

**SOCIO - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VILLAGE
GROUPING IN MIZORAM :
A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

ABSTRACT

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT**

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SHILLONG—793 014

DECEMBER, 1998

ABSTRACT

Insurgency and counter-insurgency is a common phenomenon in the third world countries especially after Second World War. To tackle this insurgency, various measures have been taken by the concerned government. In Mizoram also, political disturbances broke out in 1966 created by Mizo National Front (MNF) movement. To check this insurgency in Mizoram, one of the most important measures undertaken by the government is grouping of many small villages into a larger units. Grouping of villages into a larger units as a counter-insurgency measure done in Mizoram during 1967-70 was based on after the 1958 grouping launched by the British in Malaya against the Chinese. It was also linked with grouping in South Vietnam by the USA in 1962 to counter the Vietcong. The authorities responsible for grouping exercises in the past were foreign powers against the communist insurgents. Hence, its application in India is, to some extent, a deviation.

Statement of the Problem

The tribal population of India living in inhospitable and hostile environment and without much exogenous impact have traditionally adjusted and

adopted to their habitats very amicably with a symbiotic relationship with that environment. The natural resource base has permitted a precarious balance with which, the tribal population deals with the environment most effectively. Such relationship expresses itself in their economy, settlement structure and population distribution etc. However, any change in its climatic or technology or external pressures changes this symbiotic relationship and it has its implications in the tribal communities. It is in this context that a forced grouping of villages of the tribal communities living in Mizo Hills can be properly understood. It goes without saying that the changes through village grouping has had tremendous impact on the tribal economy, society and culture in Mizoram which is the problems of investigation in this research.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to analyse the impact of village grouping on the social and economic lives of the people in Mizoram. Keeping in mind the general changes that take place due to the introduction of village grouping, the following broad objectives are placed in this study :

1. to get an insight into the resource base of the study area and to analyse the settlement pattern as evolved in response to natural settings,
2. to examine the socio-political compulsions of village groupings,

3. to understand the socio-economic, environmental and demographic consequence of grouping of villages among the Mizo.
4. to evaluate the desirability of such groupings in a geographical frameworks.

Hypotheses

Based on the problem and the objectives placed before this research, the following broad and tentative hypotheses are proposed to be tested during this study:

1. Given the subsistence nature of agricultural production in most part of the Mizo hills, the artificial (and forced) grouping of villages at selected points were made without a proper assessment of the potential of such sites. Therefore, the existing land-man ratio is causing serious imbalances in population, settlement, social and economic structures.
2. Flowing from the hypothesis one, it may be stated that such a situation compelled significant changes in the occupational structure of the population consequent upon declining agricultural opportunities in the subsistence production sphere.
3. Consequent upon the two above hypotheses, it may be further stated that the grouping of villages were responsible for growing social change, demographic change and economic conditions among the diverse groups leading to the disintegration of the grouping sites once the political conditions stabilised in the state.

Chapterisation

The study has been divided into Seven Chapters

The First Chapter is an introductory part given a brief introduction of the study, statement of the problems, review of literatures, objectives of the study, hypotheses to be tested, data base, methodology of the study, the study area with the culture, customs and traditions of the people.

The Second Chapter analyse the physical setting of the study area taking into account the physical aspects such as Geology, Topography, Climate, Soil, Drainage and Vegetation. The understanding of physical aspects help in examining the relationship between man and his environment.

The Third Chapter highlights the present population and economic conditions of Mizoram. The population structure and composition has been studied accounting the Density, Religion, Language, tribe Compositio, Rural-Urban Migration, Distribution of Rural-Urban Population, Sex ratio, Age Composition, Level of Literacy and Population growth. The economic conditions like Land-use, Occupational Structure, Agriculture, Horticulture, Transport and Communication, Industries, etc., has also been discussed.

The Fourth Chapter examines the genesis of village groupings, its aims and objectives, the pattern of groupings, physical extent and affected areas of village groupings.

The Fifth Chapter analyse the various impact of village grouping on the social life of the people in Mizoram in general and comparative study of grouped and ungrouped village accounting their sex-wise population composition, level of literacy, age structure, social organisation and the traditional work-partnership in agricultural works.

The Sixth Chapter deals with the economic impact of village grouping comparing between their occupational structure, amenities, land use pattern and work force in the grouping centres and traditional village or ungrouped village.

The last Chapter summarises the preceding Chapters and presents major findings of the impact of village groupings on the social and economic life of the people in Mizoram.

The first category of grouping called Protected and Progressive Villages (PPVs) was introduced in 1967. It consist of about 106 villages grouped together into 18 grouping centres. The second phase was carried out in 1969 and was called New Grouping Centres (NGCs). It involved the shifting of 184 villages grouped together into 40 new grouping centres. The third stage of grouping called Voluntary Grouping.

Centres (VGCs) was ordered in 1970 which involved the shifting of 110 villages grouped together into 26 grouping centres. The fourth and last grouping called Extended Loop Area (ELA) was ordered in 1970 and it involved the shifting of 63 villages grouped together into 17 grouping centres. Before grouping, there are 764 villages in rural areas. Of these 764 villages, 516 villages were evacuated and grouped together into 110 grouping centres leaving 138 villages ungrouped. Around 120 villages have been burnt down during Grouping Scheme. Grouping of villages roughly involved 80 percent of the population of Mizoram. Grouping of villages were extensively carried out in Aizawl District and Lunglei District than Chhimtuipei District. This was mainly due to the less active movement of MNF volunteers in

Village grouping happened in Mizoram during 1967-70 was due to the insurgency activity led by Mizo National Front (MNF). One immediate object of grouping in Mizoram was to facilitate the effective operation of security forces against underground elements which had taken control of the interior villages spread out in the far flung areas, to safeguard the villagers from the MNF activists and to accelerate the progress of developmental works in the interior villages.

Grouping of villages was introduced under the Provisions of the Defence of India Rule, 1962 and the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953. It has four distinct stages or categories.

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The sudden introduction of grouping of villages, without proper planning, had tremendous consequences on the traditional jhum cultivation and the traditional social organisation. The agricultural work-partnership, which develop the solidarity and harmony in the village had been the main source of sentimental to village land which bound all the village members together in a kind of family network of relationship was declined due to village grouping. The removal of this long cherished customary

practice in many of the grouping centres means dislocation of family bond which ties all the villagers as genuine members of the village. It is in this fashion that any dislocation of jhumming acts as instrumental in deteriorating village harmony and solidarity.

The emergence of new occupation with greater emphasis on monetary value in all-round alternate, the social value system which ultimately diversified village communities in the grouping centres. In the pre-1967 Mizo society, the influential persons were largely those who exploit agricultural works and made some profit of it. However, in the present context, especially in the grouping centres, jhumming is left to poorer families who were unable to make a start in other occupations. Thus, the structural consequences of grouping of villages had been transformation of relatively undifferentiated, simple village communities into the relatively differentiated, complex village communities.

The changes situation brought about by the introduction of grouping scheme was so abrupt and forced that it resulted in much anxieties and tensions. The resultant anxiety and tension cause the emergence of new structure of relationship in Mizo society. Capital crime like murder, theft and corruption which were almost unknown to the pre-1967 Mizo society have become common in the grouping centres. Besides, the activities of security personnel on duty in the grouping centres arouse tribal suspicion and have drawn them together in an increasing enmity with the non-tribal. Moreover,

the people who involved in the grouping scheme were sentimentally hurt which ultimately resulted to strong feeling of regionalism.

Being exposed to the world of modern facilities, the conditions in education, medical and other social amenities are relatively better in the grouping centres than that of ungrouped village. It is also discernible that level of literacy is better in the grouped villages and the educational level in both sexes are also much better in the grouping centres. It may also be interesting to note that while the level of female literacy almost equals to male literacy level in the grouped villages, there is a large gap between male and female literacy in the ungrouped village.

The structure of population in terms of age structure and sex composition is more or less similar between the grouped and ungrouped villages. On the other hand, dependency ratio is much higher in traditional village. In case of religion, denominational diversification can be observed in the grouped villages. However, the structure of social and voluntary organisation between the grouped and ungrouped villages are more or less similar.

Another immediate effect of village grouping in Mizoram was the total dislocation of jhumming as villagers had to leave the year's jhum cultivation and unable to make a fresh start in the grouping centres due to the seasonal character of jhum cultivation depending purely on monsoon rain. Moreover, the original inhabitants of grouped villages were unable to work full time in the jhum field due to constant

supervision and harassment of military personnel. Thus, widespread hardship condition naturally followed the introduction of village groupings.

Besides, the concentration of agricultural workers in the grouping centres soon exhausted the available land the already short cycle of jhum cultivation had to be shortened. This had been reducing the agricultural yields incredibly and only a few families in the grouping centres were able to harvest paddy sufficient enough for the whole year. The level of agricultural production is relatively higher in the ungrouped village.

Diversification of occupation can be observed in the grouping centres mainly due to the unremunerative condition of jhumming. Thus, many people were forced to go back to their original villages and also many people were forced to engage in other occupations whatever and whichever way they could find. Which, in turn, diversified the occupational structure in the grouping centres. Moreover, the living standard is far better in the grouped villages.

To conclude in short, at the present condition, though grouping scheme immensely increased social amenities in the grouping centres, it broke the traditional village harmony and solidarity. In case of economy, grouping of villages uplifted the general economic condition of the people and also diversified the occupational structure in the grouped villages.

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