Lushai Hills (present Mizoram state), Mizo National Front (MNF) also launched unification movement under the leadership of Laldenga. MNF fought to integrate all Zo people inhabited areas of India, Burma and Bangladesh under one administrative unit. In January 1966 Tunkhopum and some CLA leaders - Suakdam Galte (President, Paite National Council, Sialkal block, Mizoram), Hang Khawkan (General Commander, CLA) and Lamkhawsiam (Southern Commander, CLA) from India side had a meeting with MNF leaders on January 15, 1966 in Sihphir, Lushai Hills. In the meeting, Tunkhopum and Laldenga agreed to help each other in their endeavors. Laldenga wanted the CLA to take on the Government of India. However, Tunkhopum declined by saying, “the Government of India is very powerful to be defeated” and told Laldenga, “We will camp at Sialkal ranges and do not disturb us”.²⁴ According to the agreement of the meeting, CLA would help MNF with arms and ammunitions. The same year, Tunkhopum and some of his men started from their Lamka camp and went to East Pakistan to acquire some arms and ammunitions for the newly recruited CLA cadre. However, MNF ambushed them at Aiduzawl (Aizawl) and kept the leaders under their

²³ B K Dasgupta, ‘The Paite National Council’, in K S Singh (ed.), *Tribal Movement in India*, Manohar Publishings, New Delhi, 1982, p. 127.

²⁴ Cited in L Lam Khan Piang, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

custody.²⁵ After one year, Tunkhopum was killed.²⁶ Describing the events, C G Vergese and R L Thanzawna noted in their book, *A History of Mizos*, “Some armed clashes took place between the Paites and the Mizo National Army (MNA). Twenty volunteers of PNC were captured by MNA. Six PNC volunteers, including the PNC Secretary Suakdam of Teikhang, east of Khawdungsie (in Mizoram) were said to have been killed by the MNA in May 1967. A dozen of volunteers were also killed by the MNA at Mimbung northeast of Teikhang. These killings were aimed to stop anti-MNF activities”.²⁷ Some who could escape from the MNF attack ran to Lamka, mourned the death of their leaders and shunned the dreams of liberating their homeland.²⁸ This incident created a strong resentment against the MNF and the Zo activists of Lamka, Manipur appealed to the Government of India for help.²⁹ After fighting against the Indian Government for more than a decade, MNF signed the Mizo Accord in 1986. As L Keivom writes in ‘Towards Zo Unification’, “The political dust kicked up by the MNF movement in 1966 settled with the grant of Statehood...the euphoria the new status has created soon waned and evaporated...Mizoram has begun to slowly abandon its role model as a forerunner of Zo integration and has become less and less accommodating”.³⁰

²⁵ Douluang Valte, *Khantawn Hinna Thangkhum Tanchin*, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

²⁶ Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh*, published by the author, Aizawl, 1987, p. 236.

²⁷ C G Vergese and R L Thanzawna, *A History of Mizos*, Vol. II, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1997, p. 88.

²⁸ L Lam Khan Piang, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

²⁹ With assistance of Indian government, the Zo people such as Paite, Zou, Vaiphei, etc joined Village Volunteer Force (VVF) popularly known as Home Guard, whose main task was to fight the Naga and Mizo insurgents of the 1960s.

³⁰ L Keivom, ‘Towards Zo Unification’, in *Prism of the Zo People*, Publication Board, 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration Committee, Lamka, 2008, p. 199.

The 1970s and early part of 1980s again witnessed *Zo* unification movement. This time Zomi National Congress (ZNC) founded in 1972 by T Gougin at Daizang village, Lamka, was at the forefront of the movement. The declared aims of ZNC were “to inculcate a sense of Zomi nationalism among the people of Zoland and for this purpose, to organize a political platform from the village level strictly based on principles and discipline, and to fulfill the above, it shall be the prime duty of ZNC to pull down the communal barriers that obstruct the Zomi unity and to ensure that the liberty, equality and fraternity for all the Zomis by enlightening the people through education and extensive tours; to guarantee that Zomi nationalism has within itself as its contents the institution of a social democracy sans poverty and inequality, and pledge to establish a free and democratic state called Zoland so that every Zomi has a) the liberty of every individual growth, b) freedom of expression and c) the right to sue for justice and the right to join a government of his choice (sic)”.³¹ According to T Gougin, “The birth of ZNC was necessary for the political salvation of all the Zomis (known by others as Kuki, Chin and Lushai)...whose ultimate goal was nothing less than their political emancipation and the reunification of all the Zomis”.³² The ZNC organized volunteers drawn from different *Zo* communities. ZNC began its political campaign from the villages in Lamka district and gradually expanded their activities to Lamka town, the district headquarters. The organization submitted memorandum to the Government of India in 1972 and 1982 wherein they stated their political objective of Zomi unification and sought the help of India to achieve its goals. It become a sort of mass movement and reached it highest peak in the middle of the 1980s. In a meeting that he had with

³¹ Refer T Gougin, *History of Zomi*, Zomi Press, Churachandpur, 1984, pp. 235-236.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 234-235.

Laldenga on May 5, 1982, Gougin advocated Zomi (Zo people), while Laldenga insisted that Mizo (people of Zo) is a better choice.³³ Sharing his views on the Mizo-Zomi semantic continuum F K Lehman of the University of Illinois (USA) said, "... between Zomi and Mizo, I cannot think what to say. Their meanings are identical, clearly." On the little acceptance of Mizo outside Mizoram, the possible explanation as given by F K Lehman is the 'unavoidable overtones of Mizo dominance' - linked, in turn, to the past prestige of Sailo chiefs.³⁴ At its special assembly held on July 8-9, 1983 at Zoveng, Lamka ZNC arrived at a political resolution that read, "Resolved that all Zomis should live together under one administrative umbrella with the protection and care of Indian Union".³⁵ The resolution was moved by S Thangkhingin Ngaihte, the General Secretary of ZNC. In a show of strength and as one of its campaign strategy, the ZNC launched a twelve-day long march from Sipuikawn to Lamka town (265 km). Writing on the ZNC movement, Gougin wrote, "We move on under the banner of Zomi. So long as one Zomi survives on earth, the slogan of Zomi reunification will be sounded no matter who perish".³⁶

In spite of the euphoria, popularity, and high drama of Zomi movements, ZNC could not achieve their political goals and began to lose its popularity in due course. After the initial excitement died down in Manipur, the ZNC had a new lease of life as its Burma chapter commenced in 1988.³⁷ In Burma ZNC had successfully contested election as a regional political party even though it was short lived. It may be noted that a short-

³³ David Vumlallian Zou, 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

³⁴ F K Lehman, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁵ Cited in T Gougin, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

³⁷ David Vumlallian Zou, 'The Role of Literature in Nation Building: The Case of Zo People', in *Prism of the Zo People*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

lived democratic government was installed in Burma in the year 1988. On December 6, 1988 ZNC Burma proclaimed Zomi to be the racial identity of the people known as Chin in Burma. The last paragraph of ZNC Burma Declaration read, "...We proclaim that the racial name Chin should be done away with and *Zo* must be reinstated to its proper place and status of racial identity".³⁸ ZNC was also instrumental in organizing the 'First World Zomi Convention' held at Champhai, Mizoram from May 19-21, 1988 where representatives from Mizoram and Manipur participated. One of the outcomes of the Convention was a declaration that reads, "We, the people of *Zo* ethnic group, inhabitants of the highlands in the Chin Hills and Arakans of Burma, the Chittagong hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the Mizoram state and adjoining hill areas of India are descendants of one ancestor. Our language, our culture and tradition, and no less our social and customary practices are clear evidences of the ethnological facts. Further, our historical records, and footprints both written and unwritten in the sands of time testify to the truth of our common ancestry...".³⁹

Although many among the Paite lent their support to the activities of ZNC, there were also forces of opposition within the community. According to H Kamkhenthang, while accepting the term Zomi, there was an organizational misunderstanding between ZNC and the then leaders of PNC. He also noted that all Paite were not loyal to PNC or to ZNC.⁴⁰ In the interviews that the author conducted, some Paite elites mentioned that the strained relationship between the two organizations was mainly because of election

³⁸ Declaration No. 7/88, December 6, 1988. For detail, refer Khup Za Go, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-197.

³⁹ For details, refer, Khup Za Go, *ibid.*, pp. 177-179.

⁴⁰ H Kamkhenthang, 'Identity Crisis among the Tribes of Manipur', in B Pakem (ed.), *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Northeast India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1990, p. 288.

politics of the then leaders of PNC and ZNC. Community organizations such as PNC were initially motivated by electoral politics. When the ZNC also contested election directly, it faced stiff challenges from the existing tribe-based organizations. It was also pointed out that the then PNC leaders lacked the political vision for Zo unification as they were driven by their narrow community interest. Lack of consultations between the two organizations at that time was another reason for misunderstandings. The PNC leaders felt sidelined as they were not consulted or informed sufficiently. However, as one person noted, “Given the widespread nature of its movement, ZNC had become a clear threat for the erstwhile leadership of PNC. Even though there are many Paite supporting the ZNC and its policy, they all succumbed to the threat and onslaught of the erstwhile PNC”.⁴¹

According to the ZNC sources, PNC leaders opposed Zomi movement launched by it because of narrow communal politics. It was further pointed out that had the PNC leaders had the vision and concern for the Paite people, they would have supported ZNC.⁴² PNC leaders on the other hand asserted that PNC was not against Zomi and that they always stood for unification of various communities that have shared common customs, traditions and culture under a commonly acceptable nomenclature.⁴³ The PNC source cited the general discussion that it had on nomenclature at its Annual General Assembly in the year 1982 and the resolution it had taken to accept in principle that all

⁴¹ These views are expressed by Paite elites. Interviews are conducted by the author from December 2007-February 2008.

⁴² For details, refer, letter of S Thangkhangin Ngaihte, the General Secretary of ZNC, titled, ‘*Zogam Itna Laikhak Khatna*’ (in a booklet), distributed by Zomi National Congress Party, Headquarters at its Party Congress, Behiang (T), Singngat Block, Lamka, September 8-10, 1985, pp. 2-3.

⁴³ Inaugural speech of T Phungzathang, General President, Paite National Council (in a booklet) at its General Assembly held at Lungchin Village, Singngat Subdivision, Churachandpur, Manipur, February 19-20, 1986, p. 5; also see leaflet of Paite National Council (Information Wing), Headquarters, Lamka, February 17, 1986.

the hill tribes should have a common political platform.⁴⁴ It also pointed out that before a common political platform was formed, there was the need to hold consultative meetings among the different stakeholders.⁴⁵ Despite such differences of opinions, one fact was certain that the Zomi movement launched by ZNC had succeeded in arousing pan-Zomi consciousness in the minds of the general masses. As T Chinsum Naulak rightly put it, “the emergence of Zomi National Congress can be considered as the beginning of Zomi nationalism among us (read Paite)”.⁴⁶

The 1990s again saw the resurgence of Zomi nationalism as a potent force in the trans-border area of India and Burma. This time, Zomi Re-unification Organization (ZRO) professing to reunify the ethnified ‘Zo nation’, formed in 1993 at Phapian (Kachin state) of Burma was at the forefront of the movement. Its armed wing Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) recruited cadres from different Zo communities of India and Burma. The political situation of the 1990s in the hill areas of Manipur provided an opportunity to Zomi leaders of Manipur to pursue Zo unity. The Kuki-Naga conflict (Manipur) that broke out in 1992 had uprooted and displaced many Naga and Thadou-Kuki villagers. The conflict made the Zomi leaders feel that their political survival depended on their ability to unite different Zo communities. The feeling of insecurity they experienced as individual tribes / communities compelled the Zomi leaders of Manipur to come together under a common political platform.⁴⁷ In this context, the

⁴⁴ PNC Annual General Assembly held at Tuithapi village, Churachandpur 1982, cited in T Phungzathang, *ibid.* p. 5.

⁴⁵ For detail, refer, T Phungzathang, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ T Chinsum Naulak, ‘Zomite Maban Diing (Basic Steps for Re-unification), in *Siamsin Thugousiah*, Vol. IV, Siamsinpawlpī Shillong Branch Publication, Shillong, 2004, p. 29.

⁴⁷ These views are expressed by Paite elites. Interviews conducted by the author from December 2007-February 2008.

remark made by T Gougin, in his booklet, *Discovery of Zomi Resurgence*, is worth noting: “Whether Zomis shall sink in or swim across the storming sea of the modern world will depend on their ability to unify the scattered Zomis here and there into one single family or one nomenclature on the basis of their blood relationship and ethnical oneness...The word Zomi is not so selfish as we, who are still the slaves of selfishness...When we like to come under the name Zomi, we can think of bigger aims, bigger plans...(sic)”.⁴⁸ The ZRO aims to achieve geographical, political and cultural / social reunification of the Zo people of India and Burma. The preamble of ZRO reads, “We, the indigenous Zomi ethnic group once a free people having a country of our own, but now divided by international and national boundaries of India, Burma and Bangladesh with no political future, have solemnly decided to launch a struggle for reunification...”.⁴⁹ In the words of K Guite, founder President of ZRO, “a land or people which were once a union need to be unified...A broken nation need to be patched up. Hence, re-unification, the big task of re-unifying the Zomis and the land they occupied thereof is the main aim of this organization”.⁵⁰ To L Lam Khan Piang, “the organization was formed on the principle that if others armed with sophisticated weapons laid claim even to one’s hearth and home, and yet one did not have any proper means to safeguard, then one cannot help but arm oneself”.⁵¹ The ZRO issued its first press note on August 1993. The press note reads, “...we are Zomis not because we live in the highland or hills, but we are Zomi and called ourselves Zomi because we are the descendants of our great ancestor Zo / Zou / Zhou...The Bengalis then the Britishers called us Kukis in India, but

⁴⁸ T Gougin, cited in T Chinsum Naulak, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁹ For detail discussion on ZRO, its organizational structure, aim and objectives, etc. refer *The Indigenous Zomi*, edited and published by Information and Public Relation Department, Zomi Re-unification Organisation, Ciimnuai, 2005, pp. 109-125.

⁵⁰ K Guite, cited in T Chinsum Naulak, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ L Lam Khan Piang, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

we are not and we don't call ourselves so. Therefore, it is an imposed name, not from within. The Burmese, then the Britishers called us Chin in Burma and the name foreign to us. We know best who we are and what we are. So, Zomi is the name by which we called ourselves. The name was passed on to us by none else, but our great great ancestor, Zo...This is our appeal...We are not two, but one under Zomi. Let us wake up, and join hands for the geographical, political and social reunification of the already divided Zos...Come forward with your clear vision, your might, your money and your whole being to build a unified Zogam / Zoland / Zoram. Come and join ZRO with your identity for it is ZRO alone, which gives equal respect to all Zomi tribes, big or small. It is ZRO, which guarantees to protect, safeguard and preserved every tone of language. Unity in diversity is the guiding principle of ZRO...It is an organization committed to Zomi Re-unification (sic)".⁵²

As the rhetoric of unification reverberated among the educated, intellectuals and enlightened masses, the Zomi Co-ordination Committee meeting held at Pearsonmun village, Lamka attended by different recognized Zo tribes of Manipur viz Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Gangte, Simte, and Zou came out with a resolution, which read: "In continuation of Zomi movement, the members felt the necessity of having a common identity with which all tribes can identify themselves without any reservation or hesitation for unity, solidarity and safety. The leaders present, therefore, adopted the name Zomi for common identity which will take immediate effect from today (sic)".⁵³

⁵² ZRO: *An Appeal*, Publicity Wing, Zomi Re-unification Organization (ZRO), Ciimnuai, Zo land, August 9, 1993.

⁵³ T R Nehkhojang, Zomi Co-ordination Committee, Resolutions, Pearsonmun, Manipur, June 26, 1993, cited in *The Indigenous Zomi, op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

The PNC gave recognition and support to ZRO in the year 1994. Resolution five of the Chief Executive Council (CEC) meeting of PNC dated January 10, 1994 reads “Recognizing that it is necessary for the achievement of its long-term policy of ‘Chin Re-unification,’ PNC declare its recognition and support to ZRO”. Again, resolution 4 (i) of PNC’s CEC meeting of February 14, 1996 accepted Zomi to be its nomenclature. Different apex Zomi organizations such as Zomi Council (ZC), Zomi Students’ Federation (ZSF), Zomi Youth Association (ZYA), Zomi Mothers’ Association (ZMA), Zomi Human Rights Forum (ZHRF), Zomi Economic Planning and Development Agency (ZEPADA) also emerged one after another.⁵⁴ With the formation of ZC in 1997, PNC becomes one of the constituent members of ZC.⁵⁵ Formally subscribing to the idea that Paite together with other cognate *Zo* tribes / communities form the ‘Zo nation’, the 48th General Assembly of PNC of June 27, 2003 rechristened itself as Paite Tribe Council (PTC) vide resolution No. 5.⁵⁶ In ‘Paite Nam Lailam Politics’, John K Ngaihte writes that the international boundary runs cutting their traditional territory. By the time they become conscious of their status, they found themselves living in two separate countries, India and Burma. But the fact is that in terms of identity, clans and language they are same people, and now they have accepted Zomi as their nomenclature.⁵⁷ Writing on the renaming of PNC to PTC, H Nengsong, former President of PTC writes that when PNC

⁵⁴ With the formation of different Zomi organizations, the apex organization of different *Zo* communities of Manipur becomes the constituent members of Zomi organizations.

⁵⁵ United Zoumi Organization, the apex body of Zou tribe of Manipur becomes a full-fledged member of ZC on November 12, 2002. The Mate Tribe Council of Manipur becomes member of ZC in March 4, 2003. Refer, yearly report of ZC, *Zomi Council: Activities and Involvement (2000-2002)*, Zomi Council Headquarters, Lamka, p. 11; and *Zomi Council: Activities and Involvement (2003-2004)*, Zomi Council Headquarters, Lamka, p. 2.

⁵⁶ This resolution was taken during the Presidentship of Pu H Nengsong. The PNC’s 48th General Assembly dated June 27 2003 changed the name of PNC to PTC.

⁵⁷ John K Ngaihte, ‘Paite Nam Lailam Politics’, in S Ngulzadal (compiler), *Paite Zoumite Laipau (Paite Zoumi Literature)*, Convention Press, Lamka, 1999, p. 293.

was formed, Paite leaders had a very broad conception of Paite that would include Zou, Simte, Vaiphei, Gangte and others living in Manipur and the Chin Hills. However, when the Government of India recognized twenty-nine tribes of Manipur in 1956 including Paite, Simte, Gangte, Vaiphei, Zou, they all gained equal legal and political status.⁵⁸ As no individual Zo tribe could become a nation, it was necessary to make alliance with other tribes. The feelings of insecurity as individual tribes and instincts of survival compelled the leaders to assert their common ethnic identity. In a way, it amounted to embracement and acceptance of their primal identity deeply rooted in the social and cultural milieu of the people.⁵⁹

On December 18, 2004 Zomi leaders of Manipur issued a press communiqué in one Lamka based vernacular newspaper that reads “We, the undersigned tribe leaders, representing our own tribe declare ...with a distinctive sincerity and conviction, Zo is our own common ancestor...it is the duty of every Zo descendant to strive for the reunification of the Zo descendant ethnically, emotionally and geographically...the Zo descendants’ having a separate political status of our own within the Indian Union is a mandatory; the different clans and tribes within Zo nomenclature enjoying an equal status is our unique glamour...organizing movement in the name and style of a particular tribes or clan is inharmonious and deviating from the Zomi National Movement and

⁵⁸ H Nengsong, *Paite Tribe Council Administration and PTC Finance Managements*, Lamka, 2004, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁹ These views are expressed by Paite elites. The interviews conducted by the author from December 2007-February 2008.

interest...(sic)".⁶⁰ The Cabinet meeting of ZC held on March 16, 2005 endorsed this declaration under Resolution 1.⁶¹

Kuki-Zomi Conflict

Even though Zomi identity and its political movements was initially articulated to include all Zo (Kuki-Chin) communities, political conflicts and competition in Manipur compelled Zomi as a political platform for the non-Thadou-Kuki speaking Zo communities in Manipur. The idea of Zomi as something opposed to Kuki received wider audience during the Kuki-Zomi conflict of 1997. The Kuki-Zomi conflict had widened the gap among the ranks of Zo nationalists of Kuki advocators and Zomi protagonists. The conflict had uprooted and displaced a number of people from both the communities. Scholars like T T Haokip, Bhagat Oinam, Aheibam Koireng Singh see the conflict as largely the outcome of Kuki-Naga conflict of 1992. According to T T Haokip, displacement of Kukis to Sadar Hills⁶² and Churachandpur district because of the Kuki-Naga conflict resulted to a spin-off conflict between the Kuki and the Zomi.⁶³ The Kukis claimed that during the height of Kuki-Naga conflict, the Zomis instead of supporting them, maintained closer relations with the Nagas. In T T Haokip's view, the apprehensions of the Zomis that the displaced Kukis would dominate and subjugate them

⁶⁰ All Presidents of the constituent tribes of Zomi signed the press communiqué. Refer, *Manipur Express*, Lamka, December 18, 2004.

⁶¹ Yearly report of ZC, *Zomi Council: Activities and Involvement 2005-2006*, Zomi Council Headquarters, Churachandpur, Manipur, p. 3.

⁶² Sadar Hills is a sub-division in Senapati district, Manipur.

⁶³ T T Haokip, 'Ethnic Conflict and Internal Displacement in Manipur', in C Joshua Thomas (ed.), *Dimension of Displaced People in Northeast India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 227.

in various ways was the real cause for Kuki-Zomi tensions.⁶⁴ Similar argument was presented by Bhagat Oinam who argued that the fear among the Zomis of being demographically overshadowed, land being snatched, and politically dominated by the increasing Thadou-Kuki migration in Lamka district were the major causes for the conflict. Oinam attributed the immediate cause of Kuki-Zomi conflict to Zomis' refusal to help the Kukis during the Kuki-Naga clashes and the consequent act of vengeance by the Kukis. Kuki asserted its supremacy over the Zomis exactly in the same way the Nagas did to them".⁶⁵ According to Aheibam Koireng Singh, because of displacement of the Kukis to Churachandpur, law and order problems relating to flesh trade, extortion and burglary, collection of taxes were on the rise as those displaced came to Lamka in pauperized state. Apart from the influx of Thadou-Kuki to Lamka, the activities of Kuki militants coming from Sadar Hills who did not have any knowledge of the local sentiments proved to be a fertile ground for Kuki-Zomi clashes.⁶⁶ In general, these scholars have taken political development of 1990s as the point of their analysis and did not give much emphasis to the politics of the Kuki and Zomi of the period prior to 1990s.⁶⁷ As has been noted earlier, Zomi leaders sought unification of the different Zo communities. The advocators of Zomi and Kuki identities competed with each other as champions of different Zo communities. "As the rhetoric of 'unification' spun off the academic circles, it got increasingly radicalized in Manipur in the 1990s. The genie of irredentism has grown out too big for rational dialogue and debate. It coincided with the advent of gun culture. Ironically, an internecine Kuki-Zomi (1997-1998) clash took place

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Bhagat Oinam, *op. cit.*, p. 2036.

⁶⁶ Aheibam Koireng Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁶⁷ Also see U A Shimray, 'Socio-Political Unrest in the Region Called North-East India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 42, October 16, 2004, pp. 4637-4643.

in Manipur amidst irredentist rhetoric”.⁶⁸ In other words, the ideological differences and the politics of unification of the two communities reached highest pitch during 1990s with the outbreak of Kuki-Naga conflict. In the background of this political situation, an open Kuki-Zomi conflict broke out when Kuki National Front (KNF) killed ten Paite and injuring other four persons at Saikul village on the night of June 24, 1997. This incident provoked retaliation from the Zomis.

Peace and normalcy returned to the two communities with the signing of Peace Accord on October 1, 1998 by Albert Gen Goukhup, President of Kuki Inpi, on behalf of Kukis and K Vungzalian, Chairman of Zomi Council, on behalf of the Zomis. Both the parties agreed to forgive and forget the past mistakes committed against each other. The peace accord that they entered into declared, “As a token of customary apology for the mowing down of ten innocent persons and injuring other four persons on the night of June 24, 1997 at Saikul village by the KNF, thereby dragging the two communities into conflict, the Kuki Inpi offered a feast by killing a four legged animal, a bull (*bawngtal*) on September 29, 1998. In a very cordial atmosphere and mutual trust, the feast was happily shared together by leaders of the Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council. In response to the good gesture shown by the Kuki Inpi, the Zomi Council showed their goodness and love for peace in the form of killing another four legged animal, a pig, the following day, September 30, 1998, which was happily shared together by both community leaders”.⁶⁹ The two communities also agreed on the following points - “i) That, the nomenclatures

⁶⁸ David Vumlallian Zou, 2008, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹ *Final Peace Accord between Zomis and Kukis for Restoration of Peace and Normalcy*, Churachandpur District, October 1, 1998. Signed by K Vungzalian, Chairman of Zomi Council and Albert Gen Goukhup, President of Kuki Inpi in the presence of W Nipamacha Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur.

Kuki and Zomi shall be mutually respected by all Zomis and Kukis. Every individual or group of persons shall be at liberty to call himself or themselves by any name, and the nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall not in any way be imposed upon any person or group against his / their will at any point of time. ii) That, any person who has occupied or has physical possession of any land / private building / houses and quarters wrongfully and illegally during the period of clashes shall return and restore to the rightful owners, such lands and buildings. iii) That, no Kuki or Zomi militants shall indulge themselves in any forcible collection of funds, taxes, etc, against their counterpart nomenclature be it from the Government officials, individuals, contractors and business establishments. iv) That, all points of MOUs between the Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council shall be operative and binding to all concerned persons and parties including the government (sic)".⁷⁰

Contribution of Indigenous Intelligentsia to Zomi Identity

Literature has the capacity to mould public opinion. From the available writings of a community, it is possible to learn the dominant thoughts and feelings of a community of a particular period and time. Usually educated elites and intelligentsia make use of literature to propagate their thoughts and ideas to the general masses. In India's northeast the introduction of modern education by the Christian missionaries led to the emergence of new group of people who are capable of reading and writing. Attaining higher education in higher institution of learning exposed them to literature (especially in English). In their zeal to understand their communities, many indigenous educated tribal elites and intelligentsia took up their own communities as fields of their study and in the

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

process came out with books, presenting a larger picture of their communities through their works.

The first generation of Zo scholars from Manipur managed to enter the country's higher institutions of learning, including the premier institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi.⁷¹ In the year 1979, S Thangkhangin Ngaihte and L S Gangte submitted their M. Phil dissertations at Jawaharlal Nehru University. While L S Gangte⁷² worked on Zomi polity of Manipur, Thangkhangin Ngaihte presented a historical analysis of the pre-colonial society of the Zomi. Explaining the emergence of clan based identities among the Zos, Ngaihte writes that in the past, the Zo people were forced to disperse and migrate to the hills and in the course of their migrations in small groups; their society underwent serious stresses and peculiar socio-economic transformation. Because of this, the Zo society regressed to the clan-based society, to the extent of forgetting their original common name, and calling themselves after their respective clan leaders.⁷³ Both scholars strongly argued that Zomi was the oldest and appropriate generic name of the so called Kuki-Chin groups of people. T Gougin also contributed to the cause of Zomi consciousness through his writings. His two most enduring works are *The Discovery of Zoland*, 1980 and *History of Zomi*, 1984.⁷⁴ In the year 1987, Vumson published his work *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and*

⁷¹ David Vumlallian Zou, 2008, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12

⁷² L S Gangte, 'Zomi Polity in Transition: A Case Study in Manipur', M. Phil Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru Univeristy, New Delhi, 1979.

⁷³ S Thangkhangin Ngaihte, *op. cit.*, whole chapter 2.

⁷⁴ T Gougin, *op. cit.*

Bangladesh.⁷⁵ Tualchin Neihzial was another person whose contribution to Zo consciousness cannot be ignored. In the year 1984, Neihzial started one journal *Zogam News Research Journal*, published and circulated from Lamka. Apart from sharing his ideas on Zomi, Neihzial used the journal to publish academic writings on Zomi. Later, Neihzial took up Ph. D work on 'History and Culture of the Zomis' and submitted his thesis in the year 1993.⁷⁶ In 'Groping for Identity' an article written in an edited book *In Search of Identity* published in 1986, H Kamkhenthang's wrote, "Nowadays, there is another name getting more and more popular. This name is not a new name but remained dormant in the social and cultural layers of the past. It is called Zomi...Zogam (Zoland) and Zo remained in the layers of their folksongs and are now exposed in the social, religious and political life of the people".⁷⁷ The 'Zo' and Zomi concept gained currency in the academic circles as a result of these works. Apart from generating enthusiasm among Zo readers, they became the intellectual foundations for subsequent studies on Zo people.⁷⁸

A good number of English language writings from secular and theological academic backgrounds also appeared during the 1990s. In his work, *Tribal Agrarian System of Manipur: A Study of Zomi*,⁷⁹ L Chinzakham Ngaihte critically examined the agrarian system of the Zo people. Chinkholian Guite and Vanlalruat Guite submitted their

⁷⁵ Vumson, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ Neihzial Tualchin, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ H Kamkhenthang, 1986, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16. (Also published in *Prism of the Zo People, op. cit.*, pp. 219-242.

⁷⁸ David Vumlallian Zou, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁹ L Chinzakham Ngaihte, *Tribal Agrarian System of Manipur: A Study of Zomi*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998.

Ph. D theses in 1995 and 1999 respectively.⁸⁰ The work of Chinkholian Guite analyzed the political and economic development of the Zomis of Manipur, and that of Vanlalruat Guite presented a historical study of the dresses and crafts of the Zomi. The Ph. D thesis of L Lam Khan Piang, 'Kinship, Territory and Politics: The Study of Identity Formation amongst the Zo',⁸¹ argued that the term 'Zo' is a cultural or a primal name of the Kuki-Chin people. By applying T K Oommen's concept of 'ethnification', Lam Khan Piang explained how the Zo people had become an 'ethnified nation'. He attributed the 'ethnification' process and dissolution of the Zo people to the annexation and separation of the people (territory) by the British imperialists into three different independent territories Burma, India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Similar arguments can also be seen from the work of Vumlallian who wrote, "it became quite common to hear historical narratives about the partition of the 'Zo nation' and their current 'minority status' within the nation-state of Burma, Bangladesh and India. After the discovery of this 'problem', an irredentist line of thinking prescribes the solution as 'ethnic unification'".⁸²

Among the theologian writers the work of Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*⁸³ and that of Khup Za Go's, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations among the Zo*

⁸⁰ Chinkholian Guite, *op. cit.*; Vanlalruat Guite, 'Traditional Dresses and Crafts of the Zomi in Manipur: A Historical Study', Ph. D Thesis, Manipur University, Imphal, 1999.

⁸¹ L Lam Khan Piang, *Kinship*, *op. cit.*, whole Chapter 4.

⁸² David Vumlallian Zou, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁸³ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*, Lamka, Manipur, 1995.

*People in Northeast India*⁸⁴ are worth noting. Sing Khaw Khai's work gives insight into the historical, cultural and traditional, religious beliefs / concepts of the Zo people. It also deals with the various clans and tribes of the Zo people. Khup Za Go narrated how the translation of the Bible into different Zo dialects denigrated the integrity and unity of the Zo people. His work shows that more than twenty dialect groups, many quite small, have their own Bible printed in their language. Khup Za Go's *Zo Chronicles*,⁸⁵ a compilation of rare documents, reports, and memoranda from colonial to post-independence period provides invaluable information about social, cultural and political history of the Zo people. The objective of publishing the book as admitted by Khup Za Go was to inculcate a spirit of unity, harmony and to create consciousness of their unique oneness of the Zo people. The effort made by Zomi leaders to create wider consciousness is also clearly reflected in *Prism of the Zo People*,⁸⁶ which was published to commemorate 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration, 2008.⁸⁷ The book contains contributions from native scholars and writers about the history, land, culture, economy and traditions of the people. The objective for publishing the book as pointed out by the publication board was to instill the spirit of oneness among the Zo people. This was clearly spelt out by the publication board which reads, "we hope that it inspire the readers to take more interest in the issue...may reinvigorate the spirit of oneness among the Zo kindred tribes and take them to higher level of patriotism; bring forth peace and fraternity amongst them, and led them towards preserving, promoting and protecting their indigenous rights as a nation (sic)".⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Khup Za Go, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations among the Zo People in Northeast India*, Chin Baptist Literature Board, Lamka, Manipur, 1996.

⁸⁵ Khup Za Go, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ *Prism of the Zo People, op. cit.*

⁸⁷ The occasion falls on February 20. Every year, all Zomis of India and Myanmar celebrate the occasion.

⁸⁸ *Prism of the Zo People, op. cit.*

The contribution of vernacular works on Zomi consciousness is no less significance. Mention may be made here of the contributions of Nengzalam Guite, Thanga Tonsing, and Lalneithang Hatlangh. Recalling their perceived common ancestor 'Zo', the trio founded a vernacular comic named *Zokhankhual*⁸⁹ in 1984 during the height of ZNC's political movements for unification. As claimed by the author, the comic was founded with the objective of furthering political consciousness among their people.⁹⁰ The story of *Zokhankhual* revolves around one main character named Zokhankhual who is projected as 'The Tribal Superman' by the author. The stories written in a rather humorous style convey messages political and reformative in nature. Recently, some diehard Zomi from Delhi posted the back issues of *Zokhankhual* in the net and it was received with much applause from the site visitors.⁹¹ While English writings serve the English knowing people within the community, vernacular literature fills the gap by disseminating information to the non-English literate masses, thereby contributing to wider circulation of ideas among the Zomi masses.

Representation of Zomi consciousness in Vernacular Songs and Lyrics

What effects do the sweet love songs and nostalgic feelings express by a person have on the masses? How would a nationalist express his or her love and feelings to his

⁸⁹ *Zokhankhual* is a combination of term 'Zo' progenitor / ancestor of the Zo people, and 'khankhual', which means 'concern for the welfare and development'.

⁹⁰ Haumuanlun Samte, 'Zokhankhual Bawltu Pu Nengzalam Guite toh Houlimna,' May 20, 2010, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7612&Itemid=32 (accessed on June 2, 2010).

⁹¹ Refer, 'Re-introducing The Tribal Superman - *Zokhankhual* - The Return 2', May 18, 2010, http://zogam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7605&Itemid=32 (accessed on June 2, 2010).

or her valentine?⁹² The use of language in the form of poetry or lyrics had always been to attract the attention of the masses. Songs are carriers of tradition, cultural ethos and the collective psyche of the people. Songs not only reflect the personality of the composer, but also the feelings, emotions and the day-to-day personal experiences. In addition, songs mirror the wider picture of the historical context of the period in which they were composed. Songs have the capacity to stir emotions and reinforce communal solidarity. Among Zomis there are songs composed on topical issues with explicit and implicit undertones of message - political and reformist in nature. While some songs may be a response to particular social or political event and phenomenon, nevertheless, they have the capacity to create wider consciousness among the people. Although there are traditional folklores and folksongs that reflect the history, tradition, and culture, many of the contemporary Zomi nationalist songs were outcomes of political consciousness aroused by the surge of Zomi nationalism during the 1970s and 1980s. Most songs composed during this period were songs of lamentation, expression of love for their land, their desire for unification, the need to work and serve their land. One popular song composed by Late Jelshyam⁹³ in 1965 appeals to his people, especially the younger generation to work hard and serve their motherland faithfully. The song talks about the importance of good personality, firm determination, spirit of teamwork, and the will to help others. The poet appealed to his people to pursue education and learn whatever they could for their land, their birthplace. The land of ancestors prospers only when the youth works.

⁹² I am using 'valentine' to denote the love and feelings that people have for their land. People love their land and are ready to do anything for their land. Hence, for a nationalist or people who have a nationalist feelings 'their land and their people has becomes their lover' i. e. their valentine.

⁹³ Late Jelshyam IAS was a bureaucrat by profession, formerly the Chief Secretary of Manipur. He composed the song in the year 1965 during his college days in Shillong.

The song in Paite goes like this,

*I tuun leh zua lung mawl in, Pianna gam giabang zuun di'n / Sen vontawite hon
ngak uh, Sinin, seemin, giabang zuun.*

Dialdial in dialdial leng lawm / Vualzawlina I gam lei di'n.

*Sum leh pai lamtam sang in / Sakmin hoih manpha zaw hi / Lawmvual liangvai
panpih ding / Na min lawi bang hong thang ding.*

*Khai le lawm aw, masuan ni / Lungkelou in pang ve ni / I tunnu zuapa gamlei /
noplenna gam hong suak diing.*

Free Translation in English is as follows:

Our simple, naïve forefathers / To tend and serve motherland / Waited for us – we
young folks / Let us learn, labor and serve.

Friends, if we live in harmony / Blessings shall be for our land.

Instead of more money and riches / Good name is far valuable / Serving the poor
and needy / Your fame will spread far and wide.

Friends lets rise and march ahead / Lets strive and not disappoint / Then our
beloved motherland / Will turn into land of bliss

A song composed by Lengtong Pauno, Sua Mang and T S Khai during 1988 invokes Zo solidarity by appealing to their shared origin and sentiments in Burma and India and urges them to stand united. It also conveys their desire to be integrated politically, which the poet dreams that their wish could be achieved one day. Yet

skeptical of their political unification, the poet says, “Though may not unite in this world, we shall unite in heaven above”. The song runs as follow,

Tuunsung khat pan piang hi ngeingei hang e.

*Sakmi khangmi ki khenlou in / Mimbang pianna Chiimtui vangkhua / I heina pian
in dang zong leng / Sinlai pai tembang kuah chiat veni.*

*Ziin in khen maw, Sianmang in khen maw? / Sinlai a na saang e / Gibang khen
zong lung a ki ngilh kei ni / Tuunsung khat pan piang hi ngeingei hang e.*

*Simthu tuibang luangkawm den ni / Kawlgam vaigam gibang khen zong / Simlei
tuibang gawmlou mah leh / Thangvan a tuibang ki gawm nawn ni.*

Free translation of the song is as follows:

For sure the same mother had borne us.

With shared origin in Chiimtui / Kinsfolk from north and south shall not part /
Though we dwell in divided worlds / Let’s stick together like sheathed knives /
Whether God’s will or Satan’s wiles / Partition hurts all the same / While
separated, forget not that /

For sure the same mother had borne us.⁹⁴

Be always of one mind like water that flows together / Though live in India and
Myanmar / Though may not unite in this world / Again, we shall unite in heaven
above.

⁹⁴ Translation of the first nine lines are that of David Vumlallian Zou taken from his article, ‘A Historical Study of the ‘Zo Struggle’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLV, No. 14, April 3, 2010, pp. 61-62, while the rest are translated by the author. The author owns the responsibility of the limitations or mistakes, if any, in the translation of these songs.

The song composed by Thawnzachin talks about feelings and attachment that he has with Zogam.⁹⁵ He addresses his people as ‘separated lovers’.⁹⁶ He expresses his love and feelings for his land in melancholic notes. The poet compares himself with some of the creatures found in his native land such as the cicada, the wild dove and quail. Striking a sad note, the poet says that these creatures will go on singing, crying and moaning in the thick jungles and in the bushes. Like these creatures, the poet cries for Zogam and his sadness and grief would last as long as these creatures continue to sing. The close attachment that he had with his land is clearly reflected when he says, “The pure Zo breeze that gently sweeps around, reminds me I am a Zo”. In Paite, the song runs like this:

*Galkhua dak kimvel veng, Zo lenmui kai chiaichiai e / Lungzuan zatam in tuibang
hon tum e / Vang kingai gibang khen Kawlgam Vaigam a heite / Lungzuan ka
sialna tul singbang saang lua sa'ng.*

*Zolengthe lah khuangkhuang diing a maw / Zo sinlai ah na saang e / Zo huih
khisiang hong leeng hialhialte in zong / Zomi nahi hong chi uh.*

*Leenna tang kitawi pan galkhua ko'n don chiaichiai a / Vaang k'on ngaihman
mimva bang thumthum ing e / Itluat, ngaihluat ngabang ka lenna gam vaangla
pan in / Vaang ko'n ngaihman Zo huiva bang mau ing e.*

⁹⁵ In English, Zogam (also Zoram) means Zoland where ‘gam’ stands for ‘land’.

⁹⁶ Separated by the international boundary that runs between India and Burma.

Free translation of the song is given below:

As I look around yonder, Zo cloud⁹⁷ hang in the air / Like a flood, deep yearning
overwhelms me / Separated lovers living in Myanmar and India / My yearning
has become as high as the tree.

Zo cicada⁹⁸ will go on singing / Its painful in my Zo's heart / The pure Zo
breeze⁹⁹ that gently sweeps around / Reminds me I am a Zo.

I look at you yonder from my high hilly abode / I keep wailing like a quail,
yearning for you / Beloved, darling, as I love you from my distant abode / I keep
wailing and wailing like the Zo dove.¹⁰⁰

An impassioned nationalist feelings conveyed rather in a sad notes is reflected in
a song composed by V Paukhansiam.

*Zuang diing in, Zogam zuang se / Liang diing in, Zogam liang se / Simlei mizata
pak path bang / Zolei aw nang, tulpan na kai maw / Vontawite hambang
huaikhawm in / Sambang khen ding, Zogam na lawmlou.
Singgam a niang-le-tai / Zogam a kial leh taak / Zolei aw nang sunni'n hong
taanlou maw / Aw solkha siang Zogam na taanlou maw.*

Free translation of it in English:

Of nostalgia, Zogam feels more nostalgic / Of poverty, Zogam is more poor /
While others are like full bloom flowers / O Zogam, you have gather moss /

⁹⁷ Cloud is referred to as *Zo lenmui* (Zo cloud) by the poet.

⁹⁸ The cicada is called *Zolengthe* (Zo cicada).

⁹⁹ The cold breeze that blows is referred to as '*Zo huih khisiang*' (pure Zo breeze).

¹⁰⁰ Dove is addressed as Zo dove (*Zo huiva*)

Gather your children together / Zogam, you don't look seemly to be divided.
Abundance in others' land / Hunger and thirst in Zogam / O Zogam, does not the
sun shine on you? / O moon, do you not shine upon Zogam?

In another song of V Paukhansiam, the poet pours out his love and feelings for Zogam. Praising the beautiful orchids that perched in a tree, the poet said that there is no one as beautiful as they are. Nothing can equal their beauty in this world. While the poet uses sweet love notes to express his feelings for Zogam, he also tells us about his perception on the status of his land. No matter what its social and political status of his land, the poet is still very much enchanted and overwhelmed by the beauty of his land that he sing the beauty of his land. Ultimately, the poet conveys the message that the land of his birth is more beautiful than anything else, and it is not possible for him and the son of Zogam to forget their land. This is the song in Paite,

*Na tuanna tulsing niam saang e / Tullel heisa etlawm nou aw / Na sakmelnou
ngailou om diam? / Simlei a nangbang mi om diam?*

*Sakmel etlawm heisa aw, Na heina tulliim ngai veeng / Huihkhi'n honsem heh
heisa aw, Na heina Zogam nuam e / Zolei vontawi zatam in, zunlouh Zogam
ngilhtheilou diing / Heisa leh mimbang pianna gam, Kenzong pham dong ngilh
kei ning...*

*Tulel Heisa pal lawmnou aw / Sakminthang duangzen ngaihrou aw / Na sakmel
in Zogam zeem hi / Zatam lung in na taisak.*

...Huihkhi, siktui leh Heisa in, Zolei zata lungtai sak.

Free translation

The tree on which you perch is lowly / O beautiful orchid on the tree / Who'll not
love your tender look / Will there be one like you on earth?

Oh, you beautiful orchid, I love the shade of your abode / Let the breeze sweep
you, O orchid / Pleasant is Zogam your abode / Children of Zogam cannot forget
the untended Zogam / The orchids and land of my birth, I too 'll not forget till I
die.

O beautiful orchid on the tree / Oh, enchanting darling of great fame / Your look
beautifies Zogam / You gladden the hearts of myriads.

...Gentle breeze, stream and orchids gladden the hearts of Zolandars.

The song¹⁰¹ sung by Biaklian Samte talks about the good and happy times that the
poet had together with his fellow friends. The songs tells about the difficulties and
hardships that he had encountered in his daily life such as the autumn rain, the loneliness
that he experienced in the dark night without food, and his longing for Zogam to be
liberated. The poet visualizes what the situation will be when they achieve their political
struggle. He says that while those alive enjoy the fruits of their struggle drunk with the
sweet wine of Zogam. This has saddened the poet. The song clearly reflected the loyalty
that the poet had for his land and his people.

*Heina tum in dang ta, Lailung zuang veeng e / Lungdeih simthu suut a, Kholhpih
gualngaih teng toh / Nuihchiam I leenlai ni, Loubang tul dia lawmlou /*

¹⁰¹ The song is composed by a person who had joined his fellow friends in the jungle.

Zogam vaangin tuangnung siah mai ta hang e maw.

*Doulai dai bang theng a, Zogam a hong paal Chiang / Guabang a hing lai teng,
Dawnbang tuak kimuh Chiang / Zotui nunkhum ning zou diing / Aw, lungdeih teng
kim nawnlou diing.*

*Sunni mualdawn liam a, Muikhua hong ziing in / Zogam vang a tulvuah luang leh
zaan mial nuai a / Genthei thuk in laigil kial leh selung zuan toh / I Zolei gam
hong paallun diing hai bang ngak laang*

*Tangpa dougal lai ah, Kha ka pham zong in / Kawlgam, Vaigam a hei, Laizom
tuibang gawm a / Zolei vont'e'n Zogam, Khuambang a luah nak leh / Lungtup
tuibang tung hi, Chi'n lailungdam ning e.*

Free translation of the song is:

My dwelling place has changed, I feel nostalgic / Days when with beloved friends
/ We discussed choice topics / And filled with laughter / Seems unreal to pass
away / For the sake of Zogam, we've left those things behind.

When the wars are over, and Zogam flourishes / Those who are alive meet with
one another / We'll enjoy Zogam's nectar / O! not all loved ones would be there.

As the sun descend in the hills, and darkness sets in / For Zogam's sake, under
torrent and the dark night / Wretched, hungry and yearning / I eagerly waited for
Zogam to bloom.

Youngman amidst enemies, even if I die / If kindreds, of India and Burma unite /
And Zo offspring inherit Zogam / I'll be satisfied, saying my hearts desire is
fulfilled.

This is a song composed by Siamchinthang during 1990s. The poet sings that as long as the son of the soil live, no one except the Zo people will occupy their land. The poet asked his people to have faith in the almighty God and march ahead for their land. This is the song,

Khua kiim a mi singta paalte'n / I Zogam nuam khuambang luah ning chi e / Tuan a Pupa, I Zogam nuam / Kuataan khuambang a luah thei diam? / Salpha taangbang dam lai veeng e.

Pitu Thianmang muang in / Lunglellou in machiang suan leng / Paksil bang in hong luun diing a / A sung a lungtuak ngabang I leeng diing hi.

Siktui duh gilkiel dangtak in / Om muangmun a deihbang lellel diing maw? / Machiang suan in khaubang chiah ni / Zo siktui kuan hong dawn hiam? / Selung in gel hun lota e.

Free translation of the song is:

Other people who live around / Say they will occupy our sweet Zogam / Sweet land of forefathers of yore / How can anyone occupy it /

I, man of valor am still alive.

Trust in God, our guide / If we march on undauntedly / Our land will blossom like flowers / We shall dwell in it in harmony.

Panting for water, hungry and thirsty / Shall we idle away, talking heart's desire? /

Let us march on and go ahead / Who has drunk Zogam's water? / Its high time to think about.

Another song that became popular in the 1990s was a song composed by Thawnkham. The song goes like this,

*Zogam, tuan a Pupa luahna gam / Zogam, khangsawnte luahna gam / Zogam
mualdawn leenmui kai e, ngeisok paak san silsial / Zogam ton leh lamna Zogam /
Zogam, gaal leh sa-aih na gam / Zogam, ningzu khuaizu bang khum, lenkhuang
toh zaila'n awi, Pu leh Pa leenna gam.*

*Kolgam, vaigam ka zin zong in / Kawl anne, mangin sung ka om zong in / Zo ann,
Zo in mah lunggulh ing / Zo ngeina mah deih ing / Zogam, zalmang in hon mang
in / Zogam mubang ken hong ngai veeng / Itna damtui a luan na gam / Beh leh
phung teenna gam / U le nau kichinna.*

*Zogam aw, ken hong taisan kei ning / Zogam aw, na kha nuai hon keem aw / Ka
lam khatna, ka lutang phumna'ng Zogam / Kong it hi Zogam aw.*

*Zogam, mite'n hong neu et in / Zogam, namite'n hong taisan maw / Zogam,
gilkiat dangtak in thum, khutzep in en ding maw? / Zogam, ton leh lam hong lak
in / Zogam, na zaila hong awi veng / Zogam, na ningzu hong lupin / Na ngeina a
luite, kou hong lak kik ve maw.*

*Zogam, Zomi khantouh na di / Pilna, siamna leh neih leh lam, lungsim pumpi
khoul sisan piakkhiat na toh sem ni / Kawlgam, vaigam a Zomi te / A nei a lam
Zomite / Mualdawn Zomite kahna aw, nu-le-pa tauna aw / Hong huh hong chiah
un chi.*

Free translation of the song goes,

Zogam, the land inhabited by ancestors / Zogam, the land inherited by new generations / Cloud hangs around, red rhododendrons bloom on Zogam hills / Zoram, the land of celebrations and dances / Zogam, the land where the killing of enemies and animals are celebrated / Zoram where forefathers lived, people sip rice beer as sweet as honey, and sing with beating of drum.

Though I travel to Myanmar or India / Though I take Myanmarese food, or live in royal palace / I long for Zo food and Zo home / And love Zo culture and traditions / Zogam, I dream of you in my dreams / Zogam, I love you / The land where the stream of love flows / The land where my clan and kinsmen live / Where many brothers and sisters live.

O Zogam, I will not forsake you / O Zogam, shelter me under your wings / Zogam where my placenta dropped, where my head shall be buried / O Zogam, I love you.

Zogam, do people despise you? / Zogam, do your people forsake you? / Zogam groans in hunger and thirst, will you watch her with folded hands? / Zogam, show me your celebrations and dances / Zogam, I sing your songs / Zogam, serve me with your rice beer / Show us again your culture and traditions.

For the development of Zogam and Zo people / let us work, dedicate our wisdom, knowledge, wealth and riches, mind, sweat and blood / Zo people of Myanmar and India / The rich and the wealthy Zo people / The cry of the highland Zo people, the groaning of parents / Call you to come to their help.

There are several other Zomi nationalistic songs in Paite, which are not mentioned in this research work. These songs did not just remain as lyrics or in text form; they are sung and played in most of the public meetings and community gatherings. Many of the songs were now accessible through internet and other means of communication. Most of the songs, which in fact, reflect the mind of the Zomi masses, are avowedly vocal in their assertion of their political aspirations.

Conclusion

Paul Brass writes that the ethnic community or nation created through the efforts of ethnic elites using the cultural markers need not necessarily constitute an entirely new entity but one that has been transformed, whose boundaries have in some ways been widened.¹⁰² On 'The Nature of ethnonational bond', Walker Connor states that nationalist were "mindful of the common blood component of ethno-national psychology and did not hesitate to appeal to it when seeking for popular support."¹⁰³ A community of people engaged in search for identity, generally traces back their ethnic roots in order to legitimize their claims. As seen from the above discussion, the propagation and articulation of Zo / Zomi identity has socio-cultural and pre-existing ethnic linkages. Although Zomi is not exclusive to Paite community alone and that other Zo communities worked for the development of Zomi consciousness, the Paite did play an important role in propagating and asserting Zomi identity in Manipur. As claimed by the community leaders, renaming of Paite as a tribe within the Zo nation was the result of their admission

¹⁰² Paul R Brass, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Walker Connor, 'The Nature of Ethnonational Bond', in Michael W Hughey (ed.), *New Tribalism: The Resurgence Race and Ethnicity*, Macmillan, London, 1988, p. 44.

and acceptance of their primal name 'Zo', which was deeply rooted in the social and cultural milieu of the Zo people. In the construction of *Zo*-ness among the Paite, several Paite intellectuals and elites have given vigor to Zomi identity through their writings. From the reading of the available indigenous works on Zomi, one can get the Zomis point of view about themselves, their history, and their political goals. Their writings reflected the social, cultural, political and historical experiences and political aspirations of the Zo people. The emergence of Zomi nationalist movement facilitated in creating wider consciousness among the Zo masses about the need for unity. The rise of Zo solidarity movement witnessed the surge of Zomi nationalist songs, which are avowedly political and reformist in nature. In fact, Zomi nationalism would not have achieved present vigor and popularity among the Paite and other Zo communities in Manipur had there been no organizations and elites that worked hard to uphold and safeguard the interests and identity of the Zo people. By repeatedly refuting the colonial names attributed to them; emphasizing on their common ethnic origins and roots; narrating on how the Zo people had become an 'ethnified nation' due to division of their ancestral homeland into India, Burma and Bangladesh, and by effectively convincing their communities that they all have common ancestor 'Zo', the indigenous Zomi intellectuals and elites professing the Zomi cause succeeded in creating Zo solidarity and unity among the different Zo communities.

Even though Zomi identity was initially articulated to include all Zo communities, political conflicts, interests, and competition in Manipur made it a common generic name of the Paite, Vaiphei, Zou, Simte, Mate, Kom, and other Zo communities in Chin states of Myanmar.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Apart from transforming the social, economic and political life and activities of the indigenous tribal communities, the onset of modernization in India's northeast has led to the emergence of a new group of elites who contributed considerably to social and political awakening of the hill communities. Under the guidance and leadership of the emerging modern indigenous elites, the tribal communities transformed themselves to more organized and politically conscious ethnic communities or nationalities. Relatively smaller indigenous tribal communities of Manipur such as the Paite have also experienced similar process of change. Yet in-depth studies on process of change taking place in the Paite studies are very few. Although some interesting descriptive, historical, anthropological, linguistic, and political studies on the Paite and the Zomi are available, there has not been any systematic work that has examined and analyzed the process of formation of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite community. Moreover, none of the existing studies on Paite-Zomi examined the politics of identity formation among the community using the rich theoretical insights available on issues of ethnicity and identity. Further, although the indigenous elites has been playing important roles in guiding and leading the Paite politics, there is no study on the multiple roles the Paite elites have been playing in Paite politics. These limitations in the existing literature underscore the need to study the role played by the emerging elites in the identity discourse of the Paite community using appropriate theoretical insights. The research study is undertaken with three broad objectives viz. i) To

understand the emergence and growth of modern Paite elites in Manipur; ii) To examine the social, economic, and ideological background of the Paite elites in Churachandpur district; iii) To study the role of Paite elites in the formation of Paite identity and Zomi identity consciousness among the Paite in Manipur. Apart from exploring these objectives, attempts are also made to understand different inter-related issues relevant to the study such as the development of ethnic community, nature and dynamics of the ethnic elites, politics of boundary making, role of language and literature, and the relevance or irrelevance of the memories of the past in construction of identities. This concluding chapter sums up the major theoretical and empirical findings of the study and draws some conclusions and observations based on the research findings.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

There is abundant theoretical literature available on issues concerning ethnicity, ethnic elites and identity formation. However, for understanding the role of elites in the construction of ethnic identities among smaller ethnic communities like the Paite, one needs to distinguish between the relevant and not-so-relevant ones. The primordial theories are not taken into consideration as they do not give much importance to the political construction of ethnic identity. Many contemporary social and political identities and alignments are created through both primary and secondary processes of socialization. Primordial theories fail to explain why and how particular ethnic identities emerge, change and dissolve, or why so many people choose to emigrate to and

assimilate with other ethnic communities.¹ Similarly, Relative Deprivation theories are not found reliable for the study because although it talks about the social conditions that give rise to ethnic consciousness and identity, they do not account for individuals and agencies that articulate the needs of the community. Moreover, the significance of cultural features does not find a significant place in their analysis. As pointed out by Pradeep Kumar,² economic factor may not be sufficient factor to generate regional pulls, and one has to go beyond the socio-economic syndrome to understand some of the other subjective and objective factors that may be necessary for a mass scale mobilization on regional issues. Similarly, class based theories such as Split-Labor Market theory³ and Middleman Minority theory⁴ are not relevant to study of ethnic dynamics in tribal communities, which have not yet witnessed antagonistic class struggles. The Rational Choice theory⁵ has been criticized for giving much emphasis to rational preferences or choices of the individuals, ignoring the emotional factors influencing the mobilization of communities of people. The theory transforms all choices, including cultural ones, into economic choices. They view ethnicity as located more in the mind than in the genes or in cultural differences. Moreover, it ignores the fact that the ethnic assertions are

¹ Anthony D Smith, 'Cultural, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism', *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1996, p. 446.

² Pradeep Kumar, *The Uttarakhand Movement: Construction of Regional Identity*, Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 20-21.

³ Edna Bonacich, 'Class Approaches to Ethnicity and Race', in Norman R Yetman (ed.), *Majority and Minority*, Allyn and Bacon Inc., London, 1985, pp. 62-78; also see Edna Bonacich, 'A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 1977, pp. 547-559.

⁴ Edna Bonacich, 'A Theory of Middleman Minority', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, 1973, pp. 583-594.

⁵ Michael Hechter, 'Rational Choice Theory and the Study of Ethnic and Race Relations', in John Rex and David Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 (first Published 1986), pp. 264-279; Michael Banton, 'The Actors Model of Ethnic Relations', in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 98-104. For a critical analysis on Rational Choice Theory, see Siniša Malešević, 'Rational Choice Theory and the Sociology of Ethnic Relations: A Critique', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, March 2002, pp. 193-212.

influenced more by emotions rather than by reason. Instrumentalist theories are criticized for viewing ethnicity as a property of individuals. Their accounts leave no place for collective values, memories and emotions, but only for goods of wealth, status and power.⁶ While the instrumentalists inform us on how group identity can be manipulated and / or constructed through the actions of the elites, they fail to explain why the 'masses' should so readily respond to ethnic calls for unity and struggles. Consequently, it fails to explain why ethnic conflicts are so often intense and unpredictable.⁷ Moreover, historical movements and ideas are determined by a number of variables, almost all of which are beyond the control of individual leaders. The limitations notwithstanding, one cannot completely neglect the role of elites and organizations in ethnic movements.

In a way, there is no single theory that can be relied upon for exploring all objectives of the present study. Nevertheless, it is found that theoretical contributions of some of the scholars can be used for the present study. Elite Competition Theory of Paul R Brass, as propounded in his work, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*,⁸ is one such study. To Brass, ethnicity is a modern phenomenon, socially and politically constructed. The process involves competition and conflict between the ethnic elites of the dominant group and those of the non-dominant group, and between the states and ethnic elites. Competition arises from the broader economic and political environment rather than from the cultural values of the ethnic communities in question.

Cultural forms, values and practices of the ethnic groups becomes political resources in

⁶ Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 70; Errol A Henderson, 'Culture or Contiguity: Ethnic Conflict, the Similarity of States and the on Set of War, 1820-1989', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 5, October 1997, p. 649; Anthony D Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 30.

⁷ Anthony D Smith, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁸ Paul R Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

their competition for gaining the support of the masses and achieving political goals. Brass, however, admits that mere elite competition alone cannot explain communal mobilizations. For successful mass mobilization, the ethnic elites have to go beyond competition.⁹

Deviating from the dominant sociological and anthropological perception on the central role of cultural stuff in the definition of ethnic groups, Frederick Barth¹⁰ focused his analysis on making and maintenance of ethnic boundaries. To Barth, a group is defined by boundaries, not by the cultural stuff that it encloses. Cultural markers play a secondary role in the making of ethnic boundaries. Selective cultural features, not all cultural differences or similarities, go into the making and maintenance of the socio-cultural boundaries of the group. Instead, ethnic boundaries are perpetuated by the structural differences and political perceptions of the group. Boundaries persist in spite of the continuous inter-ethnic contact, interdependence, and flow of personnel across the groups.

By moving away from the modernist interpretations of nationalism as given by scholars like Gellner, who looked at ethnic roots as navels which have little significance to the modern nations, Anthony D Smith holds the view that historical and / or sociological explanations are necessary for understanding the continuing emotional attachment of people to their primordial ethnic ties / past. Smith explains the resurgence

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-66.

¹⁰ Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1969.

and power of ethnicity in the contemporary world by using ethno-symbolism approach.¹¹ The approach emerged in response to systemic failure to accord any weight to the pre-existing cultures and ethnic ties of the nations that emerged in the modern epoch. Ethno-symbolists see the power of ethnicity / nationalism in the modern world in the rediscovery and reinterpretation myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages by modern nationalist intelligentsia. These cultural and historical elements provide motives for conflicts as well as solidarity.¹² In short, ethno-symbolist scholars seek to overcome the limitations of instrumentalist versions, while acknowledging the modernist insights of nationalism.

To T K Oommen, ethnicity is an ongoing process, which emerges as a result of conquest, colonization, and immigration and the consequent disengagement between culture and territory.¹³ He interprets ethnies as aliens in their own homelands. Most of them are deprived collectivities both in symbolic and material terms.¹⁴ Oommen believes that an ethnie can transform itself into a nation and vice versa. Language is common to both nation and ethnie. Nation is a territorial entity to which the people have emotional attachment. It is the fusion of territory and language.¹⁵ When nation dissociates itself with its homeland, they become an ethnie.¹⁶ Oommen also talked of six processes of 'ethnification', a process through which the link between territory and culture is attenuated and the possibility of a nation sustaining its integrity is put into jeopardy.

¹¹ Anthony D Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 9.

¹² Anthony D Smith, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹³ T K Oommen, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity*, Polity Press, Jaipur, 2001, p. 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Like Oommen, Paul R Brass also believes that an ethnic group can transform itself into community and nationality. However, Brass approach is different from that of Oommen. To Brass, formation of nationality involves three stages.¹⁷ The first stage involves the movement from ethnic category to community, which entails creation of a self-conscious language community out of a group of related speakers, the formation of an ethnic association, or a community of believers from the followers of a particular religious leader. Brass relates this phenomenon with the early stages of modernization in multiethnic societies where languages are yet to be standardized, where religious groups have not become highly structured and compartmentalized, and where social fragmentation is prevalent. To Brass, the movement from ethnic group to community is a transition that some groups never made, that others made initially in modern times, and still others undergo repeatedly at different points in time. The second stage in the transformation of ethnic groups, according to Brass, involves articulation and acquisition of social, economic, and political rights for members of the group or for the group as a whole. As such, mere subjective consciousness of the group of its cultural identities and its (culture) further employment for achieving group solidarity and interest are essential condition for emergence of a subjectively self-conscious (political) community. If the ethnic group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political action and political mobilization, it has gone beyond ethnicity to establish itself as a nationality. To Brass, the politicized ethnic elites, who constitute the most articulate and dominant sections of the community, becomes the social agents of identity construction.

¹⁷ Paul R Brass, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

In his 'imagined community theory', Benedict Anderson¹⁸ perceives nation as an imagined political community, which is inherently limited and sovereign. The idea of nation comes into maturity at a stage of human history after the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm was destroyed. Prior to the emergence of national culture was the dominant religious culture. National culture replaced the predominant religious culture, and this transformation was facilitated by the development of print capitalism. According to Anderson, development of print capitalism was responsible for the development of nations. Development of print languages, which owed much of its success to print-capitalism made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others.

The 'invention of tradition' thesis of Eric Hobsbawm¹⁹ does not believe in the logic of natural origins of nation or in the essential role of history. He sees national consciousness as a modern phenomenon constructed around the ruins of the past. Hobsbawm central arguments on the emergence of nationalism and national consciousness rests on the belief that many of the traditions which were considered as very ancient in their origins were in fact invented comparatively recently. Hobsbawm thesis presented complex linkages between past and present, thereby, deepening our understanding of communities and nationalities cherished myths.

Various theories of ethnicity discussed above have highlighted different aspects of the nature and dynamics of ethnic communities and the politics of identity formation. The

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 (first edited 1983).

availability of diverse approaches or theories on ethnicity indicates that no single theory can explain all aspects of ethnicity. The indigenous ethnic elites play an important role in the construction of ethnic identities and in promotion of the political and economic interests of the communities they represent by making use of select cultural and historical markers. Although instrumentalist theories help us to understand the manner in which the elites and organizations work, one needs to understand that even the elites and organizations also work within the structural and cultural limits. Hence, it is necessary to widen our understanding of the role played by the elites in the light of more refined theories offered by scholars like Paul Brass, Benedict Anderson, Frederick Barth, Anthony D Smith and Eric Hobsbawm.

Findings of the Study

The preceding chapters have discussed in detail different aspects of the study. The major findings of the thesis can be summarized as follows:

Development of Modern Paite Elites: Autonomy that the hill areas of Manipur enjoyed during the colonial period led to a new trajectory in the history of the hill communities in Manipur. In the pre-colonial era the Paite lived in villages and the village chief and his council of elders exercised considerable influence in social, political and cultural life of the people in the villages. However, after they came under the influence of modernization, the traditional political system, social values and the traditional power structure of the Paite, which were intact for centuries, began to transform gradually. Different factors like the growth of Christianity, exposure to modern education,

development of new social, political and economic institutions, policies of the Government of India and Government of Manipur, etc., led to the emergence and growth of new indigenous Paite elites. These resulted in dual leadership situations: the traditional Paite elites represented by the chiefs and his council of elders on the one side and the newly emerging Christianized modern Paite elites on the other side. As they saw a threat to their authority and status, the traditional chiefs tried to stop their villagers from embracing Christianity. Even though there was stiff resistance from the chiefs and elders to the new faith and modern ideas, the traditional forces could not stand against the newly emerging social forces in long run. Despite the challenges that the new forces posed to traditions and customs of the community, the growth of modern forces could not eliminate customary practices completely. The emerging Paite elites soon consolidated their hold over the society by occupying position of influence. Under their guidance and leadership, initiatives were taken to develop vernacular print language and literature. By the time India attained independence, a considerable number of modern elites emerged among the Paite. The competition and conflict with other ethnic communities in the region also contributed to the shaping up of their political and ideological orientation.

Birth of Ethnic Organizations: Another development that advanced the cause of the Paite community was formation of different Paite organizations, which played important roles in the development of the Paite community in Manipur. The first organization that emerged among the Paite community, *Siamsinpawlpi* (formerly known as Paite Students Association), was formed on January 13, 1947. It was followed by founding of Paite National Council (1949), Young Paite Association (1953), Paite

Literature Society (1954), and different Church denominations. Formation of different Paite organizations strengthened the up-coming Paite elites and facilitated the emergence of student and youth leaders. Emergence of Paite centric organizations also help in reinforcing the social boundaries of the community.

Post-colonial Influences on Paite Elites: Apart from the structural changes, the changing political situation in the hills of Manipur since India's independence has also influenced the political outlook and dynamics of the modern Paite elites. Political transformation of the state of Manipur from monarchy to constitutional monarchy on the eve of India's independence saw induction of the tribal people in the political affairs of the state. The subsequent integration of Manipur state into the Indian Union and adoption of parliamentary democratic form of government created a new platform for the hill communities including the Paite. The post-colonial developments such as enactment of Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947; Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act 1947; Manipur Village Authorities (in Hill Areas) Act 1956; Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act 1960; Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act 1967; Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act 1971, also influenced the political orientations of modern Paite elites. The process of urbanization, expansion of communication network, modern facilities, and market economy further opened up new opportunities and avenues for employment and people began to get jobs in various fields of administration and trades. All these developments led to the growing influence of the indigenous modern elites - politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats and businessmen - in Paite public life.

Compromise between traditional and modern elites: Although at one time, it appeared that the emerging modern Paite elites would completely do away with the traditional elite as in the Mizo hills, political developments in the hills in Manipur after Indian independence forced a compromise between traditional and modern elites. Far from acting as rivals, the traditional elites began to change, while modern elites stopped targeting the traditional elites. The political compulsions to protect collective interests of the community forced them to come together to resist the real or imagined threat of domination by more powerful ethnic communities in the state. Because of such elite compromise, one can see elements of both modernity and tradition co-existing among the Paite elites.

Influence of Elections: Drawn into election politics, the ethnic communities in Manipur began to view it as a matter of prestige to have their community members represented in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly. This resulted in competition for political power based on community lines. In their competition for political space or power, the community leaders made use of ethnic organizations to gain the support of their community members. Since its inception in the year 1949 as the common political platform for the Paite community in Manipur, Paite National Council (PNC) has been playing an active role in the Paite politics in particular and the politics of the state in general. At the time of elections, PNC used to declare the names of candidates that it supports. Initially PNC exercised considerable influence over electoral and voting behavior of the Paite people. Paite voters developed the feeling that the defeat of the candidate from Paite community in elections was the defeat of the Paite community.

Therefore, every voter used to cast his or her vote for the candidate belonging to the Paite community. In case, there were more than one candidates contesting from the same constituency, the majority of voters cast their vote to the candidates put up by PNC.²⁰ However, in recent years with the growth of political elites among the Paite, political elites within the same community started competing with one another for winning political power.

Socio-Economic Status of Elites: Some studies on elites have shown that high levels of education, higher incomes and high standards of living, job security, wider exposure, etc., are important attributes of modern leaders / elites.²¹ Since there is no empirical work to prove whether these assumptions are true in case of the Paite elites also, in chapter III, a survey was undertaken in the district of Churachandpur to comprehend the social, economic and ideological position of modern Paite elites and understand their role in construction of Paite and Zomi identities in Manipur. The following are the observations drawn from the survey:

- i) It is observed that an overwhelming number of Paite elites are above forty years of age. Eleven (forty-four percent) are in the middle age group (41-60) and ten (forty percent) in the old age (61 and above) group. There are only four (sixteen percent) in the young age group (14 -40).
- ii) There is an unequal gender representation in the affairs of the community. Only one member of the elite out of the twenty-five surveyed elites is a

²⁰ Lianhnun Guite, 'A Study of the Village Administration among the Paite with Special Reference to that of the Paites of Manipur', M. Phil Dissertation, Manipur University, Imphal, 1991, p. 188.

²¹ See K C Kaistha, 'Measuring Social Mobility through Occupational Prestige', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1987, pp. 81-91; P K Bandyopadhyay, *Leadership among the Mizos*, B R Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985.

woman. Further investigation shows that only in student (Siamsinpawlpi) and church organizations, women participation was noticed. Even in these organizations, women generally occupy lower rungs of hierarchy.

- iii) There are no illiterate elites among the respondents. All elites are educated and most of them have completed degree.
- iv) Even though the elites are drawn from different occupational backgrounds, most of them are salaried employees and have stable economic means.
- v) Although some of their parents have agricultural background, none of the elites is found to be engaged in cultivation for their livelihood. This indicates total shift of elites from agriculture to modern activities and symbolizes the decline of traditional hold on the society.
- vi) It is observed that majority of the elites hail from joint family background (thirteen members of elites i.e. fifty-two percent are from joint family's background). The average size of family ranges from six to 10.4.
- vii) Although the incidences of inter-community marriage are not many, it is observed that community elites are quite open and liberal when it comes to inter-community marriages.
- viii) There is more than one earning member in the families of the respondents. Together there are sixty earning members in the families of twenty-five surveyed elites. The average number of earners in Paite elite family ranges from two to three.

- ix) Even though the families depended from two or more different sources, salaries (ninety-two percent regular and forty-eight percent pensions) is the main source of earnings for majority of the families.
- x) The majority of the Paite elite families surveyed have a decent income of over sixteen thousand per month. This is explained by the presence of a large number of joint families among the families of the elites. It is also related to the existence of significant number of earning family members.
- xi) Out of the twenty-five surveyed elites, only one family (four percent) did not have television, three (twelve percent) families are without fridge, eight (thirty-two percent) families did not possess washing machine, and one family (four percent) did not have vehicle. Even though none of the elites is found to possess all these household items, it is found that they enjoy comfortable standard life and possess households amenities considered luxuries by the poorer sections.
- xii) It is observed that fourteen members of elites (fifty-six percent) out of the twenty-five respondents are associated with three or more than three community organizations while six (twenty-four percent) are associated with only one organization. Four (sixteen percent) others claimed that they work for two organizations. The data indicates high involvement of the elites in community affairs. The study shows that twelve members of elites (forty-eight percent) are involved in organizing and planning of public meetings, while eleven members of elites (forty-four percent) are found to attend public meetings just to listen to what leaders say. Ten members of

elites (forty-percent) usually participate in public meetings as special guests. The study also shows overlapping of roles performed by the elites. In contrast to the above, fourteen members of elites (fifty-six percent) stay away from political demonstrations and processions.

- xiii) It is observed that only two members of elites (eight percent) have affiliation to political parties. Twelve members of elites (forty-eight percent) expressed that they are not interested in political affiliation while nine members of elites (thirty-six percent) said that they are concerned with candidates, not with political parties. The finding clearly reveals the insignificant role of political parties in the political life of the elites. It also shows the general apathy of the Paite people towards political parties. The track record of parties and party manifestoes are not relevant to them. It is then natural that they cast their votes without any consideration for political ideology and can easily switch their loyalty from one party to another.
- xiv) From the survey, it is learned that all respondents read newspapers regularly. Seventeen (sixty-eight percent) of them reported that they are most interested on issues concerning community. The study established that news relating to the community issues is the first preference of elites.

Development of Paite Script and its Impact: Development of the script for Paite language played an important role in the advancement of Paite community. In the year 1903 a Welsh Calvinistic Foreign Missionary Rev. David E Jones and T Vialphung

(1889-1936) of Kaihlam village, who was attending mission school in Aizawl prepared Paite Primer. Almost at the same time in 1904, George A Grierson published his linguistic survey of North-Eastern India, which made reference to Paite language. In Tedim region in Chin state of Burma, Rev. J H Cope, a Christian missionary, who also was a linguist, prepared Chin Primers in Tedim (Paite) dialect in the year 1913. The New Testament of the Bible was published in Tedim in 1932. Dr. Crozier, a North East India General Mission (NEIGM) missionary, went with H Chinlang, a NEIGM worker-cum-headmaster and some other Paite to Tedim and brought the Primer, songbook and the New Testament of the Bible to Manipur. However, the arrival of H Nengzachin on the scene during the last part of the 1930s had set a new trend in the development of Paite language. Nengzachin was one of the earliest educated Paite-Zomi from Manipur. In the year 1944 Nengzachin started translation of the New Testament of the Bible with Psalms in Paite. To learn Paite, he wrote Paite primer *Sintung Bu* in the year 1945. Nengzachin, thus laid the foundation for Paite literature on the India side.

As different persons were involved in developing the script for the Paite of India and Burma, one could see differences in spelling and writing. Notwithstanding such limitations in the script, the very development of a script language enhances the power of the language thereby, increasing the consciousness of the members as a political community. The development of script was accompanied by the formation of Paite organizations through which emerging Paite leaders / elites articulated and propagated the identity and interests of the community both within and outside the social boundary.

Movement for Tribe Recognition: The first Scheduled Tribes list order issued by the President of India in 1951 categorized the indigenous tribes of Manipur as any Naga tribes, any Kuki tribes, and any Lushai tribes. Because of non-inclusion of the Paite in the first Scheduled Tribes list, the nomination papers of the PNC supported candidate named T Thangkhai was rejected, when he refused to declare himself as Naga or Kuki or Lushai. Hurt by the incident, the PNC leaders demanded recognition of the Paite as a distinct scheduled tribe. The demand for political recognition was mobilized by PNC and its leaders. Paite leaders and PNC initiated peaceful and democratic movement. They presented a memorandum to the Government of India in 1955 wherein they stated that Paite have their own customs, language and literature, and identity different from their neighbors and sought promotion of Paite culture, customs, and language and demanded that all benefits and safeguards be guaranteed to the tribes under the Indian Constitution. The PNC's memorandum asserted that the Paite cannot be dubbed as Kukis, Nagas or Lushai. It also pleaded to the government to rectify its earlier policy of not permitting the Paite to contest the elections as Paite. Ultimately, in the year 1956 the Paite was recognized as a distinct schedule tribe of India.

Multiple Roles of Paite Elites: Recognition of Paite as a distinct Scheduled Tribal Community cannot be conceived in the absence of Paite elites. Since then, a number of steps and decisions were taken by the community leaders to further strengthen the identity base of the community. These apart, the PNC and Paite leaders codified all customary laws and practices of the community. The codification of Paite customary

laws, which can be invoked through the *Indongta*,²² the village authority, Paite Tribe Council Court or any court of law set up by the government, made it possible for application of common and uniform laws in dealings with cases, which concern the Paite. Demand was also made insisting on introduction of Paite vernacular subject in schools and colleges in Manipur. Initially, Paite vernacular paper was introduced in 1975 from class I to class V in Manipur. Since the academic year 2004-2005, it has been introduced as a subject at college level also.

Growth of Paite Literature: The development of Paite script and introduction of Paite language papers at school and college levels facilitated the growth of vernacular literature. Paite vernacular writers have also contributed considerably to the promotion of Paite language and literature in their writings. Their writings reflected the thoughts, ideas and aspirations of the Paite elites. At the organizational level also, a number of decisions and resolutions were taken by Paite leaders to further improve and facilitate the growth of Paite language and literature. The growth of print media and books including magazines and journals in the secular and non-secular fields enabled the Paite people to become conscious of their history, customs, traditions and culture.

Development of Zo Consciousness: The Zo people who reside in the trans-border area of India and Burma are known in Burma as Chin and are called Kuki or Lushai in India. The hyphenated term Chin-Kuki or Chin-Kuki-Lushai were used to refer to these culturally, linguistically, and ethnically related people. Even though the Zo people

²² The *Indongta* (Household Council) is the traditional social institution of the Paite-Zomi. It has been discussed in brief in chapter II.

accepted these names for sometime, some started rejecting them even during the British times. In Manipur, a number of scholars and writers have considered the dominant attitude of the Thadou community as responsible for the rejection of Kuki by the Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Lusei, Kom, Anals, and others. The Kuki tag is contested also on the ground that it was not indigenous name, but imposed upon them by outsiders.

Paite Elites and Zo Movement: A number of organizations clamoring for Zo solidarity have come up from time to time. The Paite people lent support to different political and militant organizations such as Khulmi National Union (KNU), Chin Liberation Army (CLA), Zomi National Congress (ZNC), Zomi Re-unification Organization (ZRO), etc., which promised to unite Zo communities in India and Burma. Paite elites from time to time reiterated its resolve or support to all efforts to unite all Zo people, as seen in the resolutions of PNC Annual General Assemblies and the PNC Chief Executive Council meetings. For instance, PNC Annual General Assembly held at Hanship village, Churachandpur on October 10-13, 1957 adopted 'Chin Re-unification' as its long term objective; PNC General Assembly held at Tuithapi village, Churachandpur from May 6-9, 1983 declared its desire to build closer relations and secure coordination among different Zo communities who share common customs, traditions and culture but speak different dialects / languages. The Assembly also felt the need to have common political platform for all the Zo peoples of Manipur at the earliest possible time. To achieve this objective, PNC decided to work at the political organization level, work together with the church, and through literature. In its Chief Executive Council meeting dated October 10, 1994 PNC resolved that in line with the

PNC's long-term policy of Chin Re-unification, PNC declared its recognition and support to ZRO. PNC's CEC meeting of February 14, 1996 formally accepted Zomi to be its nomenclature. In the year 1997 Zomi Council (ZC), apex Zomi organization in Manipur was formed and PNC became one of the constituent members of ZC. Again, recognizing that one tribe (read Paite) alone cannot become a nation (in the context of the Zo people), the 48th Annual General Assembly of PNC dated June 27, 2003 rechristened PNC as Paite Tribe Council. In the year 2004, Zomi leaders of Manipur issued a press communiqué that read, "We, the undersigned tribe leaders, representing our own tribe declare ...with a distinctive sincerity and conviction, Zo is our own common ancestor...it is the duty of every Zo descendant to strive for the re-unification of the Zo descendant ethnically, emotionally and geographically...the Zo descendants' having a separate political status of our own within the Indian Union is a mandatory...the different clans and tribes within Zo nomenclature enjoying an equal status is our unique glamour..."²³

Conflicts and Compromises: Even though Zomi identity and its political movement initially sought to include all Zo communities, the term became popular among the non-Thadou-Kuki communities in Manipur. The idea of Zomi as something opposed to Kuki received wider audience during the Kuki-Zomi conflict of 1997. The Kuki-Zomi conflict came to an end with the signing of a Peace Accord on October 1, 1998 by President of Kuki Inpi, on behalf of Kukis and Chairman of Zomi Council, on behalf of the Zomis wherein both the parties agreed that, the nomenclatures Kuki and Zomi shall be mutually respected by all Zomis and Kukis and every individual or group

²³ The press communiqué was signed by constituent community leaders of the Zomi of Manipur. See, *Manipur Express*, December 18, 2004.

of persons shall be at liberty to call himself or themselves by any name, and the nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall not in any way be imposed upon any person or group against his / their will at any point of time. Thereafter, the term Zomi again began to signify all those Zo communities who accept to be designated that way.

Impact of Zo Intellectuals and Writers: Apart from the above, the scholarly works of indigenous intelligentsia both from the secular and theologian backgrounds have also facilitated in creating common ethnic consciousness among the Zomis. From the reading of the available indigenous works on Zomi, one can get the Zomi's point of view about themselves, their history, and their political goals. Their writings reflected the social, cultural, political and historical experiences and political aspirations of the Zo people. They repeatedly refuted the colonial names attributed to them; emphasized on their common ethnic origins and roots; narrated on how the Zo people had become an 'ethnified nation' due to division of their ancestral homeland among Burma, India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Apart from the writings in English, the indigenous intelligentsia wrote a number of vernacular works on Zomi which help in disseminating information to the non- English literate Zo people about their history and politics. Apart from the scholarly writings, the Zomi activists effectively used folklore, songs and poems to rouse the political consciousness of the members. Many of the Zomi nationalist songs espouse love for their land, express their desire for unification and inspire the Zomis to work together. These songs which are popular among the Zo people contributed considerably to the strengthening of Zomi consciousness. Several Paite writers, lyricists

and singers played a conscious role in using the cultural forms to promote and strengthen the Zo / Zomi consciousness among the Paite.

Concluding Observations

Community life and community interests are not determined by individual / personal choices. Objective material conditions in which they live determine the nature and dynamics of the community. However, in every community, we see leaders / elites, who organize, guide and lead the social, political, cultural / identity movements of the people. The study shows that in the Paite society also indigenous elites actively involved themselves in the identity discourse of the community. The Paite elites, through their relentless campaign, succeeded in securing official recognition of Paite as a distinct tribal community. Recognition of Paite as a separate schedule tribe community, codification of customary practices of Paite community, introduction of Paite language and literature in school and college syllabi etc., could become possible only because of the efforts of the Paite elites. The community leaders or elites articulated the interests of the community within and outside the social boundaries through community organizations. The transformation of the spoken dialect of the Paite into a print language and the consequent growth of Paite literature enhanced the consciousness of the members as a political community. The Paite elites with the help of mass media and different literary and cultural organizations played an important role in the development of language and literature. The crucial role played by the language and literature in the formation of Paite identity consciousness underscore the views of Benedict Anderson and Paul Brass.

Initially while advocating the separate identity of the Paite, the Paite elites tried to project Paite as a distinct nation and named their political organization as Paite National Council. The community leaders initially attempted to construct 'nation' out of Paite identity. However, learning from the experience, the Paite elites realized that one tribal community alone cannot make a nation. Therefore, accepting more pragmatic idea that the Paite and other cognate Zo communities could together build 'Zo nation', the Paite leaders renamed Paite National Council (PNC) as Paite Tribe Council (PTC) and chose to work together with other Zo communities to strengthen Zo solidarity among different Kuki-Chin communities in Manipur. This experience of the Paite is a deviation from Paul Brass's formulation regarding development of an ethnic community to the stage of a nationality. Nevertheless, the renaming of PNC to PTC by the community leaders after more than fifty years of its (PNC) inception has a much deeper symbolic significance. As claimed by Paul R Brass, if the ethnic elites succeeded in their efforts, the nationality thus created does not result in the emergence of an entirely new entity, but one that has been transformed, whose boundaries have in some ways been widened. In the case of the Paite, though the community has failed short of achieving nationality status, formal acceptance of Zomi appears to be the resultant rediscovery of their primal Zo identity, perceived to be deeply rooted in the social and cultural milieu of the Paite and other culturally related Zo communities.

The Zo people did not completely cut-off themselves from traditions, as Gellner²⁴ would expect. This becomes evident from their beliefs, folklores, and contemporary literature. The Zomi experience reminds us of Anthony D Smith's argument that in their

²⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell Publishers Limited, Oxford, 1983.

quest to discover a true identity, the communities look backwards to find their origins and genealogy.²⁵ The assertion of Zomi identity based on the socio-cultural and ethnic ties validates Smith's contention that ethnic beliefs and myths become a rallying point for marginalized and submerged communities aspiring for national status and territorial recognition.²⁶ In the absence of written traditions, it is difficult to ascertain how old these traditions and beliefs really are. But the Zo people's interpretation of *Zo* as the fore-father of all Zo communities appears to validate Eric Hobsbawm thesis on 'invention of tradition', wherein he says that many of the traditions which were considered as very ancient are, in fact constructed or invented rather recently by community or nationalists leaders to meet various political, social and cultural needs and challenges of the community. Nevertheless, their invocation of what they believe to be their primal name, reminds us of what Walker Connor wrote in his article, 'A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic, is a...,' wherein he says that in "analyzing socio-political situations, what ultimately matters is not what is but what people believe is".²⁷

Alongside consolidating the Paite identity, the Paite elites also played an important role in the movements for Zomi identity with the aim to integrate or unify all the Zo communities / tribes of India and Burma. The Zomi leaders rejected the name Kuki declaring it as the name imposed by outsiders and instead articulated their common ethnic origins and cultural similarities to bring the cognate Zo communities under a common platform. They propagated Zomi nationalism with the help of community

²⁵ Anthony D Smith, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁷ Walker Connor, 'A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic, is a...,' in John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, pp. 36-46.

organizations, literature and folklores, political and militant outfits and mass media. Even though Zomi solidarity was initially articulated to include all the Zo communities, the political conflicts and competition in Manipur compelled Zomi as a political platform for the non-Thadou Kuki speaking Zo communities in Manipur. Drawing of boundaries between Zomi and Kuki in spite of their shared cultural and ethnic features validates Fredrik Barth's view of transient nature of ethnic boundaries. The Zomi and Kuki experience shows the relevance of Barth's thesis that mere cultural and racial similarities are not enough to create and consolidate social boundaries. Political interests, as perceived and articulated by the community elites, play important role in the politics of boundary maintenance and identity construction.

To conclude, apart from throwing light on the contribution of the Paite-Zomi elites, the present study on the role of Paite elites in construction of Paite identity and Zomi consciousness among the Paite shows how complex socio-political issues and trajectories influence the role of elites in construction of ethnic identities among smaller ethnic communities.

Appendix I

Memorandum of the Paite National Council

(Demanding the recognition of the Paites as a distinct tribe of India)

To,

The Honorable Minister, Home Affairs, Government of India

Sir,

We, the people of Paites in India, beg to submit this memorandum of ours to the Government of India demanding the constitutional recognition of Paite as a distinct tribe of India by the Government of India. The following are few facts about our tribe and demand:

INTRODUCTION

History

The Paites claim to have originated according to their legend from the Sun to be progenitor of their fellow tribes. They left their home at 'Chimnuai-Geltui' in Burma and come to Manipur State and Mizo District. The bulk of their population therefore still lives in Chin Hills Burma and a large number in the Mizo District today. In Manipur the Paites have their settlement chiefly in the South-West. Well over 60,000 Paites live in both Manipur State and Mizo District occupying an area of nearly 3000 square miles.

CUSTOMS

Dress

"In their dress and habitations the Paites resemble the Lushais, but the place of the "Zawlbuk" is taken by the front veranda of the houses of certain persons of importance, in which are long sleeping bunk in which half a dozen or more youngmen pass the night...The women do not wear the huge ivory earrings of the Lushais but cornelians or short lead bars."

Marriage

“As regards marriage they are monogamists, in this particular forming a very remarkable exception to all their cognates. The marriages of paternal first cousins are allowed in fact, among the chiefs these are the rules. The parent of a young man who desires to marry a girl goes to her house with an offering of “zu” and if this is accepted the girl is at once taken to their house, but the bridegroom continues for two or three months to sleep with his bachelor friends. The marriage is not considered final nor is any payment made till a child is born and if this does not occur within three years the couple separate *in few cases*, but on the birth of a child the full price agreed on must be paid up and divorce is not countenanced. On my enquiring what would happen in case the lady subsequently proved fickle, my informant smiled in a superior manner and said that such behaviour was unknown among this people-the Paites...”

Inheritance

“As among most non-Lushei tribes, *it is the custom among the Paites that the eldest son inherits and the genealogy is traced not from female line but from the male line*”.

Religion

“For their “*Sabiak*” sacrifice the Paites offer to the gods and demons and spirits, a boar, a chicken, a goat, a dog, etc. “The skin of the head, the testicles, heart, snout, and liver” are offered to the deities on a bamboo altar, which must be freshly thatched”.

Birth

“Immediately after birth the child is washed, and a fowl is killed, and its feathers are worn round the necks of the mother and infant. On occasion of the naming two or three pigs if available should be killed and much “zu” drunk.

Corpse

“After death the corpse is placed on a platform (bed) and fires are lit round it, and young men and maidens sleep near it. The skin is hardened and preserved by being rubbed with some greasy preparation. The body is dressed in the best of clothes available and a chaplet of the tail feathers of the hornbill is placed on its head. During the daytime the

corpse is kept in the house, but in the evening it is brought out and seated on the verandah while the villagers dance and sing round it and drink “zu” pouring it also into the mouth of the corpse. This disgusting performance goes on for a month or more according to the social position of the deceased. The corpses of those who have attained *Thansuah* or *Tawng* honours are kept for a year, at least, in a special shed encased in a tree trunk...” The Kut festivals are not observed *among the Paites*, but after the harvest the owners of houses in which young men lodge kill pigs and *perform what is known as Sawmzunek*.

House site

“When a new site for a house has to be chosen an egg is taken and one end is removed. It is then propped upon three small stones and a fire is lit under it. *This is called ‘Aisan’*. If the contents boil over towards the person consulting the omen the site is rejected as unlucky. (Vide page 142 of the Lushai Kuki clans written by Lt Col. J Shakespeare”. Writing in 1910 as he did Shakespeare of course did not anticipate some changes in the social customs of the Paites but as a whole he gave some pictures of the customs of the Paite even in the author’s own life time.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

G A Grierson, CIE Ph. D DLitt, ICS, in his Linguistic Survey of India (Vide page 84 Vol III) showed clearly that the language of the Paites is different from any of other tribes namely, the Lusheis, the Nagas and the Kukis and Dr Grierson gave some exhausted examples. Suppose we give the following word “What” to show the difference between Paite, Lushei, or Kuki:

English	Paite	Kuki (Thado)	Lushei
What?	Bangahia?	Ipiham?	Engani?

Thus, we can see at a glance that the distinction of the Paite language from other languages of the scheduled tribes is an open fact which does not require proof.

Literature

The Paites had their first printed book in their own language back in 1904 in a form of a Primer. Since then they have some 20 books printed in their own language.

PAITE A DISTINCT TRIBE

As stated before the Paites have their settlement in the South West of Manipur, and in Northern part of Mizo District and even in Chin Hills. They have their *own village rule, their own customs, language, literature and culture.*

In the first Edition of the Primer written in Lushei language when the British first took up the administration of Lushai hills (Now, Mizo District) it is written that “there were no particular ruling class among the lushais. But our other neighbouring tribes such as Paite, Shuktes, and Poites from time immemorial have been having ruling classes among them”. This also clearly testifies that Paite are distinct community.

GOVERNMENT’S REMARKS

Shri H Singh, Chief Commissioner, Manipur: “I thank you (General President, Paite National Council) for your kind letter of the 19th November, conveying the congratulation of the Paite National Council. I am sure that I can count on your co-operation in setting up a sound administration for Manipur”. On another accessions he wrote like this: “The Paite National Council of Churachandpur gave an excellent display of Paite dances and songs in Manipur Industrial and Cultural exhibition of 1951 and also exhibited a dew interesting articles of local manufacture such as handloom products, baskets, weapons, etc. I warmly congratulate Messrs. Tualchin and Thangkhai for the successful organization of this activities and wish the Paites every prosperity. The Paite tribe has been most loyal and helpful to the Government and I have no doubt they can always be relied upon”.

Shri R P Bhagava, ICS Chief Commissioner, Manipur: “I am grateful for the above-mentioned programme arranged on the occasion of my stay at Churachandpur. The exhibition of the Agricultural processes is quite interesting. The various dances of the occasion of the feast, merry making or on the conclusion of a successful hunt are interesting to see. I am also thankful for the cooperation which the Government of Manipur is receiving from the Paite National Council in the collection of unlicensed arms”.

The Deputy Commissioner of Manipur Shri M N Phukan also has remarked on 10-9-1954 as follows:

“The Paite National Council has always been helping the Administration in collecting unlicensed firearms and maintaining law and order. The members also helped a great deal in organising the Manipur plains and Hills Festival held this year and making it

a success. I am personally indebted to them for their help and cooperation during my four and half years' stay in Manipur" Sd/.

Lastly but not the least, Shri Kaka Kalelkar, M.P., Chairman of the Backward Classes & Tribes Commission of the Government of India also on 23-11-1953 during their (Commission's) visit to Imphal remarked as follows:- "I am very glad to see the dances of the students of the Paite community this morning at the Adim Jati Shiksha Ashram, Imphal. The dances showed both grace and vigour. I congratulate the Paite community".

The above remarks recently made by the various high personalities of India and her Government's representatives and those of the important documents and books of old and long standing as quoted in the foregoing paragraphs prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the Paite have from time immemorial been a very glaring distinct community. But to our most disappointing and surprise the Paites have not been allowed to stand for election in the last General Election of India for the Membership of the House of the People (Lok Sabha). The Paite community cannot but feel this rejection as a divorce by the Government of India from the Paites being member of Indian citizen unless timely rectified by the authorities.

The Rejection of candidature

The Paites wanted to be more helpful and expected to be more and more responsible in the Government of the country. Therefore, in 1951 the Paite National Council nominated Mr. T Thangkhai to be a candidate for an MP, in general election. But to our great surprise and amazement, the then returning Officer rejected the candidature on the following plea: "The candidate (i.e. Mr Thangkhai) says that a Paite is neither a Kuki nor a Naga nor a Lushai. The seat is reserved for the Scheduled Tribes which mean any Kuki tribe, any Lushai tribe or any Naga tribe. The nomination is rejected".

Sd/- M N Phukan, Returning Officer,
Dated December 8, 1951.

Facts are facts and there is no other way. That there is such a tribe as the Paites is that the Paite are a distinct tribe from either the Kuki tribe, the Naga tribe or the Lushei tribe, is a Universally known and proved fact, as clearly shown in the writing of several authors on linguistic surveys and Hill tribes.

The Government of India should note that recognition of Paites as distinct tribe is not demanded on the basis of population nor on any idea except on the fact of our being a distinct tribe. If any body objects it, it cannot but be anti-Indian. Because, India, for her democratic ideals, stands for the upliftment, preservation and development of the customs, culture, language, etc. of even the least and most backward tribes of India. And if this demanded recognition be denied of us, it cannot mean other thing than denial of citizenship to us. The Government should not delay to assure any body or tribe of their feeling as Indians.

Therefore, there should be no further delay in recognising the Paite tribe and it must be a constitutional recognition when an individual state or Union officer will not have the slightest doubt about the accomplished fact. We have no doubt that both the Government in the State and at the Centre are anxious to see every section of the country is happy and when the Paite are recognised constitutionally as a distinct tribe, there will be happiness among some 60,000 Paites throughout the region of 3000 square miles.

Hence our request and demand is a kind reply of recognition of the Paites as distinct tribe in time for the next general election of India, otherwise the Paites will take it for granted that they are not wanted to be an integral part of Indians. and therefore can join any other Government which will give them (Paite) due recognition, and they cannot be blamed for that if the order dated 8-12-1951 of the Returning Officer. outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency is to prevail.

Yours Faithfully,

Dated: New Churachandpur
Manipur.
November 18, 1955

Sd/- VAN LAL-AU
President
PAITE NATIONAL COUNCIL
Manipur State

Appendix II

Memorandum submitted by the Paite National Council for Re-unification of the Chins of India, Burma and Pakistan under one Country to the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, May 30, 1960

We, the undersigned, in continuation of the resolutions passed at the Annual General Assembly of the Paite National Council held at Hanship village from the 10th to 13th October, 1957 and at Mualnuam village from the 6th to 8th February, 1960 and the Memorandum submitted thereof, have the honour to submit this Memorandum of ours again in pursuance of the resolution passed at the General Meeting of the Paite National Council held at Hiangtam Lamka village from the 27th to 29th May, 1960 with a request that Government of India, with good-will and under standing, will take initiative as to group all Chin people inhabiting the Indo Burma border areas within one country as specified and justified herein for the safe-guard of their economic, social, political rights, etc.

Re-Unification of the Chin People into One Territory

The name "Chin": The word "Chin" is supposed by some Authorities to be a corruption of Chinese word "Jen" or "Man". It is related to names such as Chingpa, China, Shan, Siam etc. Many leaders have always attempted to interpret the word Chin as analogous to Kuki. There has been no difference of opinion that there are some, of course, Kuki stock of people. But there is a gulf of arbitrary difference between Chins and Kukis in the sense of grading or grouping system. The identity of the Chins can be best verified in the Linguistic Survey of India, Volume III, Part III by G.A. Grierson, I.C.S.; Ph. D; D. Litt; C.I.E. because the Author who collected the Data, Specimen and Records by referring to 30 Authorities, was an authorized one by the British Indian Government. Thus, according to this Book, under Chin, as a genius, come all the Kuki tribes and other various tribes; whereas Kuki as a species is a sub-group of Chin or in other words, Kuki is another grouping system excluding some tribes under Chin. Hence Chin is a wider denotation and Kuki a narrower denotation.

The Origin of the Chins

The Chins are believed to be of Chinese origin as supported by Bamboo-reed musical instrument and others. The traditional memory claimed their remote original place as a Cave in China where, for fear of enemies, they hid themselves; which is interpreted in different dialects as Sinlung in Hmar and Khul in Paite and other

languages. Thus in view of the tradition and history, the Khul Union as assigned to the place of their origin was once constituted as a political reconciliation by some leaders in Manipur. Nothing of their sojourn is known beyond this cave-period till they settled in Burma. But there is a traditional belief that during their sojourn some of them migrated to Siam and some through the Northern Hilly Tracts of Burma. However, the fact is that the Chins are Tibeto-Burmese origin as also manifested in the Linguistic Survey of India. The fact of their relation with Tibetans is revealed amongst others by some common dialects of which mention may be made of 'Five' and 'three' which are pronounced as 'Nga' and 'Thum' respectively in both Tibetan and Chin dialects. Then within the memory of man, some of them migrated through the Chin Hills and settled in the Manipur Hills, Mizo District, Tripura Hills, Chittagong Hill Tracts and North Cachar Hills; and this is still proved by the names of villages which the Chins carried from place to place during the period of their sojourn.

The Peoples of Chin

In this respect also, the Linguistic Survey of India is the most reliable source of information which easily and apparently revealed who the Chin are, from the view point of Anthropology. The word "Chin" is synonymous and is used to denote the various hill tribes of Burma, Manipur, Mizo District, Tripura, North Cachar Hills in India and of the Arakan and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Pakistan. Even Manipur language is said to have originated from the Chin stock as Meitei-Chin. Attempts have always been made by some leaders to group all the tribal of Manipur, except the Nagas, into Kuki just to confuse the authorities and some leaders by citing the Government's records. This is wrong analogy and is connoted due to the fact that during the British Regime, some Kuki officials who manned the key posts personally enticed the British officers that no proper, correct data and records could be assessed as to record some tribes to the effect of their genetical existence and to the true picture of their ethnology, with a result that many tribal communities were whimsically misnamed as Kukis. Again emphasis has always been made by some leaders that the same stock of people are called Kukis in the Republic of India, and Chins in the Union of Burma or a Chin becomes Kuki the moment he crosses the Indo-Burma border and vice-versa. This fickle change of nomenclature, as if metamorphosis, is nothing but too fictitious.

Opinions may be differ and leaders may claim as belonging to one group or another, and also published some self interested books like "Thado-Kuki Clan" so as to include all other tribes under their whimsical encirclement. But no other information, data, specimen and records are more accurate and reliable than that of the Linguistic Survey of India by G. A. Grierson. Thus according to page 2 and 3 of this Book, under the Chins of India, over and above that of Burma, come the following tribes:

Thado	Sokte	Siyin
Ralte	Paite	Tashon
Lai	Lakher	Lushei
Bangjogi	Pankhu	Rangkhol
Bete	Allam	Langrong
Aimol	Anal	Chiru
Jiroi-Lamgang	Kolren	Kom
Purum	Hmar	Cha
Chinme	Welaung	Chimbok
Yindu	Chibon	Khyang or
Khami		Sho

These peoples, as Chin tribes, form a distinct ethnological unit and closely related to one another linguistically, traditionally, socially, culturally, physically, historically, etc. The Chins, unlike the Nagas, can converse with a clear understanding in their respective dialects.

The Territory of Chins

According to an unbiased Anthropologist, as manifested in the Book of Linguistic Survey of India, the territory inhabited by the Chin tribes extends from the Naga Hills in the North down into the Saudoway District of Burma in the South, from the Mytha river of Burma in the East almost to the Bay of Bengal in the West. Hence, the territory of Chin had been demarcated as to include some part of India and Burma and their existence of geographical bounds also had been circumscribed by their consolidated ethnological inhabitant of these areas. Moreover, though the territory due to the Divide and Rule Policy of the British, was artificially disintegrated into main Divisions; yet the International Boundary, the Mac-Mohan Line, which is the basic point of Sino-Indo border dispute, still seals Burma as a part and parcel of India.

The Relationship of Chins of India and Burma

Mentioned has already been made of their ethnology that all the tribal peoples, other than the Nagas in the Indo-Burma border areas, are called Chins and no sane tribal of this region could deny of their relations with the tribal peoples of Burma and of the recent migration from the Chin Hills of Burma to India. As such, the ethnological unit or origin and the relationships of the Chins of Burma and India have been conspicuously transmitted through their culture, social life, history, tradition, language, poetry and songs and customs as marked by their uniform celebrations of National Festivals, etc. So is the

case in many other aspects of their daily life and administration. There may be slight variations in the dialects, but the Chins, unlike the other tribal people, can converse in their respective dialects freely. And the chain of their relationship is circumscribed not only by geographical bounds but more often by racial unity. The Chins of Burma and India have and still maintain a distinctive culture and social life of their own which have been pervaded through ages in poetry and songs with thoughtful and meaningful ideas. The feeling of their blood relationship has been imbibed so much in them that no constitution on earth or no existing law will justify this separation of Chin people who had been living together through ages without bar and segregation.

The Political Status of the Chins Before, During and After British Regime

The Chins lived in a complete independence before the British Regime without any outside interference whatsoever from any quarter, and no part of her territory was ever subjugated under Burmese or Indian administration. They even raised into the plains of Burma. The contiguous area inhabited by the Chins as already mentioned was a compact and homogeneous one. But as far as in the Nineteenth Century, the British came and eventually conquered the Chins (in all nearly 7,000 guns were taken from the tribes between 1893 and 1896) and the area was arbitrarily divided under them for administrative convenience by disintegrating it into Chin Hills, Manipur, Tripura, Arakan, Chittagong Hill Tracts and North Cachar Hills. The land so conquered was annexed to their administration. Even then the Chins in various regions were still knitted together by common tradition, custom and culture, mode of living, language and social life. During the British Regime, the Chins of Burma and India freely mixed together and lived harmoniously. As there was no restriction of movement as is imposed today there was free intermarriage and social and commercial trading intercourse amongst them. They administered themselves in accordance with their own customary laws and ways. It was rather a sovereign land where the people enjoyed a perfect harmony of their own, and their recognition attributed by the Government was the levying of Nominal House Tax by the British. When Burma was partitioned from India in 1937, we were not consulted nor were a chance given to us to explain what we were and are.

When India was in the threshold of Independence from the shackles of foreign domination, the terms were agreed upon that Burma and Pakistan would also be given self domination status. Thus the Chins have undisputable right of regaining their former political status. But, unfortunately, no such provisions were guaranteed to the Chins nor were they given a chance to claim perhaps, due to their ignorance and unconsciousness of their political fate. In spite, the artificial Indo-Burma boundary demarcated by the British was secretly confirmed between the contracting parties themselves without considering the culture, custom, history, tradition, relation, economic condition, political rights, etc.

of the Chin people of these regions. This Division not only leads to the detriment of the people's weal but deprives of their political, economic and social rights and is quite unfair, unconditional, undetermined and inadapttable because no strong voice as to preserve their fundamental rights can be raised from either side.

Since no part of the Chin Territory was ever subjugated under the Burmese or Indian Government and the Chins enjoyed their self-administration before the British annexation; they after the British let the country, have legitimate right to be free again. But when India achieved her independence in 1947, the Chins in this region were too ignorant and illiterate as to determine what future form of political status would be most desirable and conducive form them and for the Indian independence. They in the true sense were far from being realized, and subsequently some part of the Chin areas were annexed to Burma and some to India without their knowledge. The consequence is that while the other brethren of India, for more than ten years of keen exercising their right to enjoy self-determination to solve their political destiny, the Chins have been neglected too much and given no chance other than the step-motherly treatment as a second rate citizens, to enjoy such status irrespective of their legitimate right and of provision incorporated in Indian Constitution for minorities and tribes. Hence something could be done for their preservation and checking all these shortcomings and maladjustment by re-uniting all the Chin tribes, for they will surely succumb sooner or later to extinction and extermination, and may even cause costly and irreparable loss. Thus for a stable and sound administration of the country and as our legitimate rights, we, for and on behalf of all the Chin peoples, put forth this demand for the re-unification of the Chins within one country where every community can has District or Division or Region for the preservation of their fundamental rights.

Therefore, for all the facts and reasons enumerated above, we approach the Government of India with good-will and understanding to take initiative step immediately as to re-unite all the Chin tribes into one Territory by rectifying the artificial demarcation of the boundary between India and Burma as specified thereof.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/- (T. Goukhenpau)
President,
Paite National Council

Dated: Churachandpur
The 30th May, 1960

Sd/- (S. Vungkhom)
Chief Secretary
Paite National Council

Appendix III

Memorandum of Zomi National Congress Presented to His Excellency V V Giri, the President of India, 1972.

Subject: Unleash the political chain that binds Zomi (Dismantle the political barriers between the Zomi of Burma and India)

May it please your Excellency,

While welcoming the great son of India with great zeal and enthusiasm in our midst, the undersigned on behalf of the age old wretched Zomi of this hemisphere beg most respectfully to submit this memorandum fervently seeking your wisdom which you could contribute for our political salvation. Once again, we repeat this in pursuance to our perilous quest for the political freedom of the Zomi for which our forefathers shed their blood and that we the younger generation cannot forget nor forsake the long amity that our forefathers paid for our political salvation. Hence, this humble appeal to the great son of India who is equally entrusted for the political dominated or suppressed people and who knew well the very sanctity of political independence. We, hope, your Excellency, as a great freedom fighter do certainly felt the pangs of Zomi who are now politically dominated and economically crushed. Well, your Excellency might say, "Under the shadow of Indian Constitution one can grow to the highest position," but Sir, this is only for the words sake and very much subjective we do not know what makes us that we cannot feel INDIANS! It may be some hidden truth (that) remains behind the political curtain! We don not want to be just a hewer to wood and drawer of water or just taxpayer. All we want is self determination. We feel we are being chained slowly by a political string round our waist while our people are riding on the bliss of communalism.

But in our pursuit to get political liberation, we have no iota of grudge nor ill will nor will like to destroy India nor would resort to arms might...we shall simply resort to Gandhian weapons because truth never fails...the naked truth being we were/are a nation. We want to revive our nationhood. We can unleash the political chain that binds us now, of course, with the help of a great nation like India. For we firmly believed that the rise or fall of a nation comes through charity of one nation or the other.

No nation on earth can blame India for its being the Advocacy of Zomi political liberation nor the Almighty God. Instead, history will echo and re-echo that India make two Nations- Bangladesh and Zoland.

Copy to: i) The Prime Minister of India
ii) The Chief Minister, Mizoram
iii) All Presidents of different communities

Faithfully yours

Sd/- S K Samte
Secretary
Zomi National Council

Sd/- T Gougin
President,
Zomi National Congress

Note: The memorandum was presented to V V Giri, when he visited Churachandpur in
1972

Appendix IV

Memorandum Submitted to the Prime Minister Republic of India by Zomi Re-unification Organization (ZRO), 1993

Subject: Reunification of all Zomi of Burma and India into one Political Unit

Hon'ble Sir,

From time immemorial, we the Zomi inhabited a wide areas now fallen under India, Burma and Bangladesh, and the land they occupied was referred to as Zogam (Zo Country) vide, *The Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, 1835 by Capt. R B Pemberton; *Mission to the Court of Ava*, in 1855 by Sir Henry Yule; *Descriptive Ethnology of Asia, Africa and Europe*, Vol. I, 1859 by R G Latham. Zomi are the people, outsiders know as Chin (Chin is of course a misnomer). We administered our own affairs from generation to generation (see Historical Geography of the Burmese Countries at several Epochs, AD 1500, 1580, 1822, 1856 Plate XXVI of *Mission to the Court of Ava* in 1855 by Sir Henry Yule). We were never ruled by the Burmese nor the Indians. Even when the British came, the Frontier Areas were separately administered. The Manipuris (Meiteis) also never administered the hill tribes; the British Government administered these areas through the Political Agent.

In 1892 at the Chin-Lushai Conference held in Fort William, Calcutta, the then authorities of British India Empire, decided to make a form of demarcation between Burma and India, which later became the international boundaries, dividing our land and our people.

When the British were about to leave India and Burma, the British Government issued a White Paper (White Paper on Policy in Burma) and a separate administration for Frontier Areas was envisaged. In February 1947, the Panglong Agreement was signed between the Burmese and the Frontier Indigenous people to speed up independence from the British, provided that a separate administration of the Frontier areas would continue; that the citizens of the Frontier Areas shall enjoy rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democracy; and the equal treatment would be given to them in finance, education and culture. In March 1947, the British constituted a Frontier Areas Commission, which commission in its report affirmed the inalienable right of the frontier Areas to secede from Burma at any time. This vital clause was incorporated and re-

affirmed in the Constitution of the Union of Burma, September-October 1947 saying that after 10 years, the Frontier Areas would be free to secede any time.

What we now see is a betrayal of all these aspirations, oppression and exploitation in the hands of Burmese. The present military regime is the Burmese design to perpetuate oppression and exploitation. It is all a racial discrimination. Even if democracy returns in Burma, it would only be in name. A democracy with no safe-guard of the interest of the minorities is no democracy. The Zomi has no future in Burma. Those of us in India are a bit better off, but we have no autonomy, not yet.

We, the Zomi of Burma and India, therefore, have decided and pledged ourselves to be free from the Burmese once and for all and reunify all Zomi and all the inhabited areas into a political unit. To whom shall we turn now? On our estimate, Indian Democracy is desirable, because minority interest is safeguarded. Besides, good portion of our people are already in India. Therefore, we are willing to be part and parcel of India if India is willing to help us realise this objective. In fact, our people in India have long cherished re-unification. Indeed, the Paite National Council (same people as Zomi) submitted a memorandum of 'Chin Re-unification' to the then Prime Minister of India in 1960.

Mr. Prime Minister, Sir, this is within your power and capability. We look up to you. Will you not help us, so that we can also join you to say "JAI HIND".

Your faithfully,

Dated: Ciimnuai
The September 6, 1993

Sd/- (KHAIZASONG GUTE)
President
Zomi Re-unification Organisation (ZRO)

Sd/- (DANIEL THANG)
Vice President
Zomi Re-unification Organisation (ZRO)

Appendix V

(Truth and Freedom) An Appeal, 1993

There are two conflicting views about the meaning of the term 'Zomi'. First, there are people who hold the view that we are, and are called Zomi because we live in highland and hills. This view is however contradicted by our Zomi scholars and writers on the ground that we cannot simply be called Zomi just because we live in highland or hills. There are also people living in highland or hills elsewhere, yet they are not Zomi nor people called them Zomi. Therefore, this conception of Zomi is not a valid argument to justify our being Zomi.

Secondly, scholars among Zomis doing rigorous research work on the subject are convinced that we are Zomis not because we live in the highland or hills, but we are Zomi and called ourselves Zomi because we are the descendants of our great great ancestor *Zo / Zou / Zhou*. In other words, we are Zomi by birth. This conception is anthropologically and historically established fact.

The Bengalis then the Britishers called us Kukis in India, but we are not and we don't call ourselves so. Therefore, it is an imposed name, not from within. The Burmese, then the Britishers called us Chin in Burma and the name foreign to us. We know best who we are and what we are. So, Zomi is the name by which we called ourselves. The name was passed on to us by none else, but our great great ancestor, *Zo*. The land we occupied whether hills or plain, highland or lowland, big or small is Zogam / Zoland / Zoram. It is the land of our dreams that will come true. Hence, ZOMI RE-UNIFICATION ORGANISATION (ZRO)

This is our appeal to all Zomi brothers and sisters to remember that we are all Zomis, the descendants of *ZO*. We are not two, but one under Zomi. Let us wake up, and join hands for the geographical, political and social reunification of the already divided *Zos*.

Come forward with your clear vision, your might, your money and your whole being to build a unified Zogam / Zoland / Zoram. Let us forget and forsake the spirit of narrow communalism which is the most dreaded disease that stands on our way to unification and which is leading us to nowhere.

Come and join ZRO with your identity for it is ZRO alone which gives equal respect to all Zomi tribes, big or small. It is ZRO which guarantees to protect, safeguard and preserved every tone of language. Unity in diversity is the guiding principle of ZRO.

So, once again we appeal to all Zomis to join ZRO our organisation free from electoral politics, narrow communalism. It is an organisation committed to Zomi Re-unification.

Ciimnuai: Zo Land
August 09, 1993

Issued by: Publicity Wing
ZOMI RE-UNIFICATION ORGANISATION (ZRO)

Appendix VI

Ph. D RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
(Socio-Economic Status and Political Orientation of
Paite Elites in Churachandpur District)

Date:

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Father's name:
5. Father's Designation/ Profession:
 - (i) Cultivator
 - (ii) Government employees, including pensioners
 - (iii) Working in private institution
 - (iv) Self-employed
 - (v) Any other.
6. Your present occupation/profession:
7. Educational Qualification:
 - (i) Under Matric
 - (ii) Matric
 - (iii) Higher Secondary
 - (iv) Graduate and above
 - (vi) Others (please specify)
8. Nature of Family:
 - (i) Joint Family
 - (ii) Nuclear Family
 - (iv) Extended Nuclear Family
9. Is there inter-community marriage in your family? If yes, specify the community.
10. Number of members in your family (including yourself):
11. Number of earning member in the family:
12. Sources of income of all earning member of the family.
 - (i) Agriculture
 - (ii) Business
 - (iii) Salary
 - (iv) Pension
 - (v) Others
13. Your family monthly income:
 - (i) Upto 10, 000
 - (ii) Between 10, 000 to 16, 000
 - (iii) Above 16, 000

14. Your family total monthly expenses:

- (i) Upto 10, 000 (ii) Between 10, 000 to 16, 000 (iii) Above 16, 000

15. Do you own following household items (please tick):

- (i) T V (ii) Fridge (iii) Washing machine (iv) Motor Vehicles (Both heavy or light)

16. Do you participate in church activities? Yes/No. If yes, state whether

- (i) On all service days (ii) Only on important occasions (iii) Only on Sundays

17. Are you members of any of these organizations? If yes, state against the organizations in which capacity i.e., whether

- (i) as Members (ii) as Executive members (iii) as Patron (iv) as Advisor

(i) Young Paite Association: (ii) Paite Tribe Council:

(iii) Siamsinpawlp: (iv) Paite Literature Society:

(v) Church: (vi) Zomi Re-unification Organization:

(vii) Zomi Mothers Association: (viii) Churachandpur District Student Union:

(ix) Zomi Students Federation: (x) Zomi Council:

18. Do you attend /participate in meetings organized by the following? If yes, how frequently? (Tick whichever explains you best)

Political parties: (a) Regularly (b) Sometimes /Occasionally (c) Once in a while

Church: (a) Regularly (b) Sometimes /Occasionally (c) Once in a while

Students and Youth: (a) Regularly (b) Sometimes /Occasionally (c) Once in a while

Literary Orgs : (a) Regularly (b) Sometimes/Occasionally (c) Once in a while

Community Orgs : (a) Regularly (b) Sometimes/Occasionally (c) Once in a while

19. In what capacity you participate public meetings.

- (i) As organizer only (ii) As special guests only (iii) To listen to what people say only

20. Did you participate in demonstration or procession? Yes/No. If yes, in what capacity

- (i) As leaders (ii) As active followers (iii) As a casual participant

21. Your political affiliation.

- (i) Congress (ii) BJP (iii) CPI (iv) Janata (v) Regional Party
(vi) Depends on the candidate (v) not interested

22. Did you take active part in the following elections? Indicate Yes/No

- (i) Parliamentary election () (ii) State Assembly election ()
(iii) District Council Election () (iv) Village Authority election ()

23. On what ground you cast your vote in parliamentary or assembly election?

- (i) Party lines (ii) community lines (iii) Personal equations

24. How do you identify yourself politically? Write 1, 2, 3...in the given space in order of preference.

- () Paite () Kuki () Zomi () Manipuri () Any others

25. Do you read local newspaper regularly? Yes/ No

26. What issues interests you most?

(Write in order of preference by writing 1, 2, 3...in the space provided).

- () Issues concerning community
() Issues concerning the state politics
() Issues concerning religion and culture
() Issues concerning national and international affairs

Appendix VII

Structured Schedule for Personal Interviews

ROLE OF PAITE ELITES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PAITE AND ZOMI IDENTITIES IN MANIPUR

Name of the Respondent:

Date of interview:

Time:

1. The Paite claim that they have distinct ethnic identity. What is/are unique to Paite community in comparison to other communities of the region or state?
2. Can you name some of the landmark events in Paite society? In order of preference (if possible with year).
3. Can you state your contribution for the development and strengthening of Paite identity?
4. Explain your contribution or role for the development of Zomi consciousness in Manipur (or among the Paite)
5. What according to you is / are responsible for the emergence of Zomi consciousness among the Paite of Manipur.
6. What is your opinion on the Kuki-Zomi conflict?
7. During the eighties when Zomi National Congress launched Zomi national movement, PNC seem to be against the movement. What is your opinion on this?
8. Now, PNC has officially declared *Zo* or *Zomi* to be the national identity of the Paite. What made the PNC accept *Zomi* as its generic name?

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