

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TRIBE-IDENTITY
FORMATION AMONG THE ZO PEOPLE IN MANIPUR**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

This dissertation entitled "A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TRIBE-IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG THE ZO PEOPLE IN MANIPUR" submitted in partial fulfillment for Master of Philosophy degree for this university has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.

L. LAM KHAN PIANG

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

DR. SUSAN VISWANATHAN
(Supervisor)

24 July 2000

PROF. NANDU RAM
(Chairperson)

Dedicated to

my father

Mr. (L) L. Pum Za Do

and

mother

Mrs. Dim Khaw Nem

who says a prayer for me everyday

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L. Lam Khan Piang Ngaihte

INTRODUCTION:

Manipur is a small State in the North Eastern Region of India. It is situated in between 93.2° East and 94.47° West Longitude and 23.50° South and 25.41° North Latitude. It is well known for ethnic conflicts, insurgency problems etc., which hampered the development process and disturbed the peace and harmony of the people. AK Ray rightly remarks it as “the land of ethnic mosaic”. Since various communities live together emphasis is given to their differences on the plea of maintaining their social identity. In Manipur the people can be divided into three main ethnic groups; the Meitei, the Naga, and the Zo (Chin-Kuki-Mizo). The Meitei were settled in the Valley which covers only 8% of the total areas. The other two groups: the Nagas and the Zo peoples occupy the whole hill areas which covers 92% of the total areas of the State.

The Zo people who are in Manipur are just a segment of the whole Zo populations. The Zo inhabited areas covers the trans-border areas of India-Bangladesh-Burma (Myanmar). In India, they were found in all the States of the North Eastern India except Arunachal Pradesh. Indian and Western anthropologists, as well as writers during the colonial period, use the names Chin-Kuki-Lushei (Mizo) to designate the Zo people. In this work, their own name ‘Zo’ is used to refer to this people who were called by different names. Though a single tribe they were divided into various tribes by the President’s Scheduled Tribes list order 1951 and its modification lists 1956, so as to be included in the Scheduled Tribes list.

This dissertation refers only to the Zo people in general and the Zo people living in Manipur in particular. Writing on the Zo people is very problematic, especially when it comes to their generic name. But, much research has been done by scholars some of whom are insiders. Most of them come to the conclusion that Zo is the generic name for the ethnic groups who were called by various names-‘Chin’ in Burma(Myanmar), Kuki in India and Bangladesh , and Lushai(Lushei)/Mizo in Lushai Hill or Mizoram now. The Chin-Kuki-Mizo(Lushai) may appear as different ethnic groups, if the cultural linguistic affinity and their genealogical link were not considered. They were called by different names by their neighbouring ethnic groups. The Bengali neighbour called them Kuki from the Western side, the Burmese called them Chin from the Eastern side. When the British colonists came to their territory through Bengal and Burma, probably they might have picked up those names from the people living there. In relation to this, N.K. Das wrote that, “ ... the self name of the tribal groups have been neglected and the name given by their neighbour have been imposed”¹. So they even have some derogatory term like ‘Chin bok’ which means ‘rotten’, even ‘Kuki’ is also a derogatory term, which mean ‘wild hill tribe’ and so on, as their name. It may probably be because the government recognised them by these names and recorded it so. Dr. G.A. Grierson, in his linguistic survey mentioned that “ the name (Chin) is not used by the tribe themselves who used titles such as ‘Zo’ or ‘Yo’ or ‘Sho’².

The Zo people though they were given different names at different places are one ethnic group with a number of clans. In relation to this, Tuck and Carey mention that... “the Kuki of Manipur, the Lushai hill of Bengal and Assam, and the Chin originally lived

¹ N.K. Das: *Ethnic-Identity ethnicity and social stratification in North East India*. 1989. Inter-India Publications, New Delhi. P-198.

² Dr. G.A. Grierson: *Linguistic Survey*. Vol-III, Part-III; 1904, Reprinted 1967. As cited in *Zo History*: Vumson. P-1.

in what we now know as Thibet(Tibet) and are one and the same stock; their form of government, methods of cultivation, manner and customs, believes and traditions, all point to one origin”³. Dr. Kamkhenthang also mentioned about their linguistic affinity as “... a remarkable features among them (Chin-Kuki-Mizo), ... that member of different tribes can converse one another by using their own respective dialect or language”⁴. This is a very unique feature which differentiated them from the neighbouring Naga tribes. Unlike the Zo people, the Naga tribes cannot converse among themselves. Even among a single tribe this problems is not ruled out.

NK Das says that “ in most cases the tribal names are flexible through space and time and they have varied situationally”⁵. Among the Zo people also they got their various names in different situations at different corners. In this dissertation, the term ‘Zo’ is used for all the Chin-Kuki-Mizo, as this is the name in which they called themselves before all those all names given by their neighbour was imposed. In relation to this, Dr. Vumkhohau says “...we have called ourselves Zomi from time immemorial... had the words ‘Kuki’ and ‘Chin’ been changed to Zo at that time the right word for calling the various tribes and clans of Zo race inhabiting the areas adjoining Burma, East Pakistan and Assam would have been answered long time ago”⁶. Thus, it is believed that ‘Zo’ is the progenitor of the various clans of the Zo people. K.A.Khupzathang compiled an elaborate genealogy of the various clans of the Zo people. He traced back all the Zo’s lineal descent from a person name called ‘Zo’, who is regarded as their progenitor. Thus,

³ Betran S Carey & H.N. Tuck: *The Chin hills: A history of the people, our dealings with them, their customs and manners, and a Gazetteer of the country*. Rangoon, 1896. Vol-I. Reprinted 1976. P-2

⁴ Dr Kamkhenthang,H: *Grouping for identity: In search of identity(ed) Kuki-chin Baptist Union*

⁵ N.K. Das: *Ethnic identity, ethnicity and social stratification in North-East India*, 1989. Inter-India Publications, New Delhi. P-199.

⁶ Dr Vumkhohau: *Profile of Burman frontier man*, 1963. As cited in Chinkholian: *Politico-Economic Development of the Tribals of Manipur: A study of the Zomis*, 1999. Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

Zo is used here in this dissertation to be the generic name for the various clans of the people who are called by various names; Chin, Kuki and Lushai(Mizo).

The Zo people are racially a Mongoloid race, speaking a Tibeto-Burman language. The Zo people who inhabit at present, Manipur, are believed to be migrated from the Chin hills, which is now in Burma, passing through Lushai hills. Their migration to Manipur took place not at a time but by phase to phase. At present the first groups to enter Manipur among the Zo people were settled in Chandel district and its adjoining areas. The Zo people were already in Manipur when Manipur was annexed to the British colonial empire in 1891. The origin of the Zo people were not known as there is no proper historical records. But, the traditional belief is that they were originated from a cave(a mythological cave) which they called **Khul/Khur/Sinlung/Chhinlung**. The location of the cave is remains obscure.

A) REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PROBLEM FORMULATION:

Sociologists as well as Anthropologists have taken their own varying standpoint to emphasize different criteria and thus have failed to agree on a general definition of what constitutes a tribe. Many writers who work on tribal society usually would like to define tribe according to the emperical data which he/she acquired from his/her field studies. "Where there is a society, there is both kinship and polity, both status and contracts. What is distinctive is their relative elaboration and differentiation, their relative weight and scope in different sector of social life"⁷. Though each tribal society appears to have a different way of grouping among themselves, one can discover some elements which is fundamental and general. As, according to RadcliffeBrown, "Social system are

⁷ Fortes, Mayer: *Kinship and the social order: The legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. 1969. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. p-220

compared so that their differences may be defined and beneath their differences more fundamental and general resemblance may be discovered⁸.”

To have a proper understanding of the grouping system, one has to observe carefully and recognise what it is that the individual gives priority as well as loyalty. This grouping system is a ubiquitous characteristic of a society and a mechanism for its smooth functioning. Thus, this grouping could be organised around kinship, which not only consider agnatic groups but also affines.

The social organisation theory of Evans Pritchard, in which the British School is centered around, produced a model most commonly known as the segmentary lineage system. According to this, a tribe is segmented into sub-section at different structural level down to that of the local community and its sub-section has a dominant descent group. Descent group in turn segment from the level of the clan dominant in a given tribe to that of the minimal lineage, but it is not necessary that the descent group would reside in the territory of the section where it is dominant. This pose difficulty in studying the Nuer society. So, Evans Pritchard carefully distinguished the descent frame work from the politico-territorial structure of the tribe and their section.

This theory argues that a tribe is segmented along lineage lines, where lineage is a genealogical segment of the clan. Among the Nuer, “political and lineage groups are not identical but they have certain correspondence and often bear the same name, for a tribal area and its divisions are often called after the clans and lineages which are suppose to have first occupied them”⁹. In short, a tribe among the Nuer, can be defined as the largest

⁸ Radcliff Brown, AR: *African system of Kinship and Marriage*. Radcliff Brown A.R. & Daryll Forde(e.d) 1950.P-2.

⁹ Evan Pritchard,E.E.: *The Nuer: a description of the mode of livelihood and political institution of a Nilotic people*. Oxford; Claradon Press, 1940. P-194.

territorial unit within which the member of the tribe would unite against external aggression and settle their internal differences by arbitration.

Mayer Fortes, who studied the Ashanti's kinship and marriage system says that "the political history and structure of the state decisively influences the whole social order of Ashanti"¹⁰. The Ashanti are the most numerous of the Akan speaking peoples who occupy most of the southern half of the gold coast (Ghana). Among the Akan tribal society the clan system is important as an unifying force in the political organisation and as an expression of the cultural unity of the whole people. In Ashanti there are eight clans and every lineage belongs to one or the other of these clans, and every clan is usually represented in every chiefdom. Thus, tribe among the Akan tribals or particularly, the Ashanti, is a number of clans who occupied a certain area or territory, where the clan chiefs acknowledge one chief among themselves as a king.

Max Gluckman worked on the kinship and marriage systems of the Zulu of Natal. According to him, "in the Zulu system corporate lineage and its segments endure in time irrespective of changes in personnel, and form the nuclei of villages and local groupings"¹¹. A tribe, among them is divided into a number of exogamous clans, each of which is an association of dispersed agnatic lineages which are corporate group of kins-people who trace common descent. The lineage within a clan are usually residential unit. Their segment are cores of villages and a number of segments living in one neighbourhood form a recognised group against other similar groups in their own and other clans.

¹⁰ Mayer Fortes: *Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti African system of Kinship and marriage*(ed) AR Radcliff Brown & Daryll Forde, 1940, p-253

¹¹ *Ibid.* p-166

Radcliffe-Brown, who worked among the tribes of Australia, Andaman Islands, et al. To him a tribe is a linguistic group, divided into local groups who were primarily landowning and landholding groups. He defines a tribe in Australia as a body of persons having a certain homogeneity of language and custom sufficient to permit them to be recognised as a group, and demarcate them as distinct from other and neighbouring groups. Regarding the Andaman tribes, he says that a tribe consisted of a number of local groups all speaking what the natives themselves regard, as one language. That tribe is fundamentally a linguistic group is shown by the tribal name, and no clan based solidarity exists.

As each and every writers have their own definition regarding the term tribe, application of this term or concept result in a very problematic situation. The term tribe, in the context of the Zo people, is confusing and controversial, as in the case of the African tribal. C.S. Smith wrote, in his 'Dictionary of Anthropology', that " In the context of colonial and post colonial Africa, tribe has been subject of considerable debate and disagreement as it has shown that the concept of tribe... tribal division and tribal consciousness were largely a creation of the efforts of colonial ruler to impose order and supra local unity upon previously largely autonomous local communities.... The realization of the artificial nature of the concept of tribe generated a rejection among anthropologists and among African politicians and intellectuals, who began more and more to question the relevance of the concept for the interpretation of contemporary African social and political organisation. Thus modern anthropologists prefer to employ the notion 'ethnicity'¹². So, in using the term tribe for a group of people one has to

¹² Seymour-Smith, Charlotte: *Tribe*. Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology. Macmillan press ltd 1986.

carefully take into consideration on what the social solidarity does base in their traditional society? Also, how far is it functional and continue to function the system on which the social solidarity is based? Thus, these question should be cleared first and then we may construct the concept of the tribe meshing on that system on which the social solidarity is based.

So far as the Zo people in Manipur are concerned it is difficult or rather impossible to define a tribe accurately. The Zo, unlike other tribal society which is first divided into tribes and a tribe is again divided into clans, were as a whole divided in to clans and dispersed randomly within the Zo territory. In some pocket of the Zo territory, of course, a clan may dominate and also the dialects which they use must be same. But, that same clan speaking another dialect could be found in another areas. Thus, it is not proper to study the existing tribes in isolation.

The Zo clan, like that of the Nuer clan, is the largest groups of agnates who trace their descent from a common ancestor. But, unlike the nuer, the clan among the Zo people is not an exogamous unit. There is no restriction for a man to marry from his own clan member as long as the girl is not his very near kin. As the clan is a group of agnates, the men are identified with it. When a girl got married, she is absorbed into the clan of her husband. This clan identity is very important, that no man can change it, by migrating to another place or by speaking any other dialect. The clan is a unilateral kin group who traces their link through patrilineality, so it is a consanguinial kin group. Thus, a clan as a group of agnates, is not a very important source of identity for women folk as much as it is to man. There is a saying among the Zo people that “**Numei phungbei**” which means “women has no lineage” . As lineage is a segment of clan, so women have no clan

identity. But when a woman get married she was absorbed into her husband's clan and played a crucial role in the kinship relation which is manifested in the institution of 'Inndongta'(Household council).

This shows the patriarchal nature of the Zo society, where the women folk have no say. Regarding the property right, it can be equated with the primogeniture right. The eldest son has the sole right over the property (among some sections it is the youngest). When the father of a family is dead, his eldest son take up his position as successor. Distribution of property is only among the sons, that also is depending upon the generosity of the eldest son. In the Zo society, not only the property even the member of the household, the eldest son has the right of ownership. When the younger brother wanted to be independent from his eldest brother(To), he is obliged to 'Tosagawh' which means killing of animal(cow/pig/mithun) in honour of his eldest brother. In this gesture of honour, his eldest brother usually shares, but not obliged to, some of his properties to the one who performs 'Tosagawh'. Basically this Tosagawh¹³ is not for property but for the right to be separated from his brother. After which the eldest brother(To) will arranged a household council, which is a symbol of his independence from his brother.

In the case of women, they are dependent on their brother's generosity. If he loves his sister very much and wanted to give some of his property, he can do so after her marriage, but there is no obligation. The property handed down from the fore father will never or should not be given to her as she is going to another lineage or clan by her marriage.

Territorial division among the Zo people in Manipur is in accordance with the chieftainship system. The whole territory is divided into a number of villages. It is

¹³ Tosagawh: 'To' means eldest brother/Lord. 'Sagoh' means organizing a feast in honour of a person.

possible to recognise a village with certain clan, as the chief is the owner of the village land. But it is not necessary that only a clan will live in a village. The member of a village usually speak the same dialect which bind them together, though they are from various clans. It is difficult to divide the Zo territory along with the clan accurately, as various clans live together in a village. The village is identified with that of the dominant clan, which is the clan of the chief of the village.

Many writers on the tribal society have regarded territorial group as one of the characteristic of tribe. But it is not quite accurate among the Zo people as in the case of the Australian tribe. In Australia, as Radcliffe Brown mentioned “ the territory of the tribe is the total of the territories its components hordes... the boundary between one tribe and another may be indeterminate.”¹⁴ The hordes mentioned here are land owing or land holding groups and the boundary of the territories is known. But the case in Australia and the Zo territory are different, in the sense, unlike the hordes the clans member in the Zo society are quite dispersed within the Zo territory. The clan can be equalised with the hordes if they lived in a compact area, as both are a descents or agnates group. But a village is composed of various clans and no village has a single clans.

The basis of social structure, according to Fortes, is kinship. In the Zo society kinship plays an important role in the social relation that is manifested in the institution of household council, i.e. ‘**Inndongta**’. But, to reckon kinship system as the sole basis of social structure and to use it for the basis of defining a tribe, is not really relevant. Kinship system take into account both the groups of agnatic as well as uterine descent group into the system. If affinal relation is taken into account, the kinship relation will be

¹⁴ A.R. Radcliff Brown: *The social organisation of Australian Tribes*. Part-I. P-133.

so wide. Especially for a society where there is no strict marriage rules. Among the Zo people no exogamous as well as endogamous systems is mentioned, except for some groups in the northern part of the Zo territory in Manipur. They can marry any one except their kin who is very near. Thus it would create a big problem, if kinship is used as a base to define the constituent of a tribe.

Evans Pritchard maintained that “ there is a close relation between territorial segment and lineage segment”¹⁵ in his study among the Nuer. In the Zo society the member of the lineage which is the segment of the clan, move together in their search for new settlement. They may settle along with a lineage of another clan and marry each other. Thus, living together in an area or village enable them to have more contact with each other group with the passage of time, all related in their kinship system. So, their obligations not only lie in the clan but also in their kinship idiom.

As the whole Zo territory is divided into a number of villages, each village is under the village chief. He wielded a traditional authority that he acquired by birth. As this work is dealing with the post colonial, there is no suzerain chief. Before the coming of the British colonial master, a weak and small chieftom accepted the suzerainty of the paramount chief who was successful in conquering. He has the authority to collect taxes from the villagers who accept his suzerainty. According to AK Ray, “in the Thadou-Kuki society, the privilege of kinship descent and the law of primogeniture are two traditional factors determining the title of chieftainship.” It is also the same for other group of the Zo people in Manipur.

¹⁵ Evan Pritchard,EE: *The NUER: a description of the mode of livelihood and political institution of a nilotic people* OXFORD: Clarendon press, 1940.

The chief have the village elder to assist him in discharging his function. He is like a monarch and his words are laws. But, he is a benevolent who care for the welfare of the society, as all the member are his kin in one way or the other. If the chief died without any heir, the chieftainship will go to his nearest agnatic kin. In case of his son is a minor, his younger brother take over the chieftainship as a regent and hand it over to the legitimate heir when he grew up.

B) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

In Manipur the problem of identity is more acute than any other Zo inhabited areas. After India got independence the President issued the Scheduled Tribes lists order 1951 which was amended by the Parliament in 1956. This President's Scheduled Tribes Lists order divided the Zo people into various tribes. So, it can be said that the President's Scheduled Tribes list order plays a divisive role among the Zo people.

When we delve deep into the Zo social structure, we can see that the base of the social solidarity is on what they called 'Beh' (Clan). Captain EW Dun, who wrote *Gazetteer of Manipur* 1886, states that, "the word 'clan' is undoubtedly the best to apply to the Kuki(Zo) sub-division". This shows the importance of clan as the base of the Zo grouping system. We have discussed that the Zo clan member were randomly disperse within the Zo territory. As their inhabited areas were covered with thick forest and hilly terrain, it was difficult to have frequent communication. So a clan member who lived apart in different villages have infrequent interaction due to lack of proper communication facilities. Which led to the emergence of various dialects.

With the passage of time, the people who speak the same dialect form a kind of group, as they have a frequent social interaction. Thus, emerged another social identity besides clan identity i.e. dialectal identity. It is usually regional as people who lived in the same area speak the same dialect, though they may be of different clans. When tribes recognition was done on the basis of dialectal groups or a clan by the government, it created a lot of problem within the Zo society. So, this led to the emergence of a cross-cutting of tribes, clan and dialectal identity. Due to this many people are marginalised as the dialect which they speak and the clan in which they are a member are in different tribes.

C) STRUCTURE:

This dissertation is divided into three parts- Introduction, three main chapters, and conclusion. The introductory parts deals with the geographical setting of Manipur and explanation of the use of the name 'Zo' to refer to the "Kuki-Chin-Lushai" people. It also deals with the review of literature and statement of the problem. The first chapter deals with the wave of migration and their traditional administrative system under the chief. In dealing with the social structure it explain the importance of clan identity and discuss some important social institution namely, kinship and **Inndongta**(household council).

The second chapter described two external factors- colonial administration and Christianity, which brought changes in the Zo society. It discusses how colonial administration is responsible for division among the Zo people into different administrative units. It also discusses how mass conversion into Christianity is possible for the Zo people within a short span of time.

The third chapter deals with the tribe-identity formation among the Zo people in Manipur. It discusses how various dialectal groups emerged and become tribes with the recognition of tribe on the basis of dialect, which led to the emergence of cross-cutting identity. The concluding part analyses critically the application of the “Concept of Tribe” to the Zo society. It shows how the “Concept of tribe” is irrelevant in the case of the Zo society, as their grouping system is based on clan.

CHAPTER 1

EARLY HISTORY AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE ZO PEOPLE

A) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND WAVE OF MIGRATION:

Writing tribal history is difficult as there is no written historical records. Scholars and writers have to depend sometimes on their legends, folktales, myths etc. which are traditionally handed down to the next generation orally. In this connection, most of the Zo people especially those who are in Manipur claimed to have common origin from a mythological cave; which they called **Khul/Khur/Chiinlung/Siinlung**, different terms are used because of dialectal difference. But, the location of the cave still remain obscure. Anthropologists and others, agreed that they belong to Mongoloid race. Linguistically, the Kuki-Chin(Zo) language is grouped under the Tibeto-Burman family¹. So, in writing the history of the Zo people, it is proper to trace along with the other Tibeto-Burman speakers. It is generally accepted that the Tibeto-Chinese of which the Tibeto-Burman are a branch, had their original home in North-western China between the upper courses of the Yangtse and Huangho. Carey and Tuck mentioned that "... the Kuki of Manipur, the Lushai hills of Bengal and Assam and the Chin originally lived in what we now known as Thibet(Tibet)"². According to the Report of the frontier Area enquiry Commission Rangoon(1947), "the Chin migrated to Burma from the Tibetan plateau almost in a

1. Dr. G. A. Grierson: *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol-III part -III (reprinted), 1967. Here after cited as Grierson: Linguistic Survey.*

² Bentram. S. Carey & H.N. Tuck: *The Chin hills Vol-I, 896. Here after cited as; Carey & Tuck: The Chin hills*

straight line down South are to be found from the Somra hill tracts down to Cape Negrais”³

The word Kuki and Chin are synonymous and are used for many of the hill tribes in the Indo-Burma border areas. The former is a Bengali or Assamese term and the latter Burman; both applied to the hill tribes of the areas which is stretching from the Naga Hills in the north down into Sandoway district of Burma in the south; from the Myithia river in the east, almost to the Bay of Bengal in the West⁴. Khupzagou also mentions that Zos, probably entered Burma along one of the north eastern river valley and then turned towards the west into the upper reaches of the Chindwin river, sometime near the beginning of the Christian era⁵.

Writers have developed different opinions regarding the time when the Tibeto-Burman speakers entered Burma. Lehman, F.K. agreed to Luce, who had done Linguistic tour in Chin hills, as he gave fairly convincing evidence that the first few centuries A.D. must have been a period of the influx of Sino-Tibetan speaking peoples, and in particular of Tibeto-Burma speakers, into the south east Asia, (Lehman; 1963)⁶ whatever may be the time, the Zo people came to Burma from somewhere in Tibet regions, along the North eastern river valley, perhaps, Irrawady river valley and settled in Mandalay for sometime. Though a few account could be gathered regarding the Zos’ settlement in Mandalay, it is held to be a historical fact. K. Zawla⁷ has mentioned that the Zos were living together with the Burman(Kawl) in Mandalay. They lived under the Burman King as the Burman were more advanced. As a minority, they were oppressed by the Burmans that their girls

³ Vumkohau: *Forwarding in 'Geneology of Zo race'*, Captain K.A. Khupzathang: P-1.

⁴ Grierson: *Linguistic Survey*. P-291.

⁵ Khupzagou: *A critical analysis of bible translation among the Zo people in Manipur*, 1996. P-22

⁶ F.K. Lehman: *The structure of Chin society(A tribal people of Burma adapted to non western civilization, 1963*.P-13.

⁷ K. Zawla : *Mizo Pi Pu leh a thlate chanchin 6th edition*, 1993.p-7. Here after cited as Zawla: *Mizo Chanchin*

began tattooing their face as they were afraid of the Burman rulers who used to abduct them. He said that, the Zos left Mandalay around 950 A.D. and reached Mingin. Here, they settled for around 36 years, but they felt insecure as they once again come into contact with the Burman. So, they gradually moved again from Mingin around 986 A.D. and reached Kale Kabaw valley. In this valley they built a town which they called Khampat, named after the ‘**Golden Rosary**’ which was given to them by the Burman King who married their Princess. They became on good term with the Burmans due to this matrimonial alliance.

The Khampat settlement is perhaps, their first experience of having a town on their own, where all the clans lived together. According to Mangkhosat Kipgen⁸, the time spent in Khampat is regarded as one of the glorious period in Zo history. Most of the major clans who now inhabited the Chin State of Burma, Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar and Tripura are believed to have lived together there under a great chief having the same culture and speaking the same language.

There are different opinions about the reason why the Zo people had left Khampat settlement. The Zo verbal history, as written by K. Zawla, says that, after settling there in Khampat for around 200 years, their King was no longer efficient, they were tired of him, further they were aggravated by a famine, which prompted them to migrate from Khampat⁹. But Lalthangliana¹⁰ has another opinion that the Shan invaded the Zo people. Whatever may be the reason they have left Khampat and took shelter in the hills. At this juncture a great random dispersion among the Zo people took place. Some of the groups

⁸ Mangkhosat Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo culture (the encounter between christianity and Zo culture in Mizoram)*, 1997. Here after cited as Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo culture*.

⁹ Zawla: *Mizo Chanchin*. P-10.

¹⁰ M.Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo Culture*. P-40. As cited from B.Lalthangliana: *History of Mizo in Burma*.

found their way directly, and other indirectly through the Chin hills, in to Manipur¹¹. Those groups who enter directly to Manipur toward the North-West might have include groups like; Anal, Lamkang, Purum, Maring, Chiru, Kom, Aimol, Chothe, and Taroa. The other groups who entered Manipur indirectly via, Chin hills and Lushai hills might have included groups like; Gwite or Paihte, Simte, (Gangte)*, Thado, (Vaiphei)* etc. who were called by some writers as new Kukis. Many other groups moved toward the South and reached as far as Sandoway district in Burma, to the east till Myitha river; to the west till almost Bay of Bengal. Thus, this work will deal with the groups, who entered what is now called Manipur. They are just a segment in relations to the whole Zo population.

B) ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE CHIEFTAINSHIP:

In the Zo traditional Society, the authority is in the hands of the Chief. The office of the Chieftainship is hereditary. It is inherited by the son of the chief. A.K.Ray, in his study of the Thado-Kuki, remarked that, the privilege of Kinship descent and the law of primogeniture are the two traditional factors determining the title of the Chieftainship¹². It is not always in the Zo society that the eldest son succeeded his father, there are some section who practice the succession by the youngest son. The groups who practised the law of primogeniture are, the Paite, Simte, Thado, Vaiphei, Gangte etc. where as the succession by the youngest son, is practice by the Lushei and Hmar. But, among the Hmar also different clan such as Pudaite, Tusing, etc. practised succession by the eldest

¹¹ *ibid.* P-41.

* within bracket are included under the old-Kuki: *J. Shakespeare*, 1912.

¹² A.K.Ray: *Authority and Legitimacy: A Study of the thado-Kukis in Manipur*, 1990. P-8. Hereafter cited as AK.Ray: *Authority and Legitimacy*.

son¹³. Succession by daughter is out of question when they are not even entitled to own property.

Regarding the law of succession, the law of primogeniture might have been their original practice as there is evidence from the cultural practice in support of this view. Some group like Paite/Tedim Chin, Zou, Simte, etc., has a customary practice called “**Tosagawh**”. By which the younger brother after getting married, if he wishes to run a household of his own with a separate household council (**Inndongta**)¹⁴ and establish a separate family from his eldest brother, he has to give a feast in honour of his eldest brother(**To**). By doing this (**Tosagawh**) his eldest brother is suppose to arrange for him a separate household council.

From this customary practice, the important status attach to the ‘**To**’(eldest brother) is manifested clearly. The word ‘**To**’ is used for eldest brother, of course, this is a kinship term which is not used to address him in common. A sibling has only one ‘**To**’ in their generation. The word lord in their language is ‘**Topa**’, pa means ‘father’ but here it is used as a suffix for a man. Thus, ‘**Tosagawh**’ can be interpreted as serving a feast to the Lord. Therefore, this customary practice clearly show the status of the eldest brother as Lord in relation to other brother. So, the succession by the youngest son is most probably, an emulation of the practiced of some great chief who ruled over a large territory, by the common stock. This great Chief for the sake of effective administration used to send his sons as soon as they were grown up, to rule some village under his domain. By doing so the last son remained with him at home was the youngest son. With

¹³ Chinkholian Guite: *Politico Economic Development of Tribals of Manipur (A Study of Zomi)*, 1999. New Delhi. P-39. Hereafter cited as C. Guite: *Politico-Economic Development of Tribals of Manipur*.

¹⁴ It will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

the passage of time this became a custom among the chiefs and the common stock also emulated in the later date.

The village chief possessed executive legislative and judicial power in the village. He was the supreme head of administration, whose words were laws within his chiefdom. He appointed elders called 'Upa' to assist him in administration. The 'Upa' has no power to direct him rather they are just advisory body. Without the consent of the chief the decision of the 'Upa' cannot be the final decision. All matters relating to issuing of ordinances, framing of rules and regulations, important instructions, were made by the chief within the frame of custom and tradition¹⁵.

The chief interpreted customs in discharging his judicial power. He judges all civil and criminal cases within the village, which could not be settled at the level of household council of the parties involved without the intervention of the chief. In the case of "Tualthat"¹⁶(Murder), they have a custom that gave protection to the person who committed the crime from the relative of the victim for revenge. After he committed the crime and was chased by some one for revenge he could run into the chief's house and embraced the **Sutpi** (middle post or pillar) of the house building. By doing so, he took refuge to the chief, and the chief would protect him. Then the chief would take up the case. This custom has some similarity with that of the Nuers, who has the Leopard skin chief whose main function in the society is mediating the criminal and the victim. They can also take a refuge in his house¹⁷.

¹⁵ C. Guite: *Politico-Economic Development of Tribals of Manipur*. P-40.

¹⁶ Tual: Tual is symbolized by the sacrificial alter set up at the center of the village. There could be no settlement or village without Tual nor could there be more than one tual in a village, in the olden days of the Zos. In common parlance it means a village community.

¹⁷ E.E.Evan Pritchard: *The Nuer: A description of the modes of livelihood and political Institution of Nilotic people*, Oxford: 1940.

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The chief is regarded by his subjects as the protector of their life and property. He is the commander-in-chief during war and lead them to the battlefield or in raiding a village. The village have dormitory for boys, which they called **Haam** or **Zawlbuk** or **Buanzawl**, etc. This is the place where all the bachelors are sleeping together. The chief is the supreme commander over them, and they were always ready in case of emergency.

This dormitory was also an institution for learning. The boys were trained by the elders, the art of fighting, tracking etc. which are necessary for a man to know, to carry out the responsibility of a man in daily social life.

For the smooth functioning of the village social life, the chief also appointed- **Siampu**(Priest), **Tangko**(Village Crier/Herald), **Sik Sek**(Blacksmith). With all these in the village they also cultivate whatsoever they need for consumption and make utensil and any material which they need for daily activities. Thus, they were self-sufficient.

Such is his position, holding absolute power but always caring for the welfare of his subjects. As a chief, he collected taxes from his subjects mostly in kind, namely; **Buhsun**(Paddy tax), **Tangseu**(Millet tax), **Saliang**(Meat tax), **Cisiah**(Salt tax), **Khuaisiah**(Bee tax). He had the privilege of keeping slaves too. Though his powers were such that, he seems to be with no check or limitation. But, if his behaviour is not bearable and tyrannical the villagers can desert him by mass migration to another village or establish another village. But this rarely happens as a village community is like a large family and all of them are kith and kin in one way or the other to the chief. Their tradition says why they left Khampat in Kale Kabow valley, their valley settlement, is because of cruel chief or King. Thus the chief can always be checked of Tyrannical or despotic behaviour.

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C) CLAN:

Formation:

In the Zo society an individual is born as a member of a certain clan. As soon as the child is born he/she become a member of his/her father's clan. This shows that the Zo society is a patrilineal society. So, to be a Zo one has to be identified with one of the Zo clan, as it is important in the process of social relationship, and traces its link genealogically to a common ancestor, Zo the progenitor. A clan is a system of lineage and a lineage is a genealogical segment of a clan¹⁸. The Zo clan is divided into many branches of lineage or sub-clan. This lineage they called it **Phung** and clan they called it '**Beh**'. Nowadays, when writing their name they write their **Phungmin** (Lineage name) or **Behmin**(Clan name) along with their name.

The importance of clan identity could be discerned, if we delve deep into the Zo social structures. So, it is proper to question how were the Zo clans formed? How far is it important for the individual to identify with it? In dealing with these questions it is necessary to study clan in relation to the system of Chieftainship, as initiating or forming of a new clan is usually done by the chief. So, in dealing with the formation of clan it is necessary to study along with the system of chieftainship. A.K Ray¹⁹ divided the chief among the Thado-Kukis(one of the existing tribes in Manipur) into three types namely; the clan chief, the traditional chief and territorial chief. The original clan chief is the direct lineal descent of the original progenitor, the traditional village chief are the younger branches of the original clan and the territorial chief, in most cases, are from a

¹⁸ *ibid.*

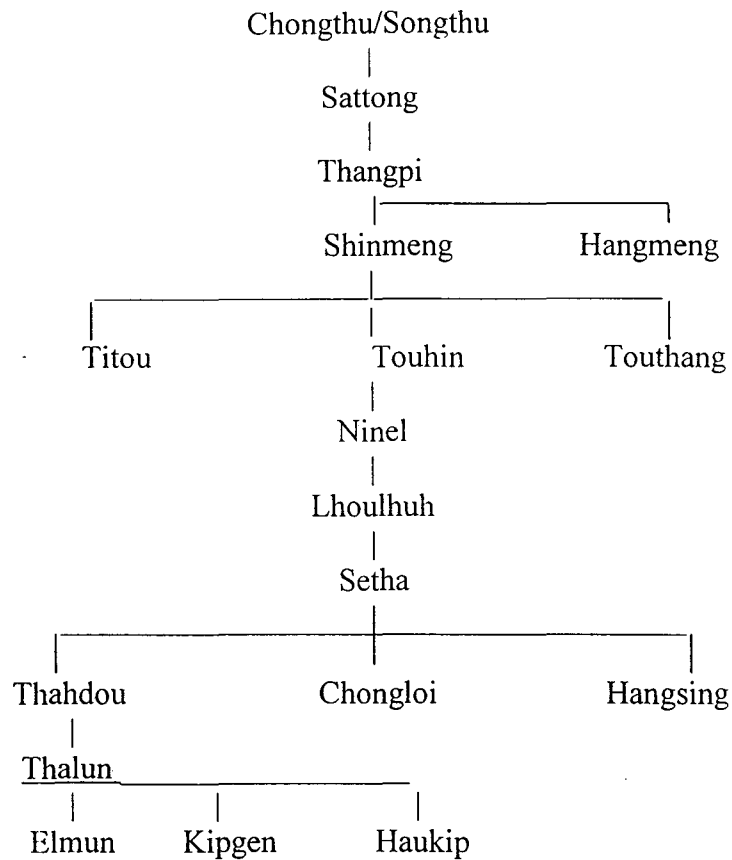
¹⁹ A.K. Ray: *Authority and Legitimacy*. P-8.

common stock. He says that, both the traditional chief and territorial chief usually initiated a new genealogical line starting from his own and somehow connecting it with the mythological ancestor²⁰. Thus, it can be said that the chief legitimise their position by initiating a clan from him and connecting his genealogical line with the original clan's ancestor.

From the above passage it is clear that clan was founded or initiated by a great man who have influence or could influence a number of followers. It could also be a branch of the original clan. The formation of new clan always go along with founding new settlement, which is regarded as a noble deed²¹. So, it is clear that formation of clan and chiefship has a direct relationship. The legitimacy of the newly founded clan is secured by claiming or tracing its link to the original progenitor. All the Zo clans, according to Khupzathang, who compiled “ The genealogy of the Zo race”, are the descendent of a progenitor called Zo. It is due to the formation of new clans besides the original line, emerged a numerous number of clans within the Zo society. A good example is shown in the following diagram:

²⁰ *ibid.* P-8.

²¹ Sing Khaw Khai: *Zo People and their Culture: A Historical, Cultural study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes*, 1995.P-141. Khampu Hatzaw Publication, New Lamka(G), Manipur. Hereafter cited as Sing Khaw Khai: *Zo People and their Culture*.



(Taken from: William Shaw; *The Thadou-Kuki*, cultural publishing house, 1929).

From the above diagram it is clear that many clans have stemmed out from Chongthu/Songthu as its branches. Chongthu/Songthu stood at the fifth generation from the Zo progenitor as from the following diagram:

1. Zo
2. Kipmang Ciinhil
3. Nawphut Leimang
4. Nawsong Phusong Suangkop
5. Songthu Ngaite
6. Songkip Songza Zakhai Zahong Zaniang

(From: *The geneology of Zo race* by Khupzathang K.A.)

By tracing back the genealogy, we can come to the conclusion that the clan names which exists today are the name of a person who was once popular as a chief of a village or a cluster of villages. When he became popular as a chief, people from other village recognised his subjects by his name. For example, Khanthum of Sukte clan had 6 sons; Luahkhai, Kamhau, Ngawhpau, Zakhai, Zapau and Khanzam²². Out of the six sons Kamhau became very popular as he was a great warrior and influential. He even conquered and raid some part of the Manipur Raja's kingdom in between 1834-50. So people who lived within his chieftom were recognised by other as Kamhau people²³ with the passage of time his descendants began to use his name as a clan name, though they belong to Sukte clan. From this example we can see that it was by his (Kamhau) popularity which has enabled him to initiate a new sub-clan by his name. There are a number of persons whose name we come across while tracing back their genealogy, but it has no importance except to link the genealogical gap of some popular personality. Thus, this is how the clans which are existing today are formed. Initially it is just a name of a person but evolved as a clan name with the passage of time.

As a social identity:

The clan is regarded as a primary social identity, as this identity is earned by virtue of birth which is based on consanguine relations. In other words, it is a group of agnates who trace descent from a common ancestor. So, it is necessary for an individual to be a member of a certain Zo clan to identify himself as a Zo. No one can live in isolation. So, we need, as a human being, someone to help and stand-by in times of

²² Capt. K.A. Khupzathang: *Zo Suanh Khang Simna Bu* (The Genealogy of the Zo race), Rangoon, 1974.

²³ Carey and Tuck: *The Chin Hills*.

trouble and happiness too. So also in the Zo society the clan member were oblique to look after each other's welfare. The importance of a clan as a social identity can be shown in two instances:

- (1) If a person face a problem like accident or died in another village or a foreign land. The rightful person to take care of him/her will be his/her clan member, if there is any. In case, the person is dead it is customarily obligatory for his/her clan member to take care and do the needful things like- reaching the body to his/her native place or arranging his/her burial. This is a very important responsibility as well as a right of the clan member to each other. They called it "**Luangphong**", which means lifting of the body from where it is lying.
- (2) In marriage, if the girl is to be sent off from the village and she has no near kin in that village. In this situation, the girl's family's household council will request a family or household of their own clan of that village to look after their daughter's welfare. But if at all they could not find someone of their clan, they will of course, have to request any other trustworthy person. This asking for guardianship is done by serving them '**Zu**' (Rice beer) at their house. This act of serving '**Zu**' is called "**Zukhawlh**".

Thus, in many ways the significance of clan as a social identity is manifested in the process of social relationship. Nowadays, the clan identity got a new interpretation within the Democratic political system. Though it is not very prominent yet, as much as politicization of caste within the Hindu society.

As a base of social solidarity:

The social solidarity in the Zo society is mainly based on what they called “**Beh**”(clan). The ‘Beh’ as mentioned earlier is an agnate group based on consanguine relation, that claimed common ancestor. It is unbreakable bond of relation for the members as it is based on descent line. After the Zo people left their Khampat, a valley settlement in Kale Kabo valley, they moved to the hills from there they split up into smaller groups often the same family of same clan as there was no flat land large enough to hold a large settlement²⁴. So, the importance of clan as a base of social solidarity got augmented. But, it is not necessary that a village will constitute only one clan. Sing Khaw Khai has mentioned, in his book “*Zo people and their culture*”²⁵, two types of Zo society: that which is composed of only the member of one clan and that which is composed of different clans. In Manipur most of the Zo villages are of the later type of society i.e. composed of different clans.

The Zo people before the coming of Christianity have two main priests- village priest and clan priest. If the village is composed of only one clan, a person can be the village priest as well as clan priest. But, most of the villages are composed of different clans. The clan priest is very unique in the sense that it is handed from generation to generation to a particular line within a clan. So, to perform sacrifices to the “**Behdawi**”(Clan god) the clan priest has to go from village to village. The clan gods a mentioned by P.L. Mung Naulak in his book “*Khanglui Ngeina*(Old Customs)”²⁶ are: **Pusa**(Spirit of Ancestors), as the Zo people practice Ancestor worship and **Sumtawng Biakna**(Worship of Household benefactor).

²⁴ Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, P-42.

²⁵ Sing Khaw Khai: *Zo People and their Culture*. P-163.

²⁶ P.L. Mung Naulak: *Khanglui Ngeina*, 1999. Aizawl, P-2.

Thus, the solidarity among the clan member existed even beyond a village which is manifested by their religious practice i.e. worshipping of Ancestor attended only by the clan priest and the social obligatory which the clan member have to each other. So, all these are the reasons besides, descent from common ancestor, which give them a we-feeling among clan members. As the we-feeling that existed among the clan member regulated by their traditional religious practice, it is stronger as well as, and has structural importance than the we-feeling existing within the village community among different clans, Therefore, the solidarity basing on clan is the most important bond of relation in the Zo social structure.

D. SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: KINSHIP SYSTEM AND INNDONGTA

As systems of kinship and marriage can be looked at as an arrangement which enable persons to live together and to cooperate with one another in an orderly manner²⁷. Marriage may be of polyandrous or polygynous, but it is not sexual intercourse that constitutes marriage “..... it is a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society determined by parenthood in the social sense.....”²⁸ In studying kinship, it is not only dealing with consanguinal relationship. It includes the kith and kin (relatives) of the ego through his/her mother, father, brother(s), sister(s) and spouse(s). This network of relationship can be best understood by considering what Radcliff Brown called order of relationship by kinship and marriage. The first order is within the elementary family, viz., the relation of parent and child, that of the husband and

²⁷ A.R. Radcliffe Brown: *African System of Kinship and Marriage* in A.R. Radcliffe Brown & Daryll (ed.). Introduction. P-13.

²⁸ *ibid.* P-5.

wife, between sibling. Relationship of second order are through connecting persons, such as those with father's father, mother's father etc., third, the fourth order so on and so forth.

The first determining factor of a kinship system is provided by the range over which these relationships are effectively recognised for social purpose of all kinds. The differences between wide-range and narrow range systems are so important that it would be well to take this matter of range as the basis for any attempt at a systematic classification of kinship systems²⁹. In the Zo society the range could be so wide, but taking into consideration how far it is effectively functioning, the kinship relation could be very narrow just bounded within the house-hold council(**inndongta**). This social institution is functioning effectively and regulates all economic, jural, and ritual relations. So in theory we can keep on extending the order range till the fourth or the fifth order of social relationship by kinship and marriage³⁰. In reality till the third order is hardly functioning and recognised socially beyond that its effectiveness lies only to the clan members.

Regarding kinship terminology, classificatory is extensively used among them whereas descriptive is used to refer a very few relation. In the Zo society, '**Pu**' is a classificatory term used for father's father, mother's father, mother's brother and all the male member of mother's clan; **Pa**-father, **Papi**-father's elder brother, '**Pa**' as a prefix of a name-father's younger brother, e.g. Pa Cin, Pa Thang, in these two example 'Cin' or 'Thang' is a name; **Nu**-mother, **Nupi**-mother's elder sisters, '**Nu**' as a prefix of a name-mother's younger sisters; **Makpa**-Daughter's husband, and all her sons as '**Tute**'; **Nuphal**-the husbands of a sibling sisters; all parallel cousins are addressed in the same

²⁹ *ibid.* P-6.

³⁰ *ibid.* P-6.

way as own brothers and sisters. There is not much descriptive term and rather many terms are commonly used especially among the first and second order relationship by kinship and marriage. All these show that the Zo family is extended to the first order relationship by kinship and marriage and they treated each other like a member of a family with in it.

The kinship relation within the Zo society is really a functioning system. It is actively functioning especially when a social institution-‘**Inndongta**’ was formed within the frame of the kinship web. The term ‘**Inndongta**’ is translated by Kamkhenthang as household council³¹. The kinship relation is manifested in this social institution, as mentioned earlier, as it regulates all economics jural and ritual relations. Regarding the Zo society, in relation to its social institutions, the following lines could be quoted from Singkhawkhai: “ The Zo society is in essence an enlarged family society... the family society is grouped into sons and the daughters. There exists a division of works within the family in accordance with the family grouping of the children. The daughters do the domestic works under the mothers supervisor and the sons are to ensure the family security under the father’s leadership... the social structure is thus determined by the filial between the son group **Beh** (Clan) or ‘**U-leh-Nau**’(in Tedim) and daughters group called ‘**Tanuta**’³².

The **Inndongta** institution is formed basing on the kinship relation. In this council the offices or portfolios and the responsibilities attached to each are an extension of the division of labour as within a family, which divided into two groups-daughters and sons groups. Besides, the sons and daughters groups some offices like **Pu**(mother side male

³¹ H. Kamkhenthang: *The Paite: a transborder tribe of India and Burma*, Delhi. 1998. Hereafter cited as Kamkhenthang: *The Paite*.

³² Sing Khaw Khai: *Zo People and their Culture*. P-149.

member), **Thusapi**(director) and **Zawl**(pack friend) are usually from different clan. Thus, the role played by the household council is so vital within the Zo social structure. Kamkhenthang wrote that, “the knowledge of the working system of the **Inndongta** institution is a pre-requisite to under-standing the social structure of the Paite(a Zo tribe) society”³³.

It may be given different names due to dialectal differences, but this institution exists in every tribe or group among the Zo people in Manipur. The term ‘**Inndongta**’ is used by Zou, Simte, Paite, etc. whereas some groups used the term ‘**Tucha-Behcha-Songgau**’. This institution is defined by Kamkhenthang as “...structural relationship of household of agnates, affines, enates and other selected non clan member of the village in a corporate manner. This corporate relationship of survival households is designed to meet the partial need of a household of a man with that of his agnates, affines, enates, and friends form an institutional organisation called ‘**Inndongta**’”³⁴. Thus, Inndongta is important social institution that is functioning in the process of social relation, interaction, and co-operation within the Zo society.

The following are the different offices within in the Inndongta institution in the Zo society:

1. **Thalloh or Bangkua**
2. **Thusa**
3. **Pu**
4. **Tanute**
5. **Behte(Behval)**
6. **Zawl**
7. **Nuphal**

³³ Kamkhenthang: *The Paite*. P-15.

³⁴ *ibid.* P-15.

1. **THALLOH or BANGKUA:** The term '**Thalloh**' is a combination of two words – **Thal** and **Loh**. The '**Thal**' means 'arrow', whereas '**Loh**' means 'to repay' hence, **Thalloh** means an arrow compensator. So, the **thalloh** is the principal head of the joint family. The other alternative term '**Bangkua**' is also a combination of two words-'**Bang**' and '**Kua**'. The word '**Bang**' means 'wall' (wall of a house) and '**kua**' means 'hole' (not a mere hole, it is a hole in which some living animal stays). Hence, the word **Bangkua** means 'household' (in nearest translation). So this office manifests or rather reflects a kind of joint family system (not necessarily joint household).

The principal **Thalloh(Thallohpi)** is the first in the line, who can inherit the household family in case of no son is born to the household. Next to **Thallohpi** there is **Thallohpithuap**, he can be from another clan as well as from the same clan as the household family. But the incumbent of this office has no right to inherit. The **Thallohpithuap** is followed by **Thalloh thumna** (third **Thalloh**) and then **Thalloh lina**(fourth **Thalloh**). This arrangement is in a descending order usually in accordance with the closeness to the household. In a place where there is no clan member, a good friend can be invited to take up these offices. The function of **Thallohpi** is to stand in place of the head of the household in times of adversity, celebration, etc.³⁵

2. **THUSA:** The term '**thusa**' is a combination of two words-**thu** and **sa**. The word '**thu**' means 'word' and '**sa**' means 'saying'. In the olden day they converse through song, though the literal meaning of '**sa**' is 'singing', it can be equated with 'saying'. As, one of their saying goes like this "*thu I cih la, la I cih thu*" which means "words are songs and

³⁵ The customary laws of sub-committee, Ngaihte Innkuan Committee (NIC): *Ngaihte Dan leh Ngeinate*.P-1 Hereafter cited as NIC: Ngaihte.

songs are words”. So the term ‘**Thusa**’ could be translated as ‘speaker’ or ‘spokesman’. But, Kamkhenthang in his book “*The Paite: A trans-border tribe of India and Burma*” translated ‘**Thusa**’ as Director. By observing the function of the office it can be equated with Director.

There are two types of **Thusa**; **Thusapi** (principal **thusa**) and **Thalloh Thusa**. The principal **Thusa** is widely used whereas **Thalloh Thusa** is mostly used in family matter. The function of **Thusapi** (principal **thusa**) is to head the household council in relation to other’s household councils. He initiates discussions and plays the role of ambassador in a matter relating to marriage or any matter related to another household council or family or clans. Thus this office can be compared with the ministry of external affairs in a Democratic form of Government.

The principal **Thusa** is from a clan other than the clan of the household. The reason as to why this office is to be held by the non-clan member is explained by H. Kamkhenthang as follows:

“...in case of any misfortune or adversity like death, member of the household or close relatives are equally affected. But a person distantly related or a non-clan member is little or not affected by the misfortune... (or) not severely affected by the sentimental wrench as other members of the same **inndongta** could naturally work and arrange thing better...”³⁶.

The responsibility of **Thusa**, especially **Thusapi** is the most important in relation to other household council or other clans. Thus, appointment to this office has to be done carefully as it requires a person with good personality who will be able to handle any

³⁶ Kamkhenthang: *The Paite*. P-36.

situation arises. So, mostly people prefer to appoint a person with great reputation and ability.

3. **PU: Pu** is a kinship terminology for the mother's father or brothers. This is not a office which one can appoint any one as he like. A person holds this office because of his sisters or daughters married to the head of the household or his father.

4. **TANUTE:** The term **Tanute** means 'daughters'. This office consists of daughters group who already left their natal family in marriage. They hold their office along with their husband and perform their duty together. The status held in this office by each daughter is arranged according to seniority or age in the natal family. Their duty is similar to that of their duty as women in a family i.e. domestic work such as cooking related works. So, when it comes to the duty attached to the portfolio each of them held, it is just like and extended of their works in the domestic chore. They perform their duties on the occasion like-**Tong** (merit feast); **sialkhumsa gawh** (bride price giving feast); **kithoih** (sacrificial meat) etc. at their natal family's household.

5. **BEHTE(BEHVAL):** The term **Behte** mean clan members. Some clans like Ngaihte designated the 'fourth **Thusa**' for this office³⁷.

6. **ZAWL:** The term **Zawl** means 'pack friend'. It is appointed on the basis of friendship usually the best friend of the head of the household or the man for which the council is constituted is appointed. It is because their intimate relation will enable him to share his problem such as a family problem. So, his friend can even take up the problem to the council to discuss for a solution.

³⁷ NIC: *Ngaihte*. P-2.

CHAPTER-II

IMPACT OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND CHRISTIANITY

In the previous chapter we have discussed the wave of migration of the Zo people. We also have discussed the Zo traditional society in which we tried to understand the social structure by studying the clan and the social institutions of the kinship system and the chieftainship system. This chapter will deal with two external factors responsible for the changes that took place in the Zo society. It will be divided into two sections, viz., colonial administration and its impact, and secondly, the influence of Christianity. The first section will discuss the contact of Manipur with the British colonists; annexation of Manipur and the division of the hill and the valley areas; the administrative reforms in the hill areas after the Zo-Gal (Kuki-uprising 1917). The second section will discuss the coming of Christian missionaries and the conversion of the Zos into Christianity, and the impact of Christianity on the Zo culture.

A) CONTACT OF MANIPUR WITH THE BRITISH

The British had a diffuse relation with Manipur before the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824. The British in-fact, never wanted to have a large-scale war with the Burmese. But the Burmese became determined to invade the British territories, for they underestimated the British as mere traders. On the 24th February 1824, Lord Amherst, the then Governor General of India finally declared war on Burma. When the war actually broke out the

British Government realized the importance of Cachar and Manipur¹. Moreover, the cooperation of the local people was necessary to conduct any operation on that direction. The British under these circumstances opened communication with the Princes of Manipur who had fled to Cachar due to the Burmese invasion. They made Gambhir Singh as the Raja and Narsingh as the Senapati (General-in-Chief). Gambhir Singh expressed to the British his willingness to advance into Manipur with 500 men who later constituted the Manipur Levy. They were trained and equipped by the British at the expense of the British.

In 1825 Gambhir Singh with 500 Manipuri soldiers marched for Manipur from Sylhet and occupied Manipur without much difficulty. For Gambhir Singh things became much easier because the Burmese were weakened after their General Mingimaha Bardula was defeated and killed in April 1825 by the British in the Southern part of Burma. By 1826, the Burmese could no longer defend through resistance the advancing British soldier. Thus the war came to an end by the Treaty of Yandaboo. This Treaty recognized Gambhir Singh as the Raja of Manipur². Under such circumstances the Governor – General and council communicated a certain number of resolutions in 1833, which were accepted by Gambhir Singh. In this Treaty the boundary line between Cachar and Manipur was drawn, which will be discussed later on. In 1835, with the proposition of Lord William Bentick, the then Viceroy of the British Empire in India, the British, the British political agent was placed in Manipur for preservation of friendly intercourse and as an agent of communication.

¹ Jyotirmoy: *History of Manipur*, (2nd edition) 1973.P-65. Hereafter cited as, J.Roy: Manipur.

² *ibid.* P-69.

Before the British established relations with Manipur, the hill tribes were nominally under the Manipur Raja. The Raja collected tributes from the tribes and sometimes sent armed expeditions as a reprisals for their raids to the valley people. As such the boundaries of Manipur did not enclose a cultural unit, but were rather a measure of the limit up-to which the darbar was in the past to effectively extract tribute from the hillmen.³ In relation to this McCulloh wrote as follows:

Before the connection of the British Government with that of Manipur took place, the latter, not to speak of exerting influence over the tribes, was unable to protect the inhabitants of the valley from their exaction of blackmail, and even after the conclusion of peace with Burma, and the fixation of a boundary for Manipur, the majority of the tribes were independent, and known to us little more than by name. With the assistance of the arms and ammunition given to Manipur by the British Government, some of the tribes have been thoroughly, the northern one particularly, reduced, and the attack of the one that bordering Burmese have led to apprehensions of the interruption of the general peace of the frontier.⁴

Only after the contact with the British the demarcation of the boundaries of Manipur was began. Racially, the people of Manipur are one-Mongoloid and speaking different languages of Tibeto-Burman. However, the social set-up of the valley dwellers and the hill tribes was different due to the religious conversion of the valley people into Hinduism with the Royal Edict of 1705⁵. Hence, their society was stratified on the basis of the caste system. The society of the hill tribes continued, without any change, to exist by following their own customs and traditions until the coming of Christianity. As the valley was more productive those who settled in the valley became more advanced and

³ J.A. Bimal & Dilip K. Lahiri: *Manipur culture and politics* 1987. Mittal Publications. P-58.

⁴ M. Mc Culloh: *Valley of Manipur*, 1980. First printed in 1857. P-57. Hereafter cited as Mc Cullaoh: *Valley of Manipur*.

⁵ James Hastings: *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol-ix/viii. P-402.

developed in comparison to the people who lived in the hill areas. Thus the British developed a relation with the more advanced valley dwellers and they had contact with the hill tribes through the valley people. Therefore, every written historical record on the hill tribes and their territories by the British were written with the information which they got from the valley dwellers and their own distant observations.

Regarding the boundaries issue of Manipur, the British settled this even without consulting the people concerned. The boundary line between the Naga Hills and Manipur was fixed in 1872 by Dr. Brown, the then British political agent in Manipur, and Captain Butler, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district⁶. The western boundary line of Manipur was settled by the treaty of 1833, in which the line of Jiri (river) and the western bend of the Barak (river) was taken as boundary.⁷ The British according to their wishes and conveniences designed this treaty.

By the Treaty of 1834 the Eastern boundary line of Manipur was laid down. According to the Treaty of 1834, ceding the Kabo Valley to Burma, the Southern boundary of Manipur from the east begins at the point where the river called by the Burmans Nansawing, and by the Manipuris Numsaulung, enters the plain up to its sources and across the hills due west down to the Kothikhyong (Manipur River)⁸. But the Eastern border issue came up again when Sir Johnston held the office of political agent. The Government of India set up a Borden Commission with Sir Johnston as a commissioner. He erected stone pillar on both sides of the Nanniya river which ran near

⁶ L. W. Shakespeare: *The Assam Rifle*, 1929. Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., Aizawl. Reprinted 1977. P-52.

⁷ R. Brown: *Statistical account of the native state of Manipur and the hill territory under its rule*. 1873. Reprinted 1975. Hereafter cited as R. Brown: *Statistical account of Manipur*.

⁸ Alexander Mackenzie: *The North-Eastern frontier of India*. 1994. First printed in 1884. P-171. Hereafter cited as Mackenzie: *North-Eastern frontier*.

the Kongal thana⁹, after surveying and investigating what is called Pamberton imaginary line¹⁰. In 1884, the Burmese challenging this arrangement threatened to destroy the Kongalthana and the stone pillar. At this juncture the third Anglo – Burmese war broke out and the settlement of the boundary dispute between the two countries was kept in abeyance for sometime¹¹.

In relation to the southern boundary of Manipur, it was with the Sakte Tribe. Alexander Mackenzie wrote that “..according to the boundary laid by Captain Pemberton contained in the Treaty of 1834, part of the Sakte tribe at present live in Manipur and part in Burma or independent territory”¹². So it was uncertain as to which area is the Sakte territory. But it is clear that they were not under the control of neither Burma nor Manipur. Mackenzie wrote that “as far as our records show, the Burmese Government do not appear ever to have exercised any control over the Sooties (Sakte), to the South of Manipur boundary line. The whole tribe seem to be practically independent, and not to have affected at all by the Treaty of 1834”¹³.

Thus, we can say that, in settling the border problems of Manipur and its neighbouring areas, the claim made by Manipur Raja and Burman was taken in to consideration. Where as the Sakte tribe who are also independent during that time were not even consulted. Had the British also consulted the Sakte in this matter, they might also come up with their own claim which was regarded by them as their territories.

⁹ Laldena: *Kuki Rebellion 1917-1920*. in Dr. Laldena (ed.) *History of Modern Manipur (1826-1949)*, 1991. Orbit Publishers Distributors, New Delhi. P-45.

¹⁰ Pamberton, without proper geographical survey draw a boundary line.

¹¹ *ibid.* P-45.

¹² Mackenzie: *The North-East frontier*. P-172.

¹³ *ibid.* P-173.

B) ANNEXATION OF MANIPUR AND THE DIVISION OF THE HILL AND THE VALLEY AREAS:

In 1886, Maharaja Chandra Kirti died leaving behind eight wives and ten sons. So tension arises among the Princes which divided them into two factions. One faction headed by Raja Surchandra, the successor of Chandrakirti, and the other faction by Kulachandra with the help of Tikendrajit. One night, Zillagamba Singh, a Prince who had joined the Maharaja rival faction, along with another Prince Angosna of the same faction stormed the palace. It was because he was deprived of small offices of state which he usually performed and even forbidden to sit in the durbar by the Maharaja. Instead of beating off the intruder, Maharaja Surchandra fled to Cachar. Though Tikendrajit, one of the formidable rival of Maharaja was not involved at the incident, some are of the opinion that, without his consent and backing the two young princes would not have the guts to do so. On learning the news, Mr. Grimwood, the then Political agent gave pass stating that Surchandra had voluntarily abdicated. Though he denied and sought help from the British to restore him on the throne, it had no effect¹⁴.

The British were very much aware of Tikendrajits' popularity. So, they made a proposal to give the throne to Kulachandra and exterminate Tikendrajit from Manipur. They plot a plan to arrest him but failed, so they went on and attacked the palace to arrest him, by any means. This provoked the people to resort to massacre of the British officers who had used violence first. The killing of five British officers prompted the Government of India to send more contingence to Manipur. To this effect, three columns of army advanced into Manipur from Kohima, Silchar and Tamu. They entered into Imphal without any resistance.

¹⁴ J. Roy: *Manipur*. P-109.

After the end of the war the India government declared that the state of Manipur had become forfeit to the Crown, but the Queen permitted reestablishment of native rule under minor Raja on suitable ground.¹⁵ The Sanad¹⁶ of Governor General, in council, 18th September 1891, selected Churachand Singh, son of Chowbiyaima with the title, Raja of Manipur. The Sanad provided for the complete subordination of Manipur state to the Queen Empress of the British. As written in the Sanad “—the permanence of the grant conveyed by this Sanad will depend upon the ready fulfillment by you and your successors of all orders given by the British government, with regard to the administration of your territories, the control of the tribes dependant upon Manipur, the composition of the forces of the state and any other matters in which the British government may be pleased to intervene. Be assured that so long as your house is loyal to the Crown and faithful to the conditions of this Sanad you and your successor will enjoy the favour and the protection of the British government”¹⁷.

Though the British government avoided the term ‘annexation’ the selection of a minor, just 5 years old, Churachand Singh showed their ulterior designs to bring Manipur under the condition which is as good as annexation. It can be seen from the setting up of regency administration during the minority of the young Raja under the control of superintendent and political agents with full powers to introduce any reforms that he considered beneficial but with instruction to pay due regard to the customs and traditions of Manipur and to interfere as little as possible with the existing institutions.¹⁸ The British fully utilized this period of regency (1891-1907) for introducing changes in the

¹⁵ Naorem Sanajaoba: *Manipur Past and Present* (History, Polity and Law). Vol-I. Appendix X(B). Mittal Publications, 1998.

¹⁶ Sanad of the Governor General in Council, 18th September 1891, Simla, H.M. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

administration of the state and make possible arrangement to make sure that after the installation of the Raja the administration will well serve the interests of the British in Manipur. Thus with the assumption of the authority by the Raja Churachand Singh on 16th May 1907, Manipur darbar was revived and the British regency came to an end.

The revived Durbar consisted of Raja as an ex-officio president, a vice president who was always a British officer, and six members of which three were ordinary in charge of departments and the other three without any portfolios. All of them were native Manipuris. But later the Raja handed the presidentship to the vice-president and remained as an advisor, since then the Vice-President's office was cancelled.

In relation to the hill tribes, it was thought necessary by the British to exclude the hill tribes under the control of the Durbar and entrust the hills administration to the vice-president (later changed to the President). Thus, the hill areas administration was directly under the British officer, not under the control of the Manipur Durbar. Even before the Anglo-Manipuri War (1891), the hill tribes were not administered by the Raja of Manipur rather they enjoyed independent status under the tribal village chief. The Raja sometimes sent armed expeditions as a reprisals against raid by the hill tribes on the valley people. The British abolished Lallup¹⁹ and slavery and introduced house tax Rs.2/- in the valley and Rs.3/- in the hill areas. They also introduced land tax Rs.5/- in the valley areas. So, the Raja could no longer exact tribute from the hill tribes, as it (the hill areas) was kept under the British who levied house tax. Thus, the valley areas and the hill areas, under the British was divided and kept under different administration.

¹⁹ Lallup means forced labour.

C) THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN THE HILL AREAS AFTER ZOGAL (KUKI-UPRISING 1917)

The Kuki uprising of 1917 has a great impact in the hill areas administration. It went through changes with the introduction of certain reforms. The immediate cause of the uprising was, the objection of the Kuki chiefs to allowing their subjects to be sent to war fronts with the labour corps which had been raised for the second time during the 1st World War. But, the forcible recruitment of the Kukis for the 2nd labour corps served as an occasion rather than as the cause of the uprising.²⁰

Before the recruitment also, the Kuki chiefs had the feelings that their authority got threatened with the introduction of British administration under the President of the Durbar. The imposition of the colonial bureaucratic structure upon the traditional tribal administration greatly undermined the authority of the Kuki chiefs.²¹ This new system of administration was looked upon by the tribal chiefs as a depletion of their privileges. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the chiefs in the Zo society had the privilege of collecting taxes (most of them in kind) among their subjects. When the house tax was introduced by the British, the burden of each of the household was multiplied.

When the 1st World War broke out the British government asked the province of Assam to raise labor corps from amongst the hill people in Manipur. But, the Kukis of

²⁰ Laldena: *Christian missions and colonialism :A study of missionary movement in north-east India with particular reference to Manipur and Lushai hills 1894-1947*. 1988. P-39. Hereafter cited as Laldena: Christian mission and colonialism.

²¹ *ibid.* P-39.

Manipur were quite unwilling to leave their country and go to unknown places²² though the British political agent tried to convince and recruit for the labor corps, the chief did not allowed their subjects to be sent to the war front. It is difficult to say why the chief declined to comply with the orders of the British political agent. Some are of the opinion that it is because of the tribal economic system that requires substantial number of labourers. As Webster (Secretary, Foreign Affairs, Government of India) in his letter to the Secretary to the Central Recruiting Board, Simla said that, “cultivation in the hills is a very laborious process and the chief commissioner is informed that already the absence of a large member of able bodied men has in some localities caused a restriction of the cultivated areas”²³.

This cited reason seem to be far from true because they were given a choice by the political agent to comply to the order, i.e., to send labor or force would be used Yet, they did not want to obey order, so they tried to negotiate by paying some money. But it did not work out, though they actually offered to the political agent Rs.1500/-, three gongs and one Mithun as **Salam**²⁴. Had it been that they grudged and let the able labourers go for corps due to economic reason, they would also like to avoid war that would take a heavy toll of human life. In spite of all these and the knowledge of the strength of the British they chose to disobey and that led to war. All these show that they did not accept the hegemony of the British into their territory, as they never had been ruled by others. It can be seen also on one very popular song even to this today, which was composed by one of the leaders during the uprising, which is as follow:

²² J. Roy: *Manipur*. P-138.

²³ Goutam Bhadra: *Kuki uprising-its nature and causes*. Man in India. Vol-55 No.1, 1975. P-15.

²⁴ Laldena: *The Kuki Reballion, 1917-1920*. P-120.

Tuizum Mangkang kiil bang hing khang;

Zota kuol zil bang hing liing e.

Zota kuol zil bang hing liing e,

Pienna Ka gamlei hi e;

Naamtem hiam a I zogam laal ka naw;

Sansiin zeel e;

Ngalliem vontawi ka zaulou laai e.

Which translates as:

In ceaseless waves came the white from across the sea.

It did quiver the Zoland with the tremor of earthquake

Grudge I bear to part with;

Its my birth place.

Stain with blood is the sword;

That has beaten the intruder in Zoland

Mighty soldier, I dare fear not.

Thus, the above song reflects their sense of being independent. It is clear from the song that they did not regard themselves as in rebellion, rather, saw themselves as defending their land from the intruder (British).

After the British suppressed the uprising they adopted a policy of decentralization of administration. The most significant outcome of the uprising was the over all reorganization of administration with the suggestion made by the Chief Commissioner of Assam in his letter to the Viceroy, 19th April 1919. The hill areas of Manipur was divided into four, each sub-division was placed under the charge of an European sub-divisional officer who was directly accountable to the President of the Durbar except some areas of Mao and Maram, Mombi areas in the South East and various tribes of the hills bordering the valley. They continued to be administered directly from Imphal under the President

because of good communication and financial question. The other three areas are – the South West under B.C. Gasper, headquartered at Songpi (but changed the name to Churachandpur); the Western division under William Shaw, headquartered at Tamenglong; the Northeast division under L.L. Peter headquarter at Ukhurul. Under this new rules, the President is equivalent to District Magistrate whereas the sub-divisional magistrate who were also of the first class as in the Indian Criminal Procedure Code 1898. This administrative system was used without any change till 1947.

D) THE COMING OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND CONVERSION OF THE ZOS:

In 1894, William Pettigrew came to Manipur as a Missionary of Arthington Aborigine Mission. He stayed at Imphal under the protection of the political agent. When he started preaching the Gospel the valley people, i.e. the Meiteis, did not like it, rather they resented it because they had already been converted to Vaishnavite Hinduism by the Royal Edict of 1705²⁵. So, the then political agent Maxell was compelled by the prevailing situation to serve ultimatum to Pettigrew to work in the hill areas center at Ukhurul.

In Ukhurul, as the Arthington Aborigine Missions sponsorship period had expired, he worked for the American Baptist Mission Union. He set up school and preached the Gospel among the people, from that school many non - Tangkhul also got benefit in the field of education. The Gospel was spread in the northern part of Manipur from there. In the South, which was bordering Lushai hills (now Mizoram) the Welsh missionaries began working. In November 1909, Mr. Watkin Roberts sent one hundred

²⁵ op cit.

and four copies of the Gospel of John (a portion of the Bible), translated by Rev. Lorrain and Rev. Salvidge, 1890 – 97 in Lushai language, to many villages.²⁶ One copy reached the Chief of Senvon, Mr. Khamkolun, but since he did not know what to do with the Scripture he invited Mr. W. Robert who was working at Lushai hills under the Welsh Mission to come and preach²⁷. It was from this time the Zos living in the Southern part of Manipur received the Gospel. It was not by the Christian Missionaries from the West that Christianity spread over the hill areas rather it was with the local evangelist, the newly converted who had the zeal to preach to their brothers and sisters about their new found faith. The local churches taking up the task of evangelism and the revival movement at the churches were responsible for the mass conversion into Christianity within a short span of time in the hill areas of Manipur.

In Manipur many of the hill tribes, were converted into Christianity within a short span of time. There is no other religion except Hinduism with which they came into contact, before the coming of Christianity. But Hindu religion that stratified the Hindu society along the Brahmanical line never attracted them. And also 'the Hindu people in the neighboring plains had always looked down on the hill-men as barbarians and given the nature of Hindu society they would, (if at all) have been assimilated at the lowest social levels²⁸. So, it is interesting to know why Christianity was accepted without much difficulty? What can be the reason for this? For the first question we can say that, it is because the new convert were not treated as a lower caste rather treated like a newly found lost brother. They have a rather high status within their social community as they

²⁶ D. Khaizalian: *Tangthupa thuma leh tun nung thu* (Before and after the advent of the Gospel). 1986. P-71.

²⁷ *ibid.* P-72.

²⁸ F. S. Downs: *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*. P-179.

were taught how to improve their well-being. Regarding the reason why mass conversion into Christianity was without much difficulty can be discussed in the following heads, namely, (1) Traditional religious background, (2) Presentation of the Gospel in their cultural context and (3) Christianity was seen as social mobility.

1. The Zo Traditional Religion:

The reason why the Zo people have mass conversion into Christianity without much difficulty lies in their old religious background. The Zo traditional religion has a distinctive character that is different from other primitive religion. It can be regarded as animism in a way but in a true sense it also has a character of a developed religion. As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, the Zos are Tibeto–Burman, the offshoot of Tibeto – Chinese, linguistically. The Tibeto–Burman history testifies to the fact that the ancestors of the Tibeto–Burman people once believed in only one supreme being. But in course of times, the belief seems to have split into numerous deities residing in different areas and realm. Yet, the primary belief is still retained in the form of moral life that the Zos are leading in modern life.²⁹

They called the Supreme Being **Pasian** or **Pathian**, which is translated as God. Later in the Bible translation also, “**Pasian**” was used for God. They believed that “God is good”. He gives good health, richness (Wealth), children and other human wishes. God is never cruel and never hurt people. Therefore Zo people never sacrifice or offer anything to appease God.³⁰ Even in their folktale “**Neino leh Nantal**”, God of heaven sided **Nantal** while he was fighting with the **Tomi** (Tiger Man).³¹

²⁹ Siing Khaw Khai: *Zo People and their Culture: A historical, cultural study and critical analysis of Zo and its ethnic tribes*. 1995, Khampu Hatzaw Publications, New Lamka(G), Manipur. P-158.

³⁰ Vumson: *Zo history (with an introduction to Zo culture, economy, religion and their status as an ethnic minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh)*. P-16. Hereafter cited as Vumson: *Zo History*.

³¹ Dr. G. Zamzachin: *Paite Tanchin*. 1992. P-198.

The Zos believed in the existence of soul and life after death. They have the concept of paradise that they called **Gungal** or **Pialral**. Though they did not know what is hell, they have a place called **misikhua**(dead man's abode). Everyone was doomed to go to **misikhua** if they are not a '**thangsuah**'. **Thangsuah** can be equated with 'salvation', but not everyone can achieve the status of **thangsuah**. For a man to earn this status, they (Zos) have two ways as mentioned by Baveja, namely; by hosting a merit feast i.e. **Tong/Chawng/Khuangchawi** and or by brave act. The '**Thangsuah**' earned by the first way is called **Lamthangsuah**, whereas the '**Thangsuah**' earned by the second way is called **Ramlamthangsuah**. The **Ramlamthangsuah** can be attained by killing blacksnake, bear, barking deer and male wild boar and a deer of small variety and he must sleep with a virgin girl.³²

From the above, we can see that for the Zos there are two ways to attain '**thangsuah**' to go to **Gungal** (paradise). It is next to impossible for the common folk to **Thangsuah**, though it is open for everyone whether rich or poor. For the rich can attain paradise through either of the ways mentioned above, whereas the poor can attain it only by some brave act. It was their belief that only **thangsuah** go to **Gungal** where as others were doomed to go to **misikhua**. The difference between **misikhua** and **gungal** is that, in **gungal** they do not have to work anymore whereas in **misikhua** people still have to work.

Thus, it can be said that the Zo society with their religious belief system was a very fertile soil to sow the seed of Christianity where everyone who believed in Jesus Christ have a place in '**Gungal**'. According to L. Keivom, a reknown writer among the Zo people, to switch over to Christianity which opened the gate of salvation and **pialral** (**gungal**) to everyone and all would be most appealing.

2. Indigenisation of Gospel Presentation:

The presentation of the Gospel in the Zo cultural context or indigenisation of Gospel presentation is also one of the reasons that facilitate mass conversion of the Zos into Christianity. The Christian missionaries attributed their success to the work of Holy Spirit of God. Many a time they also were faced with a problem that even discourage them, but the love of God which was with them encourage them to share that message of love among the people. So, they did not just preach the Gospel, rather they even helped them in many ways like – medication, education etc. It was not just preaching of the love of God, but they also showed their love toward them that won the heart of the people.

The newly converted were very enthusiastic about preaching the Gospel and their new experience. They make use of the Zo culture and their belief system to make them understand about the Gospel teaching. L. Keivom noted that ‘more Zo people were brought into the Christian fold by the Zos evangelists than by non-Zo missionaries. The Holy Spirit used Zo cultural wand to touch the hearts of the Zo people. It work much better than using the wand of Christianised western culture tended to conform the believers to the forms, rituals and discipline of established churches and made them caged Christian with little or no freedom to express themselves.’³³

The following are some of the selected elements or concepts or doctrine of Christianity that the evangelists make them clear through their old beliefs.

a) Cross:

The Zos did not know what is cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. The missionaries take ‘**temtak**’ as an example. **Temtak** was used to mark the portion that is

³³ L.Keivom: *Impact of our traditional culture on today's youth* (Seminar paper presented at, one day youth Orientation cum Seminar). Zomi Christian Fellowship, Delhi, 1997.

already reserved for the site of Jhum cultivation. It is made like cross by cutting some small tree on the top and felling all the branch, from the top separate the tree into two in vertical and keep a straight stick in a horizontal in between.

b) Sacrifices:

The Zos know very well the importance of blood and why sacrifices are offered. So, when the evangelists told them Christ sacrifice his life and shed his blood for the remission of their sins they can understand easily.

c) Holy Spirit:

Liankhohau wrote that, the Paite animists who believed their souls went to **pialgal(gungal)**, some kind of heaven beyond the river under the protection of the spirit of eagles and flying squirrels they killed during their lives on earth. The evangelist preach them that Holy Spirit will guide them on the way to heaven not only that even on earth he will help you if you accept Jesus.

d) Redemption:

It is their custom that if domesticated animals trespass into the cornfield or garden of another and is caught by the garden owner. The owner of the animal is bound to redeem it on payment according to the term of the aggrieved.

e) Sin from Adam:

The Zos were very much aware of some kind of inherited diseases that came down from generation to generation. When they were told the nature of sin which was inherited from Adam as a result of his disobedience and the impending punishment of going to the everlasting lake of fire by comparing it to inherited diseases, they could somehow make them understand their helpless situation.

f) Jesus died for their sins:

It is very difficult to make understand what does this sentence means which is one of the most fundamental in the Christian faith. By comparing the scapegoat and Jesus they could make them understand. When the heathen performed a sacrifice for an insane person, the sacrificial domesticated animal was not killed but was rather let loose in the woods, supposing that the demon which is in the insane person would enter in the sacrificial animal and be carried away.

3. Christianity as Social Mobility:

When some of the Zos got converted into Christianity, they were asked to give up 'Zu' (rice beer). So, they stopped not only drinking but also stopped preparing, which helped them to have even surplus foodgrain. The missionaries taught cleanliness and some sort of handicraft. They were also given education and those young educated were inducted in the Government services or employed as evangelists. Therefore, they appeared far better off than the others. With the increase of the Christian population and churches, those areas where Christianity was not popular were treated as backward (dark) areas by the Christians.

Only a few Christians were in those areas that were regarded as backward (dark) areas. They were ashamed of being regarded as coming from backward areas. They could also see that people from a certain area were progressing with increase of Christian population. In relation to this, the establishment of Jou Christian Church (JCA), would be a good example. According to Kaizakham, JCA was the result of the discussion of three gentlemen, namely: Kaizakham, Thonghang and Semkhopao. In 1952, these three

gentlemen who were students in Imphal at that time, came together and had a discussion on why Zou/Jou gam (Jou areas) was regarded by others as backward (dark) areas? They came to the conclusion that, others called their areas backward and despised because the proportion of Christian among the Jou community was very less. So, they planned to establish one church in the Jou areas. On the 20th February 1954 Jou Christian Association was founded at Daizang.³⁴ Thus, from the above example we see that how some section of the Zo people saw Christianity as a mean to attain higher level of social status. They used Christianity as a mean of vertical social mobility.

E) IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON ZO CULTURE :

The Zo people were divided by international boundaries and place them into three countries—Burma (Myanmar), Bangladesh and India, but their cultures know no boundary. The impact of Christianity on Zo culture can be studied in two aspects – the cultural practices that were abandoned totally due to conversion into Christianity and the practices that were continued with modification according to the tenet of the Christian teaching. The practices which are thought to be against the teaching of the Bible was discouraged by the missionaries and some were even abolished by the Government. As the Christian missionaries were from the west, they were always ethnocentric because of their better scientific knowledge, taught the Zos to be more rational. They introduced Christianity that was already molded and tempered by the western society and clothed and package in white culture. Naturally therefore whoever had received the Gospel was supposed to accept it with the package and the wrapping³⁵.

³⁴ D. Kaizakham: “*Jou Kristian Association Kipatna*”, in Tapidaw, Zomi Kristian Church (1954-1994) Souvenir, 1994. Churachandpur, Manipur. P-27.

³⁵ L.Keivom: *Impact of our traditional culture on today's youth* (Seminar paper presented at, one day youth Orientation cum Seminar). Zomi Christian Fellowship, Delhi, 1997.

The religious aspect of the Zo culture was mostly eroded by the coming of Christianity among them. Any practices related to their religion are abandoned. The missionaries also as far as possible did not want to discard the social practices and institution that has no relation with their religion, in view of preserving their (Zos) identity. In fact the major socio-cultural and political institution disappeared not because the missionaries and Christian disapproved of them but as an inevitable consequence of the imposition/introduction of an alien value system through Government regulation. With the conversion of the Zo people into Christianity some of their cultural practices and even some social institution were directly or indirectly abolished or discouraged by the Government or the Christian missionaries. The cultural practices which are very prominent or important but abandoned are: **kithoihna** (sacrifice or propitiation or exorcise), **tong/chawng/khuangchawi** (merit feast) and head hunting. All these were abandoned because these are related to the old religious practice. We will discuss one by one as follows:

1) *Sacrifices:*

The Zo traditional religion is centered around blood and sacrifices. They did not have temple, which set apart for worship, but they have altar for their blood sacrifice. Sacrifice can be broadly divided into two: sacrifice to worship benefactor and sacrifice to propitiate certain evil spirits and demons that surrounded them. The former kinds of sacrifice are:

- a) **Tual bawl/tual biakna** (communal sacrifice)
- b) **Pusha** (ancestor worship)
- c) **Sumtawng thoih** (worshipping household benefactor).

The latter kinds of sacrifice are many but all of them are the same in a way, as they all are related to the offering of the evil spirit and demons that harm them. It was their belief that some objects like trees, mountain, and river etc. have possessed spirit.

a) *Tualbawl or Tual biakna (communal sacrifice) :*

This is a sacrifice offered to ‘**Khuasiam**’ (the village benefactor) for good harvest, good health, good catch of games, etc. this was done by the whole village where the village priest performed the sacrifice. The sacrifice was performed at the village altar, which was set up usually at the center of the village, by the founders of the village.

b) *Pusha biakna (ancestor worship):*

This sacrifice was done not to appease the evil spirit rather to seek the blessing to the ‘**sha**’ of their ancestors. The term **Pusha** is used to designate the luck or luck givers of their ancestors, it was their belief that in the olden days father, grandfather, great-grandfather could give a blessing to their children, nephews etc.³⁵ **Pusha** is a combination of two words – **Pu** and **Sha**. The former one ‘**Pu**’ means grandfather and the later one ‘**sha**’ means a ‘spirit’. But when it is used as ‘**Pusha**’ it means more than just a mere spirit. According to Singkhawkhai, who wrote “The Zo people and their culture”, ‘**sha**’ is a holy spirit like a force which reinforces the weak soul of man. In other words ‘the keeper of men.’ So, **Pusha** worship is applied to the worshipping of the ego’s pedigrees’ ‘**sha**’

³⁵ P.L. Mung Naulak: *Khanglu Ngeina* (Old Customs), 1999. P-2.

from generation to generation which was believed to be their ancestors' benefactor. When the 'Zo's' in Tedim areas (Burma) say " a '**sha**' in pai" they mean 'his **sha** has forsaken him'. This was their belief that if a person is forsaken by his '**sha**', misfortune would befall on him. For e.g. if a person committed a murder they say alas! it must be his **sha** has forsaken him. In short, '**Pusha biakna**' is a worshipping of the 'spirit' – who keep and bless them or the benefactor spirit, which was also worshipped by their ancestors from generation to generation during their lifetime, to receive blessing from their all ages '**sha**' by sacrificing animal.

c) Sumtawng thoih (sacrifice offered to the God that live at Sumtawng--a place where they keep paddy pounding instruments like mortar, pestle, etc.):

This sacrifice was offered to the household benefactor. The origin of this practice is traced back to the story of '**Thangho and Liando**'³⁷ **Thangho and Liando** were brothers, when they are still a minor their father died and their mother left them. They became so poor that they do not have anything to eat. Once, **Tanglaunu** or some called **Dawikungpi**, visited them and made them rich. After staying with them for sometime, one day while talking to them she disappeared at their sumtawng. She said to them that, sons if you need me in the future worship your **sumtawng** with your piglet. So, until the coming of Christianity they sacrifice a piglet to worship her (**Tanglaunu**) at **sumtawng** every year.

³⁷ D. Khaizalian: *Tangthupha tun ma leh tun nung thu* (Before and after the advent of the Gospel), 1986. Lamka, Manipur. P-5.

d) Propitiation :

Animal was sacrificed for every sickness to appease the spirit that make the person sick. It was their belief that every sickness was caused by the evil spirit – the spirit of the jungle (gam kaupi or ram huai), spirit of the river, spirit of the mountain etc. So as to appease they sacrifice pig, dog, goat etc. in many different ways according to the spirit that caused the sickness.

2) **Tong**:

The other practice that was related to their old religious system is ‘**tong**’. The term ‘**tong**’ is used for ‘merit feast’ in the Zo society. This was practised by the rich to gain the **Thangsuah/thangchhuah** status. As already mentioned only thangsuah go to **gungal**(paradise). ‘**Tong**’ is an act of hosting the whole village community with a big feast by killing mithun. So, after becoming Christian they no longer need the status of **Thangsuah** to go to paradise. Thus, the practice of **Tong** in the old sense was abandoned. But, this practice takes a new shape in the Zo Christian society. It could be seen during the time of Christmas, Easter Sunday or new year celebrations, some of the rich people feed the whole of their church member in celebration of the occasion.

3) **Head hunting**:

The practice of head hunting was not uncommon among the primitive tribes. It has the sanction of their religion. Among the Zo people also, the practice related to their religious belief. They believed in life after death

either in **gungal** or **misikhua** (across the river or dead men abode). According to their belief that if a person is not a **Thangsuah** he was doomed to go to **misikhua** where he would still have to work. They believed that all the heads that a man can collect during his lifetime would serve him in the **misikhua**. In other words, it can be said that they are hunting for a slave for their future abode.

The cultural practices and social institution which were directly or indirectly abolished or discouraged by the government or Christian missionaries are: 1) Drinking **Zu** (rice beer); 2) **Haam/zawlbuk** and 3) **Tokai** or **bawi** system.

1. Drinking Zu (rice beer): In the Zo culture 'zu' plays a very important role in the process of social interaction. They drink and get drunk in any social activities such as: bride price negotiation, **khuado paw**i (festival), **tong/chawng** (merit feast), any sacrificial rites etc. To show their hospitality they serve 'zu' to their visitor or guest, which they called 'zuluup'. The importance of 'zu' could be seen from the names or terms of some of their social practices or activities, such as: **Puzukholh**, **zutholpia**, **zutholleh**, **kotkahzu**, **lawmzunek**, etc. From all these practices the first three are still practiced, but the 'zu' is no longer used for the purpose. The place of 'zu' is taken over by tea but the names of these practices are still termed with 'zu'. The first one, 'Puzukholh' is practiced as before. It is the practice where someone served 'Zu' (now replaced by tea) his mother's father or brother or wife's father or brother. In return, his family received blessing from them. The second one and third one is relating to marriage proposal. The first one 'zutholpia' means 'giving zu bottle', but in cultural sense it means making proposal to a girl for marriage. When the girl does not accept the proposal

her family has to return the 'zuthol', i.e., 'zutholleh'. So, 'zutholpia' and 'zutholleh' is done by serving **zu**.

The Christian missionaries discouraged the use of 'zu' as they get drunk whenever they drink without knowing the limit, and create lots of problems within the society. By forbidding 'zu' the missionaries were drawing a line between Christian and non-Christian. Making rice beer consumed a large quantity of rice, so they hardly had a surplus. When the missionaries forbid them the making of 'zu' they became well off than before economically.

2. Haam or Zawlbuk (Bachelors' dormitory): The place where all the male youths in a village are sleeping together is called Haam or Zawlbuk. This dormitory was very important in those days as they are always under the threat of war. So all the boys are already together in case of emergency. Before formal education was introduced by the Christian missionaries this is the place where the boys get their education. They were trained for the role of adulthood, and also taught the art of warfare, wrestling etc. The elders inculcated the value of '**phattumngaihna**' or '**tlawmngaihna**' in the mind of the youths. Some try to equate the word '**phattumngaihna**' with altruism and others with chivalry. In short '**phattumngaihna**' is 'caring of others more than oneself'.

It was not that the western missionaries encouraged the abolition of this institution rather by the native evangelist. As they are also brought up from there they know the reality, which are not manifested outside. As the Bible became yardstick for everything, so the evangelists who judge everything according to the Bible no longer like it and advocated its abolition. Thus, in Mizoram the **zawlbuk** disappeared along with its patron-

institution, chieftainship in 1954 by the act of the Government of Assam. Even in Manipur it disappeared slowly with the increase of Christian population.

3. Tokai or Bawi System: The western missionary like Frazer equated this system with slavery system. The Zos have different terms regarding this system but Tokai and Bawi were mostly used in the Zo territory. In Northern Chin hills and southern part of Manipur they used the term '**Tokai**', whereas Bawi was used in the southern part of Chin state (Chin hills) and Lushai Hills (Mizoram). In Falam and Haka (Khalkha) areas the term '**Bawipa**' is used for 'Lord', the suffix '**Pa**' signifies 'male', where as the other term '**tokai**' means 'becoming Lord'. The word '**Topa**' means 'Lord', the suffix '**Pa**' signifies male and '**kai**' means 'becoming'. In short, we can say that the chief or rich man became '**To**' or '**Bawi**' for those whom he gave a membership of his household. For the Zos the eldest brother in a family is called '**To**', so, when a person take in some orphans into his household he become their eldest brother i.e. '**To**'. This system of taking some poor orphans or family into one's household member is called '**tokai**' or '**bawi system**'. In its original form this system is rather a noble deed by the chief or rich man. So, if it is equated with slavery system it might have gone through some changes from its original usage.

In the previous chapter we have mentioned '**tosagawh**' where the younger brothers killed animals in honour of his eldest brother – '**To**'. In fact, the younger have to fulfill this obligation in order to get a separate household with separate household council of his own. As long as he did not fulfill this everything he has belongs to his eldest brother even he himself. This '**tokai**' system also has the same relation between the person who give refuge and who took shelter, with the relation between the eldest brother

(‘To’) and the younger brothers in a family. Those who took shelter to the ‘tokai’ are also becoming the member of the household. So, if he wanted to get away from the system, in the same way as the younger brother perform ‘tosagawh’, he also has to kill animal in honour of his ‘to or bawi’, but this act has different term called ‘kitankhia’ which means ‘self-redeeming’.

In the olden days, a village was mostly of a clan. Heterogeneous society was seldom found in early stages of the Zo migration to the hills but developed in the later stages of history.³⁸ Most probably, the tokai or bawi system was originated during the time where in a village only a clan lives together. There, the clan chief who was also the chief of the village look after the orphans and some criminals taking refuge to him, as his own household members, as all of them are of the same clan or related.

In the second aspect of impact of Christianity on Zo culture, we will deal with the cultural practices that are continued with some modification or by shedding its religious significance. Such practices are: funeral and wedding rite, lengkhawm and khuado/kut.

1) Funeral and Wedding Rites:

This rite is one of the most elaborated as practice by the Zos. Sometime it even takes more than a week to prepare for the funeral. If the family of the deceased did not have the things that the dead has to bring along with him or there is no one to take over the charge of director (**vaihawmding**), they cannot bury the body. So they have a temporary burial at their house backyard. When everything is ready they buried with complicated rite, killing animal and offer the body some of the meat. They kept the animal intestine (cooked) in the left hand and livers in the right hand of the dead. If a

³⁸ Vumson: *Zo History*. P-8.

'**thangsuah**' died they even dried the body by desiccating at the side of fire, this is called '**kuangup**'. There are other rituals such as dancing with the body etc.

But after becoming Christians they abandoned many of the elaborate practices. The Pastor took over the role of the priest (**siampu**), the church members as well as the village youth took over many of the tasks that are supposed to be done by a selected few from the household council. People came together at the house of the dead and sing together—'**lengkhawm la**' (a Christian hymn), they do the same thing as before they became Christian, but everything is Christianized. In short we can say that Christianity is indigenised as well as Zo culture is Christianised.

In the same way wedding rite was Christianised. Before they became Christians, the clan priest '**beh siampu**' performed or administered the rite by sacrificing a fowl. He chanted ('**phuisam**') and addressed all those spirits dwelling around them, as they believe. He asked those spirits to bless the new couple. He checked the liver of the fowl and predicted the couple's marriage life. After they were converted into Christianity Pastor took over the role of '**siampu**', and the marriage is done at the church with exchanging marriage vows as well as rings. It is done with singing and prayer.

2.Lengkhawm:

This is one very unique feature of Christianity among the Zo people, which is found nowhere else in the world. The literal meaning of '**lengkhawm**' is 'coming together'. But, when they say '**lengkhawm**' it is not just a mere coming together rather singing together, accompanied by drums, mithun-horns, etc. of Christian hymn in typical Zo tune to worship God of creation. The song are called '**lengkhop la**', these are

indigenous hymns composed by native Christians during revival waves. These hymns are sung in a very unique tune unlike western hymn. The tune of the new hymns were invariably a synthesis of western and Zo traditional tunes but sung typically in Zo ways.³⁹

This **lengkhawm** replace singing old traditional song. When somebody dies, it is the custom of the Zo people that the villagers and relatives will come together at the house of the bereaved family; some will bring **zu** (rice beer) as a token of their condolence. They drink and sing to console the bereaved family. So, even today this practice was continued by singing **lengkhawm** songs, which are Gospel songs composed by native Christians.

3. Khuado/Kut:

There are a number of terms given to this festival, but here 'khuado' will be used as this term has the meaning of the festival. The term 'khuado' is a combination of two words – 'khua' and 'do'. The meaning of 'khua' can be many like – climate, village, nature etc, all these can be put together under nature. The word 'khua' is taken out from 'khuazing', a god who is regarded as the adversary of the god of heaven, or from 'khuasiam' who is the village benefactor. So 'khua' represents their god. The word 'do' has two meanings – it can be fight or hosting. Therefore 'khuado' has two meanings, as it lasted for minimum three days, so they do many things together in this **Khuado** festival.

In the first day they kill pig and perform many rituals. In the second day they drive out demons and evil spirits that fulfill the first meaning of 'do' i.e. fight. In the first

³⁹ L. Keivom: *Impact of our 'traditional culture on today's youth*. (Seminar paper presented at one day youth orientation-cum-seminar). Zomi Christian Fellowship, Delhi, 1997.

day they feed or host the spirit of the departed souls. They also asked a blessing from 'Khuasiam' village benefactor.

After converting into Christianity they abandoned this festival. But with the passage of time the Government of India fixed 1st November for Kut festival. But the significance of the festival take a new shape and it is to observe as a mere merry making day and celebrated without observing the ritualistic importance.

CHAPTER-III

TRIBE IDENTITY FORMATION AND EMERGENCE

OF CROSS-CUTTING IDENTITY

In the previous chapter we discussed two external forces-British imperialists and coming of Christianity, responsible for changes among the tribals in Manipur, particularly, the Zo people. We also discussed how the British administrative policy is responsible for the division of the valley and hill areas. It shows how their (the Zos) old religious belief system and the indigenisation of the Gospel presentation is responsible for the mass conversion into Christianity.

Here in this chapter, we will deal with the tribe-identity formation among the Zo people in Manipur. This chapter will be divided into three section, the first section will deal with the emergence of various dialectal groups, and its transformation into tribe. The second section will deal with segmentation of the Zo people into different tribes. And the third section deals with the emergence of cross cutting identity.

A) EMERGENCE OF DIALECTAL GROUP AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO TRIBE.

We have mentioned in the first chapter, the Zo people once settled at Khampat in the Kale Kabo valley (now in Burma). They were compelled to leave the

Khampat valley settlement due to several reasons like famine, cruel King and Shan invasion. After they left Khampat, they moved toward the South, some group even reached as far as Arakan Yoma. But most of them were settled in the hill areas. So, except some part in Burma most of the Zo inhabited areas is covered with thick forest and hilly terrain that made communication difficult. Once they entered the hill areas, the steep mountains and deep gorges changes the Zo people in many ways. It was hard to find flat land large enough to hold large settlement; as a result, they split up into smaller groups mostly with the same family of clan settling in the same village. Thus, they lost their sense of national identity.¹

For jhuming cultivation the village needs a large tract of land attached to their villages, so as to shift their jhum field from time to time. In jhuming cultivation, the longer the jhum cycle, the better it is for the used jhum field to recovered its fertility. This is one of the reasons why they have infrequent interaction with the people living in another villages as their villages were established quite a long distance apart from each other. Thus, difficulties of communication between the now scattered villages maintaining contact with each other became infrequent. Naturally, therefore, each locality developed its own way of speaking, dressing, manners and customs.²

Some are of the opinion that various dialects emerged because of the tribal feud. As they were always in feud mostly over jhum land and their village boundary, they want to have a distinct way of speaking so as to confuse their enemy in the war. With the passage of time this distinct way of speaking became a distinct dialect, a little drifted from the original language. Though, they speak various dialect their linguistic affinity is

¹ Mangkhosat Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo culture (The encounter between Christianity and Zo culture in Mizoram. 1997, p-42*

² *Ibid: p-42*

discernable even to these days. William Shaw who wrote the Thadou-Kuki, is worth quoting in relation to the linguistic affinity among the various groups of the Zo people. He says “the Koms, Aimols, Khothlangs, Thadous, Lusheis, Chins, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes etc. are undoubtedly all connected. The language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar³.”

From the middle of the 19th Century the Zo society witnessed the rise of paramount chiefs. During these times some of the paramount chiefs encourage one dialect within each of their chiefdom. So dialects were usually identified with the dominant clan, which obviously was the clan of the chief, e.g. Thadou dialect, Lushei dialect etc. The chief who encouraged one dialect was the Sailo chief. It is said that one chief from the Sailo clan, a sub-clan of Lushei, promoted the Duhlian dialect within his chiefdom. As he was a paramount chief, he was successful as his words were law during those days. The ‘Duhlian dialect’ got changed into ‘**Lushei dialect**’ and when the Christian missionaries translated the Bible into ‘**Lushei tawng**’ (Lushei dialect), it goes along with the Gospel. Where the gospel reach the ‘**Lushei tawng**’ also reach. So for the newly converts it was easier to learn ‘**Lushei tawng**’ than English. As Christianity is a literate-religion in which everyone has to read the Bible for his spiritual growth. Thus, Christianity and **Lushei tawng**(now **Mizo tawng**) help in propagating each other. In the same way, it is said that, in the Tedim areas the paramount Sakte chief Pumzamang also admired Teizang dialect and even tried to promote, as a lingua-franca in his chiefdom. But he could not materialise his wish, perhaps because the dialect that was already in use, in his chiefdom was deep rooted.

³ William Shaw: *The Thadou Kukis*, (Reprinted in 1983, first printed in 1929). p-16

We have discussed the reasons for the emergence of various dialects in the Zo society. On the basis of these dialects emerged what can be called dialectal group with the society. Before, they move to the hills from valley settlement, their group identity or group solidarity was based on the clan. So, when they move to the hill areas the clan group moved together and founded a village for their group. Dr. Vumson wrote, “a group of families, usually of one clan and ranging from ten to three hundred people, constituted a village”⁴. This shows that a clan usually lives together in a village and due to certain reasons like feud, infrequent social-intercourse etc. developed a distinct dialect. But with the rise of paramount chief dialectal group was emerged out from a cluster of villages. Thus, dialectal group constituted various clan groups and it usually emerged as a regional identity. So it is possible that a same clan or one clan members may be in a different dialectal groups.

We have discussed how the traditional grouping system of the Zo people is based on clan line. It was when the dialectal group emerged over various clans along with the paramount chief, their neighbours as well as ethnographers, anthropologists and some colonial administrators treated them as a distinct tribe from the other Zos. It could, perhaps, be due to the tribal feuds that occurred frequently. It was already mentioned that after they entered the hill areas, because of infrequent communication and due to lack of social interaction among different villages, they lost a sense of national identity. On those few occasions when they meet it was often in the form of conflict over jhum lands that created and perpetuated clan feud⁵.

⁴ Vumson: *Zo History*, p-8

⁵ Mangkhosat: *Christianity and Mizo culture*. p-42.

In the post colonial period, as social interaction is more frequent with better communication they came to realise that they are of the same stock, having cultural affinity with the same ancestor and a legend of origin. As a result, many social movements or re-unifications of the whole Zo people were started at different corner at different places. An organisation which spearheading such movement worth mentioning is **ZORO (Zo Re-unification Organisation)**, based at Mizoram.

We have discussed how various dialects came into being and how it emerged as a group identity. The problem in Manipur among the Zo people is the confirmation of this dialectal identity as their real social identity by the Government, which resulted in the recognition of tribe on the basis of dialectal group. As already mentioned earlier that the clan identity is their primary social identity and their kinship relation which manifested in the **inndongta**(household council) a social institution formed by clan members of the household as well as some selected few members from different clan. In Manipur, clan-group were not necessarily living in a certain isolated village rather they were dispersed and inter mixed. So, when the Government recognised tribe on the basis of dialectal group, a certain clan group happened to be found in at least more than two or three newly recognised tribes. For instances, Guite clan are present among the Thadou dialect speakers as well as Paite dialect speakers. Ngaihte clan is also among the Paite, Simte, Zou, Thadou, Tedim-Chin, speaking groups, etc. Such is the situation when the Scheduled Tribe list order issued by the President in 1951 and its modification in 1956, recognised tribe on the basis of dialectal groups. Thus, the dialectal group transformed into tribe, because dialect was used as the criteria for tribe recognition.

B) SEGMENTATION OF THE ZO PEOPLE INTO VARIOUS TRIBES:

*“...So far as Assam and Manipur are concerned it was not possible for us to go in details; first, because of lack of communication and want of time and secondly, information in the possession of Government was neither adequate nor up to date...”*⁶ - Backward Classes Commission’s Report, Vol I. 1955.

*“...either they should be classified as a distinct tribe or a sub tribe everywhere. A uniform policy has to be followed every where....”*⁷ –Rishang Keishing.

The President is authorised by the Constitution to issue list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. So the President issued Scheduled Tribes lists order in 1950 under Article 342 of the Constitution. Article 342 (2) provided that the Parliament may, by law amend the list issued or promulgated by the President in relation to Scheduled Tribe. To give suggestion for any changes that might be necessary in the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes lists order, the President as authorised by Article 340 of the Constitution, appointed Backward Classes Commission on 29 January 1953 with Shri Kakasaheb Kalekar as the Chariman. This Commission was formally inaugurated on the 18th March 1953⁸.

The Commission submitted their report on the 30th March 1955. The proposals made by the Commission were contained in Vol-II of their reports. Based on the recommendation made by the Commission the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list order(Amendment) bill was introduced by the Minister of Home Affairs and Heavy

⁶ *Backward Classes Commission report* Vol-I 1955, p-155. Here after cited as BCC Report, Vol-I.

⁷ Rishang Keishing(MP-Outer Manipur): *Loksabha debates.Vol-VIII, Part-II*. 27th August to 13th September, 1956. Thirteenth Session, 1956. Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi. Hereafter cited as Loksabha Debate. P-6103. Hereafter cited as *Lok Sabha Debates*.

⁸ *Backward Classes Commission Report. Vol I, 1955.*

Industries Shri Pandit G B Pant in the Lok Sabha in 1956. Article 342 (2) provided that the Parliament may, by law amend the list issued or promulgated by the President in relation to Scheduled Tribe. When the Bill was tabled in the House of the People, some Members of Parliament (MP) congratulated the Commission Report while some of them asked for reconsideration, as they found some discrepancies in the report, but to no avail. So, when the amendment bill of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list order was passed in the Parliament seven MPs⁹ did not agree with the bill and voted against it. Even they demanded that their names should be recorded. These MPs were mostly from the communities or regions, the bill as amended has affected.

The Scheduled Tribes list (Modification) order, 1956, though it might have been done to preserve the identity of the minorities and give due recognition so that they could enjoy the privileges given to the backward classes by the constitution. But, it rather appeared as playing a divisive role among the tribals especially in Manipur. In Manipur, this modification lists of Scheduled Tribes deleted or excluded the general common names and many segmented new tribes were recognised by the Constitution. For example, the common name like Naga, Kuki, etc. are no longer appeared in the list.

During the colonial period the British Government of India divided the people living in the North Eastern region for administrative conveniences, without any consideration for the people who share common history, culture, ancestor etc. Their territory was cut like a melon and placed them in different administrative units. One of the greatest mistakes committed by the British, that wounded the hearts of the Zo people was the drawing of the International Boundary Line in the middle of the Zo country.

⁹ Lok Sabha Debates. P-6554.

Thus, it hinders social intercourse among them that led to the existence of a wide communication gap. After the British left India, the Government of Free India adopted the North Eastern region as it was, without proper rearrangement of the whole mess created by the British. It is because of this, the report of the backward classes commission was also not without discrepancies as it was based on the mistakes committed by the British colonial master. Even after independence nothing plausible was done so far for the complete solution of the improper territorial arrangement.

In Manipur, the President's Scheduled Tribes list(modification) order 1956, recognised 29 tribes. During the colonial period the British divided the people of Manipur into three groups: the Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis. By the President's Scheduled Tribes list (modification) order 1956, the common name Kuki was excluded and the people were segmented into various new tribes. These new tribes were formed on the basis of dialects or clans. These newly formed tribes were constitutionalised by the Parliament in 1956.

The problem of the hill people in Manipur was not answered by this modification of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list rather it ushered into another face of problem. The first phase of their problem begin with the coming of the British imperialist in their territories. The problem was related with the territorial division for administrative purposes. As for the Nagas, those inhabiting Manipur constitute just a small segment of the total Naga population. The Nagas inhabited areas cover the state of Nagaland and parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura and Burma (Myanmar). Like wise, the Zo people were also divided by States as well as by international boundaries. The Zo people in Manipur are just a segment of the whole Zo population. In the North

Eastern region the Zo people inhabits almost all the States except Arunachal Pradesh¹⁰. Thus, the first phase of their problem started with the division of the regions into many administrative units by the British administrators.

The second phase of their problem open with the President's Scheduled Tribes list order, 1951 and its modification in 1956. From this phase the hill people were not only divided by territorial boundaries but also by tribe boundaries. In Manipur, their common name like Nagas, and Kukis were no longer recognised by the Government, instead they were further segmented into many new tribes. Thus, due to the discrepancies committed by the rulers from time to time, the state witness many social conflicts one after another; yet the government did not take up any constructive measures to completely solve the whole problems.

The very introduction of the concept of 'tribe' for the purpose of the list of Scheduled Tribe on the basis of dialect, especially in the context of the Zo society is very problematic. The Zo traditional society from time immemorial, was grouped on the basis of clan line. The clans were further divided into lineages. Looking back into the history of Zo people, we can see that the state formation was disrupted by the coming of the British. According to Thangkhangin Ngaihte, in his unpublished dissertation which is quoted as follows:-

“ ...the early 19th Century, the history of the Zomi(Zos) witness the rise of paramount chieftainship. In the southern Chin State (the then Chin hills), the Khalkha and Falam paramount chief were the most powerful chief during those days.... In Mizoram (the then Lushai Hills) the Sailo chief were dominating the whole region. In the

¹⁰ Khupzagou: *A critical historical study of Bible translations among the Zo people in North-East India*. 1996. Chin Baptist Literature Board, Churachandpur, Manipur. P-1.

meantime, Khanthum conquered the Tedim country. His successor, Kamhau, conquered the whole areas and became the paramount chief of Tedim country. In what is now the southern Manipur, the Guite chief were gaining authority over the areas and they fought with the Meitei(Manipuris) Raja. In short, the Zomi(Zos) were in the formation stage of state society”¹¹

The British fought with all these paramount chiefs to extend their domination in this region. With the coming of the British the process of forming a state society has an abrupt end. The paramount chiefs were suppressed everywhere. In short, the Zo people were ‘suppressed, divided and oppressed since the British conquered their territory till the present days. During those days, when the paramount chiefs were ruling the Zo country, dialects was never their social identity rather the names of the chiefs or the clan names of the chiefs which were obviously the dominant clan was their social identity. Thus, the traditional social identities of the Zo people are the names of their ancestor that usually becomes their clans name. Like wise, the progenitor of all the clan was ‘Zo’ which then become their generic name.

When the Scheduled Castes and Tribes lists order (amendment) bill was discussed in the Parliament in 1956, Shri Rishang Keishing MP of Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency pointed out the discrepancies of the bill. He demanded to the Minister concerned to use “Uniform policy” everywhere. He in relation to the Tribals, cited some examples to show the inconsistency of criteria which the Backward Classes Commission has used in Assam, Manipur and other states. He pointed out by saying that, in Assam the Hmars were treated as distinct tribe, whereas in Tripura state they were treated as a sub-

¹¹ S. Thangkhagin, Ngaite: *History of the Zomi of Mizoram and the surrounding area. Aspects of pre-colonial society*(Unpublished dissertation),p-93

tribe of Kuki tribe. Again in Manipur, the same Hmar were made an independent tribe, as distinct from Kuki tribe. He also said that, in Assam Thadous, Guites and Sitlhous and so many others have been classified as Kuki. But in Manipur every tribe is independent of the other. In relation to the Naga community, he said that the Tangkhul were treated as independent tribe of the Naga in Manipur. But, in Assam all the subtribes like Tangkhul, Mao, Angami, Lotha, AO, Kabui, Sema etc. come under the main tribe, namely Naga¹². Though he made it clear that there are discrepancies in the list as amended, nothing was done to reconsider.

In defending the bill, Shri Pataskar¹³ mentioned that the amendment was done according to the report of the Backward Classes Commission. The Commission also made their recommendations in consultation with the State Government. So, it was on the basis of the recommendation made by the Backward Classes Commission report that the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list order was amended in 1956. It might have been on the part of the Government as well as the Commission that, by including in the scheduled tribes list the problem facing the backward tribals will be solved as it will enable them to enjoy the privileges given to the backward people by the constitution while preserving their identity. But they were not, perhaps aware of the problem that will arise because of the discrepancies which they have committed. It also even appeared that they were not aware of the fact that they were forming a tribe identity for certain dialectal groups.

In the report of the Backward classes commission 1995; volume-I, it is written that “..... as far as Assam and Manipur are concerned it was not possible for us to go into details, just because of lack of communication and want of time, and secondly,

¹² Rishang Keishing's speech: *Loksabha debates*. P-6103.

¹³ The Minister of Legal Affairs.

information in the possession of government was neither adequate nor upto date”¹⁴

Thus, it is very clearly shown that there is a kind of negligence on the part of the Backward Classes Commission from the above quotation, in dealing with Assam and Manipur. But it is not proper to criticize the commission as their work was done in consultation with the concerned State Government. It rather has to be appreciated as the procedure that they followed was in accordance with the procedure laid down by the constitution.

As constitution authorized the Parliament to amend the President’s Scheduled Caste and Tribes list order. So, with the recommendations made by the Backward Classes Commission, the Scheduled Castes/Tribes list was amended in 1956 by the Parliament. Then what is wrong with the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list (Amendment) Bill? What is wrong with the Commission Report? There is nothing wrong with the Bill nor with the Commission Report. But it did not yield a desirable result. In relation to Manipur, their M.P. from the outer Manipur Constituency raised his voice in the Parliament against not only the Amendment Bill but also against the President order of the Scheduled tribes list 1951. At this juncture, where did things go wrong? To realize the answer to this question one has to look back into the past i.e., the colonial period. As mentioned in the previous chapter most of the state boundaries especially those in the North Eastern region were drawn by the British without much consideration of the people concerned rather it was done according to their own convenience. And also when India got Independence they inherited everything as designed by the British without any proper rearrangement. Thus, in short the discrepancies in the Commission Report or rather in

¹⁴ *op cit.*

the Bill is just the manifestation of the discrepancies that were committed during the colonial period.

The North Eastern region has been crippled in the process of socio-economic development by problems like conflict, insurgency etc. which are the results of the British colonial regime. The people like the Nagas and the Zos are not supposed to be a minority if they were grouped together in a certain territory. The Zo people, especially who are currently about two and a half million if they were not divided by State boundaries will not be minority. But, as mentioned earlier, they were being “suppressed, divided and oppressed, so, they became minority everywhere in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Thus, in short all the problems concerning the Zo people were deep rooted in the colonial history.

C) EMERGENCE OF CROSS CUTTING IDENTITY:

Since the beginning of the Zo settlement in the hills till the British colonial masters left their territory, we could see the existence of two social identities within the Zo society, namely, clan and dialectal identity. We have discussed the importance of clan and its role within the Zo social structure. And, also shown how it emerged as a primary social identity. In the first section of this chapter, we dealt with the emergence of various dialect and dialectal groups; whereas the second section, discuss the application of the “tribe concept” in the Zo society by segmenting them into various tribes. Thus, three social identities emerged within the society that resulted in a situation of confusion and identity crisis, that cannot be properly understood by the outsiders, this led to the

emergence of marginal areas. This concept of marginal areas is unlike that of Clark Wissler who use it for the areas where two cultural areas meet and the people share the features of both the cultures. But here, it is used for the areas where the cross cutting identity existed among the people. It is not a geographical areas rather it is an abstracted area.

After India got independence, the President issued the scheduled tribes lists order in 1951 as authorised by the Constitution. The Parliament amended the list in 1956 and then it is called the Scheduled Tribes list (modification) order. The listing of tribes in the Scheduled Tribes list was a 'Babel Tower' for the Zo people, as for this purpose they were segmented into various tribes. It plays a divisive role among them. It may not be the intention of the Government as well as the Backward Classes Commission to let the listing of tribes in the Scheduled Tribes list to play a divisive role among the Zo people. But, the discrepancies in the process resulted into such undesirable situation. To give any necessary suggestion and recommendation, the President as authorised by the Constitution Article 342(2) appointed the Backward Classes Commission in 1953. The Commission sent to each of the States a questionnaire¹⁵ in relation to their work, in which the criteria for a tribe is mentioned as quoted " The Scheduled Tribes can also be generally ascertained by the fact that they live apart in hills, and even where they live on the plains, they lead a separate excluded existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of the people. Scheduled Tribes belong to any religion. They are listed as Scheduled Tribes because of the kind of life led by them¹⁶."

¹⁵ Ibid. Appendix-II.

¹⁶ Ibid. P-224.

The above criteria did not provide any point for sub-division or segmentation of the existing tribes into various independent tribes. But, what criteria used by the State Governments were not given in the Commission Report. In relation to Manipur, it appeared that the State Government used 'dialect' as a criterion for a tribe in the segmentation of the Zo people(Kuki) into various tribes. As dialect was never the basis of the Zo traditional grouping system the Government could not follow this criterion in a very systematic way.

At this juncture, one interesting question arises is that, why the dialectal criteria cannot be applied systematically? The simple answer is that they are same people living together and having common culture. They practice inter-marriage, share common myths, folklores, legend etc. Even claim common origin from a mythological cave that they called 'Khul/Khur/Chhinlung/Sinlung'. Interestingly, they have linguistic affinity and could converse one another by using their own dialects, unlike the Nagas. As quoted elsewhere, William Shaw wrote that, " the Koms, Aimols, Khothlangs, Thadou, Lushei, Chins, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes etc. are undoubtedly all connected. The language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar¹⁷." Therefore, giving separate independent identities on the basis of dialect was not only mistaken rather contradictory to the Zo traditional base of social solidarity.

The State Government might also have their own reason/reasons for segmenting the Kuki into a number of tribes, as evidence shows that some dialectal groups leaders submitted memorandum to the Centre Home Minister. Those leaders posed as the messiah of their group without any vision for the future, out of their ignorance sought for

¹⁷ Op cit.

the recognition of their group as a distinct tribe. For instance, the Paite National Council had submitted a memorandum, demanding the recognition of the Paite as a distinct tribe of India, dated 18th November 1955, to the Minister, Home Affairs, Government of India¹⁸. But, this memorandum was submitted after the Backward Classes Commission has submitted their report. There are some tribes which were included in the 1956 Scheduled Tribes list (modification) order who did not submit any memorandum, like; Ralte, Sukte etc. Therefore, it is clear that no effort was made by the State Government as well as the Backward Classes Commission to preserve the common name of the Zo people i.e. Kuki (as the British recognised them), instead, they segmented into various tribes.

This segmentation was not only to the Zo people, it was also among the Nagas in Manipur and even in Nagaland. So, Shri Rishang Keishing, MP (outer Manipur Constituency), said in the Parliament while speaking against the Scheduled Castes and Tribes list (amendment) order bill in 1956 that "... there is a strong suspicion in the mind of the tribals... that the Government of India is deliberately avoiding the used of the common name of the tribe, i.e. Naga¹⁹.

In relation to the Zo people, the new tribes included in the President's Scheduled Tribes list order 1951 and the modification list of 1956 was existed as a distinct tribe only in Manipur. They are like; the Simte, Paite, Vaiphei, Thadou, Gangte, Zou, Hmar, Sukte, etc. As a tribe constitutes many clans except some tribes recognised on the basis of clan like Sukte, Ralte, etc. So the Zo people in Manipur have their own clan members in the

¹⁸ Memorandum submitted by the Paite National Council (demanding the recognition of Paite as a distinct tribe of India) to the Hon'ble Home Minister, Govt. of India, on the 18th November 1955, New Churachandpur.

¹⁹ *Loksabha Debates*. P-6104.

neighbouring states and even in Burma (Myanmar) where half of the Zo population are inhabiting in the Western part²⁰. To make it clear we will discuss three selected newly recognised tribes by the Scheduled Tribes List(modification) order 1956, in the following:

1. **Vaiphei:** The clans available among the Vaiphei dialect speaking people are like-Khaute, Baite, Suantak etc. But, the same clan members do not identify themselves as Vaiphei in places other than Manipur. Even in Manipur, those who do not speak Vaiphei do not identify themselves as Vaiphei though they are Khaute or Suantak. It is because Vaiphei is not their progenitor, rather tradition says that it is the name given to those who settled in a village called **Khovaipei**. As they developed a distinct dialect, those who happen to be the descendant of people from **Khovaipei** were called Vaiphei and their dialect is called Vaiphei dialect.

2. **Simte and Paite:** The term Simte means 'Southerners'. It first appeared in a written record in Captain E.W. Dun's *Gazetteer of Manipur* 1886. He mentioned in his book Sumkam as the chief of the Simte²¹. Sumkam was the son of a paramount chief Goukhothang who was betrayed by the Meiteis (Manipuris) and died in 1872 as a captive inside Sankonung jail in Imphal²². Sumkam ruled over a cluster of villages- Mualpi, Tonglawn, Singtam, and Sialbu²³. So, according to Captain Dun the Simte were Guite and their allied clans. Whereas J. Shakespear²⁴ mentioned Guite as Paihte and even used

²⁰ Vumson: *Zo History*. P-.7.

²¹ Captain E. W. Dun: *Manipur Gazetteer*.1867.

²² Dr. G. Zamzachin: *Paite Tanchin*. 1992.p-7.

²³ *Ibid*.

²⁴ J. Shakespear: *The Lushai-Kuki clans*, 1912.

synonymously the name Guite and Paihte. Thus we can conclude that, the Paihte mentioned by Captain E.W. Dun were the same people, who were under the domination of the Guite Chief they are the Paite tribe of the present days.

The problem with the writers during the colonial period was that they were mostly relied on secondhand information or information which they acquired through the neighbours whom they were writing. So, the name with which the people identified themselves was not used; instead, the name given to them by their neighbours were used to identify them. Captain E.W. Dun while writing about the Guite and its allied clans who were ruled by the Guite chief, acquired information most probably through the Thadou speakers or some old Kuki group. As these people called them (Guite and allied clans) Simte(southerners) because of their late migration from the south, Chin hills settlement. Whereas J. Shakespeare wrote about the same people and called them Paihte, as a superintendent in Lushai hills, he acquired information through the Lushei. Sometimes he used Guite and Paihte synonymously. Dr. H.Kamkhenthang wrote that "...the term Paite and originally Paihte in Lushai version, was given by the Hualngo and Lushai with a slantingly degradatory sense to designate (this) Tedim Chin people..."²⁵ So this is how the names Paite/Paihte and Simte originated. Nowadays, Guite are no longer Simte, many of them are in Paite and some are among the Thadou speakers. Whereas the Simte of today are mostly of Ngaihte clan and some other allied clans who

²⁵ H.Kamkhenthang: *The Paite*. P-7.

speak Khuangnung dialect. Some even try to equate Simte and Ngaihte but the Ngaihte clan members who remain behind in Burma from where they migrated to Manipur are not even aware of the name Simte. Thus, in a true sense, Paite as well as Simte are a mistaken identity.

3. **Hmar:** The term 'Hmar' means North. Most probably this term was given to them by the Lushei (Lushai). As Dr. H. Kamkhenthang said, "Lushei people were in the habit of giving names to the ethno-cultural groups according to their choice"²⁶. When we look at the geographical situation where the Hmar people inhabits, it was/is on the northern part of the areas inhabited by the Lushei. One peculiarity of the Hmar identity is that, it is use not only in Manipur state, but even in other states too.

There are several tribes names like-Thadou, Ralte, Sukte, etc. that are appreciable if at all it is inevitable to divide the Zo people in to various tribes, in the sense that those are tribes formed on the basis of clan. Using clan name for a tribe name is not contradictory with the Zo traditional grouping system. As Captain E.W. Dun remarked, "the word clan is undoubtedly the best to apply to the Kuki subdivision"²⁷.

Thus, in the Zo society in Manipur three social identity namely, clan, dialect, and tribe existed together. The clan is the base of social solidarity in the Zo traditional society. The members claim a common ancestor whose name is being use as the clan name. It is further segmented into lineages. The main clans existed for a long time back into their history. But, dialect emerged due to hills settlement that led to infrequent social intercourse due to difficulties in communication from region to region or even village to

²⁶ Ibid. P-7.

²⁷ Captain E.W. Dun: *Manipur Gazetteer*. P-33.

village. So, it is rather a regional identity. In the post colonial period, due to the rise of town and better means of communication, the dialectal group members dispersing in the nook and corner of the Zo inhabited areas or the Zo territory. So, its nature of being a regional identity disappeared slowly and taking up a new shape when the Government recognised tribes by forming tribe on the basis of dialect.

It is not only difficult but also rather impossible to draw a clear-cut demarcation line between the existing tribes. Clan members speak different dialects due to regional differences and they become different tribes member. But, the tie of being members of the same clan cannot wither. The role played by the clan in the functioning of social institutions and as a base of social solidarity covertly cannot be taken up totally by dialect as well as tribe. While, clan is still functioning across the boundaries of dialectal groups tribe was formed on the basis of dialectal group. So, some clans have their members in many tribes and if majority of clan members happen to be in a certain tribe, they claimed their fellow clan members who were minority in other tribe, as their own tribe members. Thus, as a result of such situation there arises a core group inside the existing tribe, formed by the dominant clan or clans, Therefore, many people who are in the marginal areas (as defined before) are marginalised with multi-social identity. All these arise due to the existence of three social identities---clan, dialect and tribe, which cross-cut within the society.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed how the Zo people were suppressed, divided and oppressed since the coming of the British imperialists to their country. It will not be improper to say that the indigenous or tribal people were the worst affected by the colonial system of administration. The problem of nations or sub-nations other than the tribals were solved in one way or the other after they got freedom from the yoke of the colonial rule. The problems of the tribals, which arise in the post-colonial period such as; conflicts, insurgency, territory disputes, identity crisis, etc. were the results of the colonial rule. These problems are mostly concentrated in South East Asian and African regions. The melon-cutting of the territory inhabited by the indigenous people to suit the administrative and political demand of the colonial rule was one of the root cause of the problems facing the tribals today.

The grouping of the tribals according to the grouping system which was alien to them led to an inconsistent situation where the tribal grouping system clash with the alien system. In relation to this problem, Charlotte Seymour Smith wrote the following passage in the context of Africa:

“... the concept of tribe was largely a colonial creation...tribal division and tribal consciousness were largely a creation of the efforts of colonial rulers to impose order and supralocal unity upon previously largely autonomous local communities, and where there was previously a loose and contextually relative sense of ethnic identity, colonial rule often impose a tribal division which then acquired increasing concreteness due to the need to adapt to the administrative and political demand of colonial rule.”¹

¹ Charlotte Seymour-Smith: “*Tribe*” in Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology. 1986. The Macmillan Press Ltd., London and Basing

In the South-East Asian region, especially the north eastern region of India, the situation is of the same as in Africa. The melon-cutting of the territory into various administrative units as well as the introduction of the 'concept of tribe' for grouping the people were historical problems which manifest in many different symptoms in the post colonial period such as; tribal conflicts, re-organisation movement, unification movement etc. Due to this division the same people happens to be under different state governments or even different independent countries. Such is the situation that, when a national or sub-national consciousness stir up the people they shouted for state re-organisation or territorial rearrangement. For example, the Naga demanding for Nagalim, the leaders of ZORO standing for Zo re-unification, etc..

In Manipur, during the colonial period, the British colonial master divided the tribals into two main tribes, namely Nagas and Kukis. But when India got independence from the British colonial government, the new constitution of free India Article 342(1) authorised the President to issue Scheduled Tribe list order. As authorised by the constitution, the President issued the Scheduled Tribes lists order in 1951. By which, the tribals of Manipur got segmented and various new tribe names were included in the Scheduled Tribes list of Manipur, beside, the common name Naga and Kuki. They were further segmented by the scheduled tribes modification list order 1956, which was done on the recommendation of the backward classes commission. In this modification list the common name- Naga and Kuki were excluded from the list. Thus, we can clearly see the divisive role played by the scheduled tribe list among the tribal in Manipur.

The Zo people, who were called Kuki in Manipur by the British colonists were the worst affected by the President's Scheduled Tribes list order. It is difficult to ascertain

the criteria used by the state government, especially for the tribes that were newly included by the 1956 modification list. There are some tribes created and recognised on the basis of dialectal groups like: Paite, Gangte, Vaiphei etc., where as some tribes are created and recognised on the basis of clan like; Thadou, Sukte, Ralte etc.. If the government has to take into consideration the grouping system of the Zo people, the later type of tribes i.e. tribe based on clan, is consistent with the Zo grouping system. The formal type of tribes, as they were recognised on the basis of dialectal groups, has a kind of inconsistency with the Zo traditional grouping system.

When the government recognised tribes on the basis of dialect the importance of dialectal groups got increased. In the Zo society the loyalty of the people to their clan identity cannot be denied, as they are agnates group claiming a common descent from common ancestor. At this juncture, it is even difficult to ascertain whether the loyalty of the people lies on clan or dialectal identity. For instance, there are some who speak Paite dialect but majority of their clans members are in the Zo tribe like Samte, Tungdim, Tunglut, etc. As clan is very important identity and being a member in it is necessary in the functioning of social institution like, kinship, household council etc.. So, the dialectal based tribes even though they appear to be more important than the clans, as it is constitutionalised. But it cannot take over the role played by the clan within the Zo social structure.

The existence of clan identity as well as dialectal based tribe identity resulted into the emergence of cross-cutting identity. Had the listing of Scheduled tribe been done with a proper survey and investigation this problem might be averted. Due to the cross-cutting identity many people got marginalised. As mentioned earlier the Zo clans were randomly

distributed in the whole Zo inhabited areas. We also discussed how various dialects emerged because of infrequent interaction or social intercourse, as communication is difficult due to the geographical setting and tribal feud. So, the dialectal identity become regional identity as various dialects arise because of regional differences. With the emergence of various dialects even a clan member no longer use the same dialect as they happen to be in different places.

Thus, when tribe was recognised on the basis of dialect many of a certain clan member happen to be in different tribe e.g. Guite clan, Ngaihte clan, etc. As the clans were dispersed among the existing tribe randomly, a certain small segment of a clan member could be found in a tribe other than the tribe where the majority of the members of that particular clan are present, i.e. where the clan is a dominant clan in a tribe. So in this situation, due to dialectal difference with their clan member they cannot join the tribe where they are a majority, at the same time they got the treatment of a periphery group by the dominant clan in the tribe where they are present. Therefore, this people got marginalised due to the cross-cutting identity of their clan and dialectal identity.

In fact, the formation of tribe identity among the Zo people in Manipur created a great problem in relation to their own people living in their neighbouring areas. The new tribe identity that was recognised by the government was not even in existence in areas other than Manipur. Nowadays, realising the flaw of having different tribe identity and the need for coming together and have common identity in the political arena, emerged a number of organisation which spearhead for the unification of the whole Zo people, namely Zo Re-unification Organisation(ZORO), Zomi National Congress(ZNC), Zomi Re-unification Organisation(ZRO), Indigenous People Revolutionary Alliance(IPRA),

etc. Therefore, by way of conclusion, it is not improper to suggest the Government as well as the public leaders to address and solve the tribal problems of the North Eastern Region in general and Manipur in particular, at the grass root level from where things went wrong and not from the mere manifested symptoms of the problems.

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