

# **POPULATION STRUCTURE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN MIZORAM A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

*ABSTRACT*

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By

**LALRINTLUANGA PACHUAU**



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES  
**North-Eastern Hill University**

SHILLONG - 793014

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## A B S T R A C T

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The problems of population, poverty and settlements are among the greatest problems which the world experiences today. The present study incorporated the population characters and settlement patterns in Mizoram with the geographical setting of the area. In spite of lack of data, various conceptual approaches, statistical methods as well as cartographic techniques have been applied to find out certain regional identifications.

The analytical study reveals that Mizoram has remained socio-economically backward, in spite of its natural resources. Infrastructural facilities for

economic growth are at their minimal level, mainly due to isolation and hilly terrain and population quality as well. Density of population is very low not only because of limitation of habitable area, but also due to political factor. Micro-regional variation of density is decided by geographical factors.

Unlike the rest of the country, Mizoram is unique in its dominance of a single religion and single language. Christianity is the main religion of the region accounting for more than 80 per cent, while the speaker of Mizo language accounted for 76 per cent. Likewise, the Scheduled tribe population comprised as much as 94 per cent.

The region witnessed a rapid population growth during the last two decades. Male population grew at a faster rate as indicated by a fall in the sex-ratio. However, in respect of literacy, Mizoram is well above the national figure. The aging index analysis proved that the present age structure is conducive to higher population growth in the immediate future.

As much as 75 per cent of the population are confined in the rural areas, in 1981, which has come down from 89 per cent in 1971. This indicated that the region has made a rapid progress in the process of urbanisation.

The workforce also showed a declining trend. Migration is not significant mainly because of the imposition of "Inner Line" regulation.

The factors that affect spatial aspects in selection of sites in Mizoram are slope, climate, water, proximity to arable lands, etc. Prime factor was given to hill top for its conducive temperature in general, and for socio-political security in the past in particular. According to location broad type of settlements identified are settlements on hill top or slope, along the watershed, along the main roads and along the rivers.

Settlements located on a hill-top mostly show a compact pattern, which, in most cases, are later deviated into a linear form, consequent upon the later construction of road networks. Semi-compact settlements are most common, generally found on the watersheds. The introduction of grouping of villages in 1967-71 has also affected the settlement pattern to several extent.

Village size analysis by population size shows that among the four classes of village size in Mizoram, the highest number of village is found in the population size ranging from 200-499 persons. And the average village size by population for the region is 516 persons which decreases towards south at district level.

The spatial analysis of rural settlements reveals a very low value as compared to national figure. The village density (number of rural settlements per 100 square kilometre) is only 3.47; while the inter-village spacing taken at average is only 2.71 kilometres.

Following the Nearest Neighbour Analysis, the dispersion patterns of villages are classified into four categories at block level. They are : a) Clustering ( $R_n$  less than 0.89); b) Random ( $R_n$  0.89-1.11); c) Moderate dispersion ( $R_n$  1.12-1.34) and d) High dispersion ( $R_n$  more than 1.34). The analysis of randomness or dispersion by  $R_n$  value reveals that Mizoram, as a whole portrays a random pattern.

Till 1981 Census, there are only six urban settlements, containing about 25 per cent of the total population of Mizoram with a density of 350 persons in urban areas. However, as compared to the 1971 Census figure with only two urban centres, it is clear that the state has undergone a rapid progress in the process of urbanisation. Their spatial analysis reveals that these six towns are well distributed over the state in terms of spacing. The average spacing is 48 kilometres. The  $R_n$  value denoting the degree of randomness or dispersion indicates that the urban settlements in Mizoram is highly dispersed.

It is, thus, seen that not only the physical diversities, inaccessibility and isolation have caused the dispersed spatial pattern of population and settlement in the region, but also economic and socio-cultural factors like existence of meagre cultivable land, prevalence of jhum cultivation practice, and remarkably the chieftainship occupance pattern have greatly influenced the distribution pattern of population as well as settlements within the region.

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