

**MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY AMONG THE MARAS: A
HISTORICAL STUDY (1924-2010)**

BY

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Submitted

**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in History of Mizoram University, Aizawl**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Movement for autonomy among the Maras: A historical study (1924-2010)”** submitted to Mizoram University for the award of the degree of Philosophy in History is a research work carried out by Mr. V.B Nopha Azyu, Research Scholar, in the Department of History and Ethnography, Mizoram University, under my supervision and it has not been previously submitted for the award of any research degree to any other University/institute.

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DECLARATION

I, V.B Nopha Azyu, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “**Movement for autonomy among the Maras: a historical study (1924-2010)**” is the record of work done by me, that the Contents of the thesis did not form the basis for the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in other Universities or Institutes

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STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

It is hereby certified that the Ph.D thesis entitled “**Movement for autonomy among the Maras: A historical study (1924-2010)**” is the result of Doctor of Philosophy programme and have not taken recourse to any form of plagiarism in any of the chapters of the thesis, except for quotations, from published and unpublished sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledge as such. The source material from works such as books, articles, essays, interviews and internet sources are properly acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases are clearly indicated. This thesis or any version of it has not been previously submitted to any University and the same has not yet been published.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	:	Autonomous District Council
CADC	:	Chakma Autonomous District Council
CEM	:	Chief Executive Member
ECM	:	Evangelical Church of Maraland
EM	:	Executive Member
INC	:	Indian National Congress
JP	:	Janata Party
LADC	:	Lai Autonomous District Council
LPM	:	Lakher Pioneer Mission
MADC	:	Mara Autonomous District Council
MCHP	:	Mara Chano Py
MFP	:	Mara Freedom Party
MNF	:	Mizo National Front
MPC	:	Mizoram People Conference
MTP	:	Mara Thyutlia Py
MU	:	Mizo Union
MZP	:	Mizo Zirlai Pawl
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
PLRC	:	Pawi-Lakher Regional Council
PLTU	:	Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union
UMFO	:	United Mizo Freedom Organization
YMA	:	Young Mizo Association

Glossary

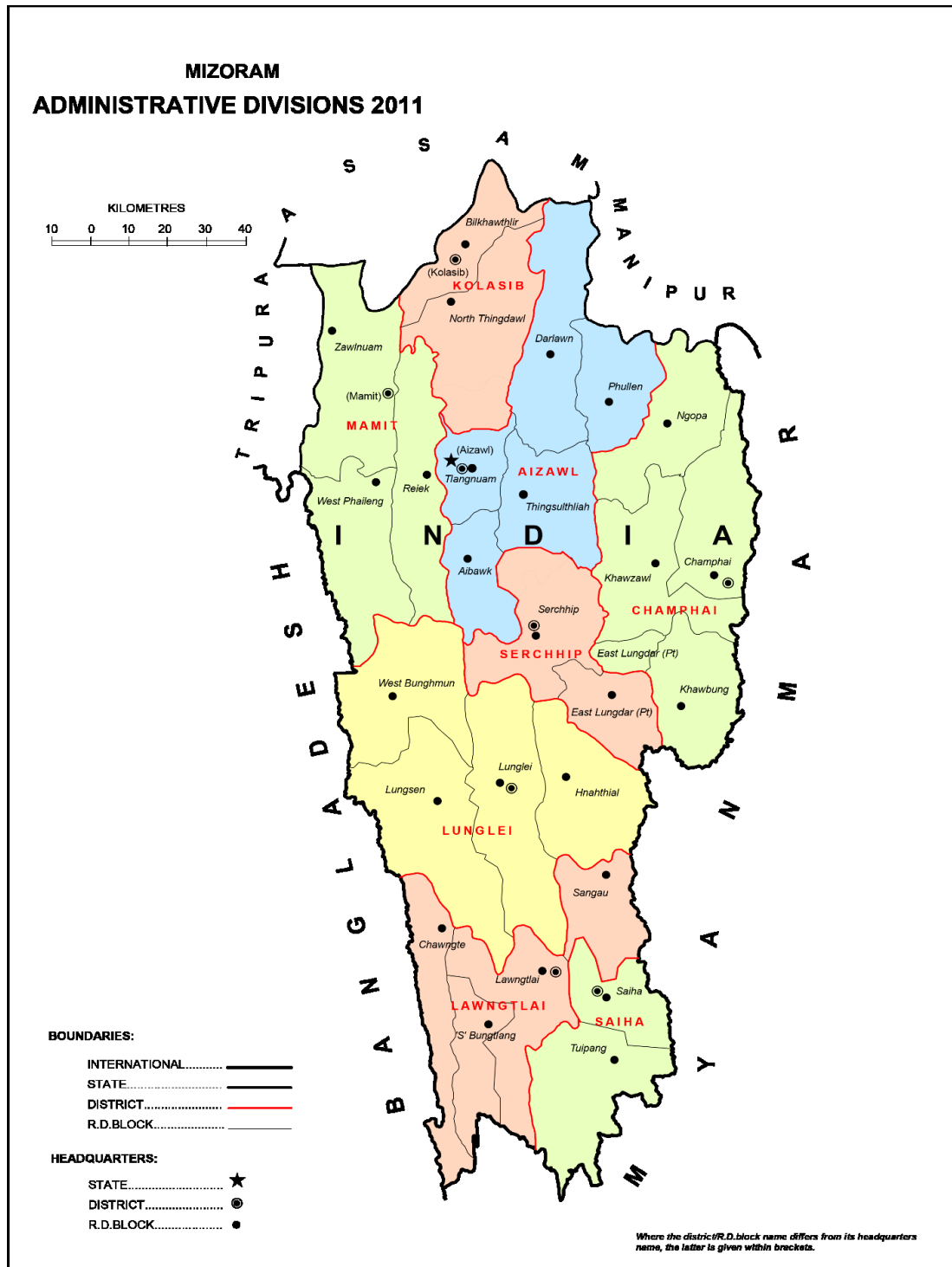
Abei Macha	: elders
Ahmaw	: lust and jealousy spirits
Ana	: forbidden
Bei	: Chief/King
Beibei	: grand series of feast
Beino	: River Kolodyne
Chavah	: river
Cha-ypi	: Festivals
Dua	: Loin Cloth
Duhlian	: Lushai language
Hlychho	: Chief clan
Khaoh laipa	: big hole
Khasoh	: village benefactor
Khazohpa	: God or Supreme Being
Khazohra	: Great Darkness
Kohrei	: sleeveless jacket that cover upper part of women's body
Khohna kia	: sharing of food and meat amongst the village folks
Ku	: festival
La	: Dance
Laiphocho	: a common practice among the Maras for a young man to sleep in the house of the girl they were courting

Lakher	: Lushai called the Maras as Lakher
Lasino	: animal spirit
Lyuchapa	: representatives
Lyurahripa	: demon/spirit of the mountains
Lyuva Khutla	: feast of the Jhum clearing
Mararah	: Maraland
Mato	: principal part of marriage price
Pami	: March
Pawis	: Lais
Rialochhi	: a sacrifice performed after clearing the forest for jhum.
Sahma	: Rice Beer
Sahrophia	: surrendering of all family possession
Sahria ku	: festivals of the harvest of rice
Sakha	: animal guardian spirit
Sawlakia	: Dance of the spirit of the slain
Sei	: Slaves
Shendus	: Maras were also called by their neighbours as Shendus
Sisai ahno	: special cloth of ladies belonging to royal families
Sisai	: small necklace
Thlahpa	: Soul
Thuasoh	: engagement
Tlah	: Mountains

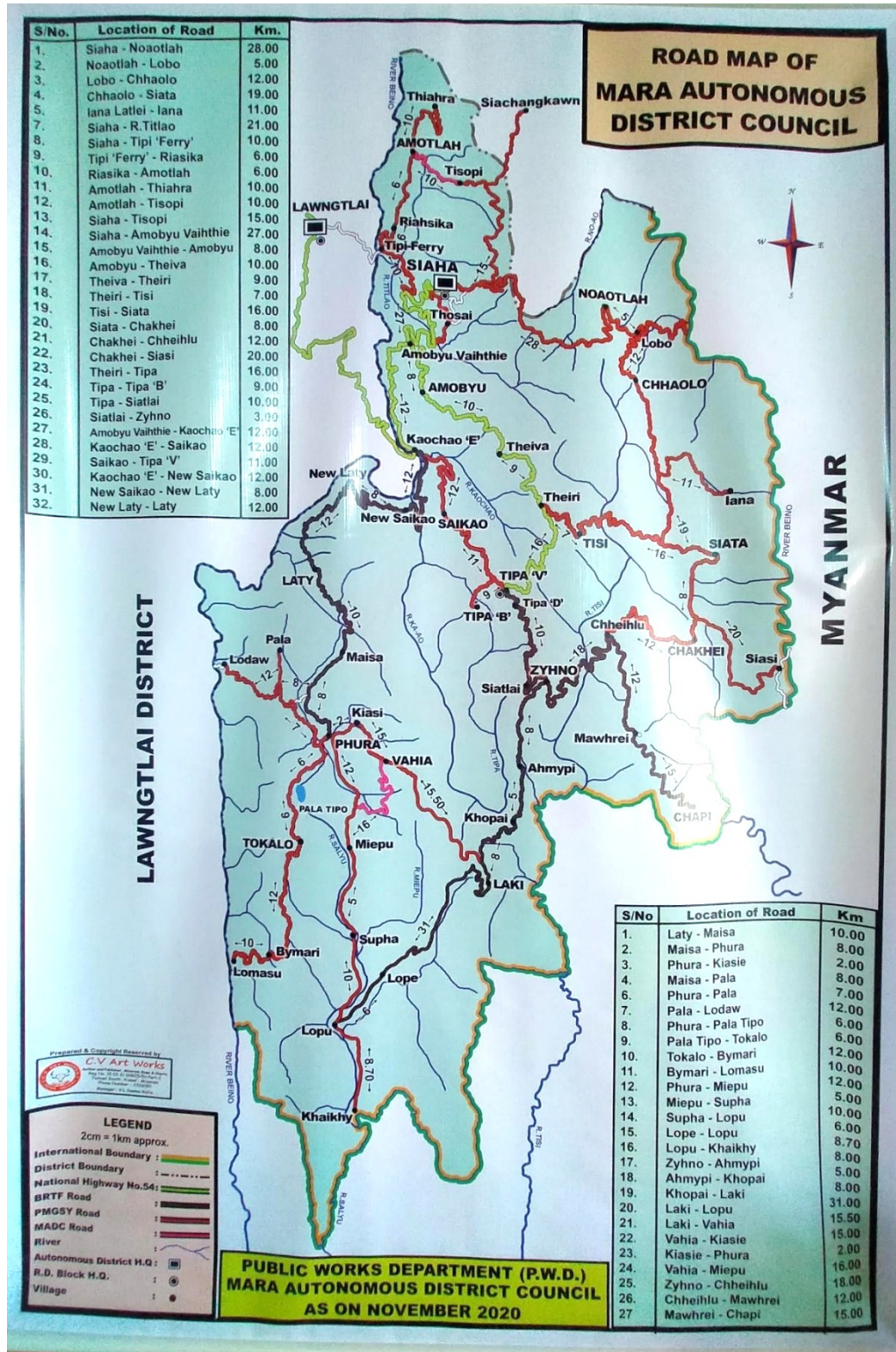
Tlosaih : common language among the Maras

Tlylia : play ground

Map of Mizoram



Map of MADC



CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALISING AUTONOMY

The concept of 'autonomy' has come to assume a place of great importance in recent discussions of practical and applied ethics¹ as well as in contemporary political and philosophical debates and arguably central concepts in bioethics. Almost in all contexts the concept of autonomy is the focus of much controversy and debate, disputes which focus attention on the fundamentals of moral and political philosophy and the enlightenment conception of the person more generally. If we examine various theoretical attempts to conceptualise autonomy, we find there is no single meaning to the term, though concern for self-governance underlines the use of the concept.

Examination of the concept of autonomy also figures centrally in debates over education policy, biomedical ethics, various legal freedoms and rights, as well as moral and political theory more broadly. Feinberg is explicit in his doubts that 'autonomy' has a single coherent meaning. In this light, he attempts to explain the related notions that function to formulate the general conception of 'personal autonomy.' He claims that "the word 'autonomy' has four closely related meanings" which refer either to the 'capacity' to govern oneself, the "actual condition" of self-government, an ideal of virtue derived from that conception, or the "sovereign authority" to govern oneself."²

The term autonomy admits a wide range of meaning which includes qualities such as self-rule, self-determination, freedom of will, dignity, integrity, individuality, independence, and self-knowledge. In *The Theory and Practice of*

¹ Thomas May, 'The Concept of Autonomy' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1994), University of Illinois Press on behalf of the North American Philosophical Publications, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20014493>, Accessed: 23/04/2013 03:19, p.133.

² John Christman, 'Constructing the Inner Citadel: Recent Work on the Concept of Autonomy' The University of Chicago Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2380932>, Accessed: 30/04/2013 02:49,p-109.

Autonomy, Gerald Dworkin³ remarks that the term ‘autonomy’ is “used sometimes as an equivalent of liberty, sometimes as equivalent to self-rule or sovereignty, sometimes as identical to freedom of the will. It is identified with self-assertion, with critical reflection, with freedom from obligation, with absence of external causation, with knowledge of one’s own interests.”⁴ This conceptual confusion about the meaning of the term reinforces the suspicion that there is no unified account of autonomy.

The early writers employed the term ‘Autonomy’ as distinctly political signifying civil or national independence.⁵ Moral and political philosophy of the early modern period also allowed autonomy to be a basic feature of persons, even where the term was not used explicitly. ‘Autonomy’ may also be defined as the freedom from any kind of internal or external forces whichever stand as an impediment towards progress. Autonomy in its political sense denotes the policy of self-government or self-governing community. Thus, Autonomy in political context means self-rule or self-government. The idea of self-rule contains two components: the independence of one’s deliberation and choice from manipulation by others, and the capacity to rule oneself. However, the ability to rule oneself will lie at the core of the concept, since a full account of that ability will surely entail the freedom from external manipulation characteristic of independence. To govern oneself one must be in a position to act competently and from desires that are in some sense one’s own. This overall approach to autonomy has been very influential, and several writers have developed variations of it and defended it against objections⁶.

Thomas May,⁷ in his work, mention two fundamental different notion of autonomy and of metaphysical grounds upon which the concept is developed. He

³ Gerald Dworkin, ‘*The theory and practice of autonomy*’, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p.3.

⁴ Pradip Kumara Bose, ‘*The Birth of the Autonomous Subject?*’ in Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian experience*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p-37.

⁵ Venkata V. Rao, ‘*Autonomy movements in Mizoram*’ in Prasad *Autonomy movements in Mizoram*, Vikas publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, P.1

⁶ John Christman, ‘*Constructing the Inner Citadel: Recent Work on the Concept of Autonomy*’, P.108.

⁷ Thomas May, ‘*The Concept of Autonomy*’ *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1994), University of Illinois Press on behalf of the North American Philosophical Publications, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20014493>, Accessed: 23/04/2013 03:19, p. 134.

referred to them as the notion of “autonomy as *auterkeia*” and the notion of “autonomy as self-rule”. These two opposing conception of autonomy take different positions on the effect of external influences upon the autonomy of an agent. The notion of autonomy as *auterkeia* views external factors as incompatible with autonomy, while the notion of autonomy as self-rule allows external factors to influence the determination of action without eliminating the autonomy of the agent.

1.1. History of autonomy:

Autonomy is the idea that is generally understood to refer to the capacity to be one’s own person, to live one’s own life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one’s own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces. In the western tradition, the view that individual autonomy is a basic moral and political value is very much a modern phenomenon. Autonomy also plays various roles in theoretical accounts of persons, conceptions of moral obligation and responsibility, justification of social policies and in numerous aspects of political theory. It forms the core of the Kantian conception of practical reason and relatively, connects to question of moral responsibility. It is also seen as the aspects of a person that that prevents or ought to prevent paternalistic interventions in their lives.⁸

The earliest history of autonomy goes back to the times of ancient Greeks. The term autonomy itself has its origin in the Greek word *autos* (self) and *nomos* (rule, governance, or law). Its earliest use involves reference to self-rule or self-governance in Greek city-states. A city had ‘*autonomia*’ when its citizens made their own laws, as opposed to being under the control of some conquering power. This original meaning of the term is still in evidence in the general idea of personal autonomy, which involves being one's own person or being able to act according to one's beliefs or desires without interference.⁹ The genesis of autonomy as self-determination can also be found in ancient Greek philosophy, in the idea of self-mastery. For both Plato and Aristotle, the most essentially human part of the soul is the rational part, illustrated by Plato’s representation of this part as a human, rather

⁸ John Christman, *Autonomy in moral and political philosophy* in Stanford Encyclopaedia of philosophy, Stafd University, 2009, p.1.

⁹ Thomas May, *opcit.*, p.134.

than a lion or many-headed beast, in his description of the tripartite soul in *The Republic*¹⁰. A just soul, for Plato, is one in which this rational human part governs over the two others. Aristotle identifies the rational part of the soul as most truly a person's own in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Both of them associate the ideal for humanity with self-sufficiency and a lack of dependency on others. The concept of autonomy itself continued to develop in the modern period with the decrease of religious authority and the increase of political liberty and emphasis on individual reason.

Medieval philosophers made no proper use of the concept of autonomy that is worthy of note, although once again, many medieval philosophers would have doubtless agreed that those who live in accordance with right reason and the will of God are properly self-governing. The concept of autonomy wouldn't be circulated in learned circles again until the Renaissance and early modern times, when it was employed both in the traditional political sense, and in an ecclesiastical sense, to refer to churches that were—or at least claimed to be—independent of the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope¹¹

After industrial revolution, the political philosophers such as Spencer and Bentham following the German philosopher Kant have spoken in terms of dignity of individual freedom. Being inspired by this idea, many colonial countries instantly woke up demanding self-rule while varying degrees of autonomy was exhibited. In John Stuart Mill's classic, *On Liberty*, autonomy is treated primarily as the autonomy of action and thought of an individual engaged in the social world, Mill's focus is on liberty or non-interference. Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882), an English philosopher, social theorist and reformer, has talked of political element of autonomy.¹²

Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalists held that our moral capacities create the capacity for self-governance. They believed that reason or conscience gives all individuals the ability to discover objective truths either about duty, or about the good, without external guidance through revelation, the church or

¹⁰ 'the Republic is a socratic dialogue, authored by Plato around 375 B.C which discussed justice, order and Character of the City-states.

¹¹ Mark Piper, *Autonomy: Normative* in Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, James Madison University, U.S.A., 2010. p

¹²Mark Piper, *Autonomy: Normative* in Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy p.58.

political authority. They also held that agents could be motivated to act by their own knowledge of moral norms. Social contract theories of this period conceived of human beings as autonomous in a somewhat different sense, by attributing to them an ‘original sovereignty’ over themselves. They regarded individuals as by nature free, equal and independent, with authority to regulate their own conduct. It follows that only through an act of consent or agreement that individual can become subjected to the authority of another only through an act of consent or agreement, and that legitimate state powers are those it would be rational to agree to¹³.

Rousseau takes the idea of self-governance a step further, claiming that sovereignty resides in the collective body of all citizens, and that legitimate laws must be self-imposed: ‘the people that is subject to the laws ought to be their author.’ He argued that the freedom and independence of each citizen could be preserved only when individuals agree to submit to the ‘general will’ i.e. the will of society as a whole concerning matters of common interest. Although Rousseau did not use the term ‘autonomy’ in his writings, his conception of moral freedom—defined as “obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself”—has a clear relation to Kant’s understanding of autonomy¹⁴.

The concept of autonomy came into philosophical prominence for the first time with the work of Immanuel Kant. His work on autonomy, however, was strongly influenced by the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and he is the only one who introduces it into the language of moral philosophy in a truly characteristic sense and he further developed the idea of moral autonomy as having authority over one’s actions. By autonomy of the will, Kant means the faculty that the will possesses of being its own law giver, of being itself, by its own nature, the source and substance of the normal law itself. To be autonomous means to be free and to be free means to act as per the voice of universal reason (Kant). One who acts free, one who is autonomous, therefore, cannot, by moral law inflict pain and sufferings on others.¹⁵ Religious view of autonomy and philosophical view of autonomy stress the

¹³ Thomas May, ‘*The Concept of Autonomy*’ American Philosophical Quarterly, p.140.

¹⁴ John Christman, ‘*Autonomy in Moral and political philosophy*’, p.7.

¹⁵ Chandana Bhattacharjee, ‘*A note on the concept of autonomy*,’ in Prasad *Autonomy movements in Mizoram*, Vikas publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, pp.55-56.

point of freedom of soul and will of an individual respectively.¹⁶ Kant called upon the will to determine its guiding principles for itself, thus connecting the idea of self-government to morality rather than letting the principle by which we make decisions be determined by our political leaders, pastors or society. The former he called heteronomy and the latter autonomy. In his “what is enlightenment” essay, he described enlightenment as “the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority” and called on his readers to have the courage to use their own understanding “without direction from another.” This description is close to what we might acknowledge today as personal autonomy, but Kant’s account is firmly located within his moral philosophy.

Between Kant’s description of moral autonomy and the recent scholarship on personal autonomy, there was a process of individualizing the idea of autonomy. The Romantics, reacting against the emphasis on the universality of reason put forward by the enlightenment, of which Kant’s philosophy was a part, prized particularity and individuality. They highlighted the role of passions and emotions over reason, and the importance of developing one’s own unique self. John Stuart Mill also praised and defended the development and cultivation of individuality as worthwhile in itself, writing that “A person whose desires and impulses are his own- are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture- is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character.”¹⁷

The Romantic conception of individuality was subsequently echoed within the conception of authenticity that runs through phenomenological and existential philosophy. Unlike the universalism espoused by Kantian autonomy, however, authenticity, like the Romantic view, involves a call to be one’s own person, not merely to think for oneself. For Kant, thinking for oneself would, if

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁷ Jane Dryden, *Autonomy (Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy)*, Mount Allison University, Canada, 2010, p. 3.

undertaken properly, lead to universalising one's maxims which is absent for both the Romantics and the Existentialist as well as for Mills.¹⁸

In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill contributed to the discussion on the normative significance of autonomy in his work *On Liberty*. Although Mill did not use the term 'autonomy' in this work, he is widely understood as having had self-determination in mind. Mill's work continues to have considerable influence on discussions on the normative significance of autonomy in relation to paternalism of various kinds.¹⁹

1.2.CONCEPTIONS OF AUTONOMY:

As discussed earlier that there are variety of contexts in which the concept of autonomy functions and it has suggested to many scholars that there are simply a number of different conceptions of autonomy, all of which are loosely based upon the core notions of self-government or self-determination, but which differed considerably in details. The word simply refers to different elements in each of the contexts.

1.2.1. MORAL AUTONOMY:

Autonomy is central in certain moral frameworks, both as a model of the moral person- the feature of the person by virtue of which she is morally obligated and as the aspect of persons which ground others obligations to them.²⁰As mention earlier, moral autonomy is associated with the work of Immanuel Kant, and is also referred to as 'autonomy of the will' or 'Kantian autonomy.' Kant takes the autonomy of rational agents to be the fact that they have the ability to legislate universally valid principles through their will and are bound only by the principles

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ Mark Piper, *Autonomy: Normative* in Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, James Madison University, U.S.A., 2010. p

²⁰ John Christman, *Autonomy in moral and political philosophy* in Stanford Encyclopaedia of philosophy, Stafsord University,2009, p.7.

that originate in their own reason. This form of autonomy consists in the capacity of the will of a rational being to be a law to itself, independently of the influence of any property of objects of volition. More specifically, an autonomous will is said to be free in both a negative and a positive sense. The will is negatively free in that it operates entirely independently of alien influences, including all contingent empirical determinations associated with appetite, desire-satisfaction, or happiness. The will is positively free in that it can act in accordance with its own law.²¹

Kant's conception of autonomy reflects the political origin of the concept in that he regards rational agent as a kind of sovereign authority who can give universal law through their willing. In contrast to the empiricists, Kant recognizes reasons and principles that are not desire-based. Like rationalist theorists, Kant thought that morality consists of necessary desire-independent principles. But he did not think that such principles represent an objective order of values existing independently of rational volition.²² Moral autonomy, for Kant, refers to the capacity of rational agents to impose upon themselves to legislate for themselves—the moral law. One of the most common objections to this conception of autonomy is that such a robust form of independence from contingent empirical influences is not possible. Kant defended the possibility of such robust independence by arguing that human agents inhabit two realms at once: the phenomenal realm of experience, in relation to which we are determined; and a nominal or transcendental realm of the intellect, in relation to which we are free.²³

Kant thought that the autonomy of rational agents is consistent with moral objectivity. The categorical imperative is the basic principle to which autonomy is committed and generates universally valid principles of action. Agents express their autonomy by deliberating and acting from the categorical imperative because it is a rational procedure through which any agent can arrive at principles that other agents can acknowledge as authoritative. His conception of agents as having autonomy

²¹ Mark Piper, *Autonomy: Normative* in Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, James Madison University, U.S.A., 2010. p

²² Gerald Dworkin, '*The theory and practice of autonomy*', p.5.

²³ Mark Piper, P.19.

determines the content of his normative theory. Kant held that the capacities to give moral principles through one's will is the basis of human dignity and that all agents are committed to valuing the exercise of their rational capacities. Thus, the autonomy of rational agents is the basis of specific duties to respect the exercise of rational agency.

Immanuel Kant also developed correlative concepts of autonomy and heteronomy in the context of moral law. Autonomy refers to a moral agent's capacity to freely and rationally adopt moral policies. Kant believed that a person's moral principles, the internal authority which imposes restrictions on how that person acts, originate in the exercise of reason. People are offered the choice of many possible principles, but they reject all principles which "cannot accord with the will's own enactment of universal law." Heteronomous principles are all those which are imposed, or commanded, from without, such as the moral dictates of the state, the society, religion, or a deity. Heteronomy extends to principles and actions which originate from some psychological drive or emotion, such as an addiction, and implies that the agent is passive under some command or compulsion that he does not initiate. According to Kant, moral maturity requires the recognition of autonomy. Self-governance and self-determination require some control over the desires and impulses that motivate action, and that control is imposed through reason.²⁴

Kant discussed autonomy in terms of man's moral character and so was concerned with his control over the moral value of his actions. Thus, his discussion of autonomy does not centre upon the practical determination of action but upon the formal determination of the moral value of action.²⁵ His conceptions of autonomy also influence modern accounts of the autonomous determination of practical action which have taken the Kantian idea of moral autonomy and developed notions of autonomous practical reasoning in Kantian terms.

Kant writes: 'Autonomy of the will is the property that the will has of being a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)'. One

²⁴ New world encyclopaedia, p.10.

²⁵ Thomas May, p.136.

implication of this claim is ‘that man [humanity] is subject only to his own, yet universal, legislation and that he is bound only to act in accordance with his own will’. Autonomy has both a negative and a positive aspect. Rational agents are not bound by any principles that do not originate in the exercise of reason, or by any sources of authority external to reason. Kant’s conception of autonomy reflects the political origin of the concept in that he regards rational agents as a kind of sovereign authority who can give universal law through their willing. So understood, autonomy presupposes certain deliberative and motivational capacities: the capacities to assess critically any proposed reason for action and to be motivated by reasons that are independent of one’s desires and presently held values. Comparisons with earlier moral theories bring out the full dimensions of Kant’s conception.²⁶

Kant also held that our autonomy is in large part constituted by our noumenal freedom. The postulation of such a form of freedom may be criticized as metaphysically extravagant, however; and if such freedom is not possible, then neither is moral autonomy in Kant’s strict sense. Some thinkers have argued that Kant’s theorization on the noumenal realm was not meant to have metaphysical significance. Thomas Hill has argued, for example, that Kant may have been merely elaborating on the practical conditions in which we must understand ourselves insofar as we conceive ourselves as free²⁷.

1.2.2. PERSONAL AUTONOMY:

The majority of contemporary work on autonomy has centred on analyses of the nature and normativity of personal autonomy.²⁸ Some writers concerned with the nature of personal autonomy have distinguished between autonomy as a capacity for self-governance or self-determination, as the actual condition of self-governance, as a personal ideal, and as a right or a social value.²⁹ It can primarily be distinguished from Kantian moral autonomy through its

²⁶ John Christman, p.6.

²⁷ Gerald Dworkin, p. 5.

²⁸ Mark Piper, p.20.

²⁹ Gerald Dworkin, p. 7.

commitment to metaphysical neutrality. Related this is the adherence to at least a procedural individualism within contemporary personal autonomy accounts.

The main distinction within personal autonomy is that between content-neutral accounts, which do not specify any particular values or principles that must be endorsed by the autonomous agent, and substantive accounts which specify some particular value or values that must be included within autonomous decision-making.

One of the most intractable problems surrounding personal autonomy concerns the analysis of the authentic self. Some philosophers have claimed that no such self exists; and indeed, some philosophers claim that no self exists at all. Most philosophers accept the possibility of the authentic self at least as a working hypothesis, however, and concentrate attention on the question of how authenticity is secured by an agent. The most popular and influential account is based on the 1970s works of Harry Frankfurt and Gerald Dworkin.³⁰ Their concern was to give an account of what kind of individual freedom ought to be protected and how that moral freedom may be described in the context of contemporary conceptions of the will. The concept of personal autonomy can be used as a way of protecting certain decisions from paternalistic interference. Frankfurt and Dworkin phrase this insight in terms of hierarchy of desires. According to this hierarchical model, an agent is autonomous with respect to an action on the condition that his or her first-order desire to commit the act is sanctioned by a second order volition endorsing the first-order desire.

There are several different objections to the hierarchical model, mostly revolving around the problem in locating the source of an agent's autonomy, and questioning the idea that autonomy can be located somehow in the process of reflective endorsement itself.

Part of the appeal of understanding autonomy is not simply in explaining how human make decisions but because the idea of autonomy suggests something about how Human identify themselves. For Frankfurt, Human identify with a lower level desire if he or she have a second order volition endorsing it. However, second order volitions do not necessarily represent us- we may have no

³⁰ Mark Piper, pp. 9-11.

reason for them, which Frankfurt acknowledges.³¹ Besides analyzing and clarifying the authenticity conditions necessary for autonomy, philosophers have also worked on providing a thorough account of the competency conditions necessary for the presence of autonomy. Competency conditions are those capacities or conditions that need to be present in order for one to be effective in living according to one's authentic self-conception in the face of various kinds of interference to that end. Examples of competency conditions include self-control, logical aptitude, instrumental rationality, resolve, temperance, calmness, and a good memory.

In addition to authenticity and competency conditions, many theories of personal autonomy require the presence of certain external enabling conditions: that is, external or environmental (social, legal, familial, and so forth) conditions which are more than less out of the agent's control, but which must be in place in order for fully autonomous living to be possible. Such enabling conditions include, for example, a modicum of social freedom, an array of substantive options for choice, the presence of authenticity-oriented social relations, and autonomy-supporting networks of social recognition and acknowledgment. Without these conditions, effective autonomous living is said by some to be impossible, even where authenticity and competency conditions are robustly satisfied. Different autonomy theorists place different emphases on external enabling conditions. Some contend that external enabling is a necessary condition for autonomy.³²

Personal autonomy is possessed in degrees, depending on the presence and strength of the constellation of internal capacities and external enabling conditions that make it possible. While not all persons possess personal autonomy, it is commonly claimed that virtually everyone—with the exception of the irredeemably pathological and the handicapped—possesses the capacity for personal autonomy. Some philosophers have argued that personal autonomy possession requires the presence of normative competency conditions that effectively provide agents with the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, but this strong account is in general

³¹ Mark Piper, p.12.

³² Gerald Dworkin, p.19.

disfavour, and even if the account is correct, few would argue that this means that personally autonomous agents must also always act morally.

Many philosophers hold the view that autonomy is normatively content-neutral. According to this model, one (or one's commitments) can be autonomous regardless of the values one endorses. On this account, one could commit to any kind of life—even the life of a slave—and still be autonomous. Other philosophers hold that autonomy possession requires substantive normative constraints of some kind or other—at the very least, it is argued that one must value autonomy in order to be truly autonomous.³³

Some philosophers doubt that proceduralist accounts are adequate to capture autonomous motivation. Substantive accounts of autonomy set more requirements for autonomous actions to count as autonomous. Susan Wolf offers a strong substantive account in which agents must have normative competency, in other words, the capacity to identify right and wrong.³⁴ Substantive accounts have been criticised for conflating personal and moral autonomy and for setting too high a bar for autonomous action. If too much is expected of autonomous agent's self-awareness and moral reflection, then can anyone be truly said to be autonomous.³⁵

1.2.3. AUTONOMY IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT:

The value of autonomy can be seen in its social and political context, and is considered normatively significant for issues in political philosophy, primarily in relation to discussions of social justice and rights. It is particularly important for political liberalism and some have argued that autonomy is the core value of liberalism.³⁶ The conception of the autonomous person plays a variety of roles in various constructions of liberal political theory. Principally, it serves as the model of

³³ Gerald Dworkin, p.12.

³⁴ Mark Piper, p.10.

³⁵ Jane Dryden, *Autonomy (Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy)*, p. 8.

³⁶ Mark Piper, p.11.

the person whose perspective is used to formulate and justify political principles of justice.³⁷

Kant described the protection of autonomy at the political level as encapsulated in the principle of right that each person had the right to any action that can co-exist with the freedom of every other person in accordance with universal law. Non-interference is generally seen as key to political autonomy. Gerald Gaus specifies that the fundamental liberal principle is that all interference with action stands in need of justification. If any paternalistic interference is to be permitted, it is generally restricted to cases where the agent is not deemed to be autonomous with respect to a decision. The framework of seeing the value of political autonomy in terms of protecting individual choices and decisions has been criticised by those who argue that it rests on an inadequate model of the self.³⁸

Communitarians such as Michael Sandel criticise the model of the autonomous self implicit in liberal political theory, arguing that it does not provide an adequate notion of the human person as embedded within and shaped by societal values and commitments.

Recognising the different levels of autonomy at play within the political sphere as a whole can help to clarify what is at stake, and to avoid one-sided accounts of autonomy or the autonomous self. Rainer Forst outlines five different conceptions of autonomy that can combine into a multidimensional account. The first is Moral autonomy, in which an agent can be considered autonomous as long as he or she acts on the basis of reasons that take every other power equally into account and which are justifiable on the basis of reciprocally and generally binding norms. Although this is an interpersonal norm, it is relevant to politics as it promotes the mutual respect needed for political liberty. Secondly, Ethical autonomy, concerns a person's desire in the quest for the good life, in the context of the person's values, commitments, relationships and communities. Legal autonomy is thus the right not to be forced into a particular set of values and commitments, and is neutral toward

³⁷ John Christman, p.11.

³⁸ Mark Piper, pp. 10-13.

them. Political autonomy concerns the right to participate in collective self-rule, exercised with the other members of the relevant community. Lastly, Social autonomy concerns whether an agent has the means to be an equal member of this community. Forst argues that ultimately “citizens are politically free to extent to which they, as freedom-grantors and freedom users, are morally, ethically, legally, politically, and socially autonomous members of the political community.”³⁹

Several writers have claimed that proceduralist accounts of autonomy would wrongly attribute autonomy to those whose restricted socialisation and oppressive life conditions pressure them into internalising oppressive values and norms.

These related considerations have sparked some to develop an alternative conception of autonomy meant to replace allegedly overly individualistic notions. This replacement has been called “relational autonomy.” Spurred by the feminist critique of traditional conceptions of autonomy stress the ineliminable role that relatedness plays in both person’s self-conceptions, relative to which autonomy must be defined. The core argument in these approaches is that autonomy requires the ability to act effectively on one’s own values.⁴⁰

Autonomy, as we have discussed, certainly attaches to individual persons and it is not a property of groups or peoples. So, the autonomy that grounds basic rights and which connects to moral responsibility is assigned to persons without essential reference to other people, institutions, traditions, or the like, in which they may live and act. However, critics claim that such a view runs counter to the manner in which most of us define ourselves, and hence diverges problematically from the aspects of identity that motivate action, ground moral commitments and formulate life plans. Autonomy, thus, implies the ability to reflect wholly on oneself, to accept or reject one’s values, connections, self-defining features.

³⁹ Mark Piper, p.16.

⁴⁰ John Christman, p. 12.

1.3.CONCLUSION:

Several distinctions must be made to zero in on the kind of autonomy that is of greatest interest to moral and political theory, for that the term is use in a wide variety of ways and in numerous philosophical and practical settings. Moral autonomy refers to the capacity to impose the moral law on oneself and it is claimed as a fundamental organising principle of all morality.

The variety of contexts in which the concept of autonomy functions has suggested to many that there are simply a number of different conceptions of autonomy and that the word simply refers to different elements in each such of context. Feinberg has claimed that there are at least four different meanings of autonomy in moral and political philosophy: the capacity to govern oneself, the actual condition of self –government, a personal ideal, and a set of rights expressive of one’s sovereignty over oneself⁴¹. Nevertheless, it is clear that formulating a theory of the concept will involve more than merely uncovering the obscure details of the idea’s essence like many concepts central to contentious moral or political debate is itself essentially contested. So a theory of autonomy is simply a construction of a concept aimed at capturing the general sense of self-rule or self-government and which connects adequately with the other principles and norms typically connected to those notions.

Although the above theorisation and conceptualisation pertains to different notion, especially Kant implication of Autonomy into understanding of self and also how autonomy has been used in understanding society, an attempt had been made in the research by employing the political implications of autonomy in understanding the movement for autonomy among the Maras. The research wholly based on the political context of Autonomy.

⁴¹ John Christman, p.4.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATING THE PEOPLE

The Maras, a tribal group of distinction, inhabit the south eastern corner of the state of Mizoram, south of the Chin Hills and the extreme north of the Arakan hill tracts.⁴² They occupied one district in the southernmost part of Mizoram and enjoyed a separate administration better known as Mara Autonomous District Council which came into existence right after the trifurcation of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. In the early periods, this area has been known by the colonial rulers as “Lakher Land” which means “the land of the Maras.” But after India’s independence the Lakher Land has been changed into Maraland. In fact, the evolution of Maraland as an autonomous district council was indeed the result of the implementation of the resolution put forward by Simon commission as early as the 1940s.

Mizoram, where the Maras Autonomous District Council is located, became the twenty third state of India on July 14th 1986 under the fifty third amendments Act to the constitution of India, 1986⁴³. It was known as the Lushai Hills District in Assam until 1954 when Lushai Hills was changed to Mizo Hills District. It is situated between 21*56N- 24*31’N latitude and 92*16’E-93*26’E Longitude. Being located in the southernmost part of the country, Mizoram occupies an area of strategic importance in the north east. At present Mizoram has been bounded by Manipur and Assam states in the North, shared international boundary with Myanmar in the East and South, and also bounded by Bangladesh and Tripura in the West. It is divided into 8 Districts viz: Aizawl, Lunglei, Saiha, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Kolasib, Champhai and Serchhip. As per 2001 census, Mizoram occupied the

⁴² N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers*, Firma KLM (Pvt) Ltd. Calcutta, 1976, p.1.

⁴³ D.D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1997, p.440.

total area of 21,081 Sq.km with a population of 8,91,058. The density of population is only 42 persons per Sq.km.⁴⁴

2.1. The Land:

The Mara people lived in the Mara Autonomous District Council area in the Southern part of Mizoram. The whole region inhabited by them is known as 'Mararah' in their Local language which means 'the land of the Maras'. In the later part of 19th century, this area has been known as Lakher land as the Maras were popularly known to the British as Lakher.⁴⁵ Mara Autonomous District Council lies in the loop of the Kolodyne river between 22*.07 and 22*.38 north latitude and between 92*.55 and 93*.10 longitude⁴⁶ with an area of 1445 square kilometres, being bounded on the north and west by Lai autonomous district council. On the south and east, she shared 159 kilometres of international boundary lines with Myanmar. Maraland is, in fact, completely isolated itself from the Indian sub-continent by the southernmost biggest river Kolodyne which curve out Maraland from the southern part of the state of Mizoram. The Land has total area of 1966 sq. kilometres.

Maraland or the Land of the Maras consists entirely of range of Hills, separated from one another by narrow valleys and deep gorges. Most of the high mountains are located in the southeast and eastern part of the land.⁴⁷ There are numerous mountains of varying heights with the average height of about 900 to 1500 metres. Among these the prominent ones are like, the *Tliatlu* with a height of 1940 meters, the *Kahrie* 1918metres, the *Zyhno thiena byuh* 1864 meters, the *Leiparotlah* 1840 meters, the *Mawma* 1834 meters, the *Meisabyu* 1810 meters, the *Chhôchhopaw* 1791 meters, the *Irene Peak* 1787 meters and the *Ngiapikana* 1765 meters and other

⁴⁴ R. Hmingthanzuala, *Emergence of Social and Economic forces for the creation of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2015, p.1.

⁴⁵ R.A. Lorrain, *The wonderful story of the Lakher Pioneer Mission*, L.P.M., 23 Putney, Common S.W. London, 1992, p.201.

⁴⁶ K. Zohra, *The Maras: Indigenous tradition and Folkculture*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2013, p.2.

⁴⁷ John Hamlet Hlychho, *The Maras: Head Hunters to Soul hunters*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2009, p.35-36.

several peaks.⁴⁸ In spite of its rugged and steeped mountain ranges, Maraland also has remarkable features of beautiful low land or plateaus in some part of the region which roughly covers an area of 2892 hectares. Some of them may include Khaikhy, Phura, Pala, Salyu, Tolyu, Vathlo etc.

Several rivers and streams run through the Land in various directions. Most of the river runs north to south direction and there are also some rivers flowing northern directions. Major rivers include *Beino* (Kolodyne), *Tisih*, *Pala*, *Ka-ao*, *Tolyu*, *Titlao*, *Dawva*, *Salyu* and *Tisopi* etc. The biggest and most important river of all is *Beino* (Kolodyne) which drained towards the south with its tributaries. River *Beino* is indeed the biggest River in Mizoram which had its source in the Chin state of Myanmar and after running a total length of 138.46 kilometres it drains to the Bay of Bengal. These rivers provided much assistance to the people of Maraland in terms of food and navigation to some extent.

2.2.1. Pre-colonial Mara Society:

The Maras are racially said to be of Mongoloid origin and they belong to the chin sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family.⁴⁹ As far as their language is concern, the Maras were classed with the Kuki tribes who have migrated almost in historic times down the valley of the Chindwin. They belong to the Sino-Tibetan Linguistic family which is sub-divided into Tibeto-Burman and Tibeto-Himalayas. The Tibeto-Burman group is again sub-divided into many groups along which the Maras fall into the Chin Sub-groups.⁵⁰ Their population is scarcely distributed between Indo-Burma borders to the south of Mizoram. Though most of the Mara population were distributed in Mara Autonomous District Council in Mizoram, majority were to be found in Chin Hills sub-division of Matupi, Palewa and Thantlang in Myanmar. Most of the villages are enclosed in the large bend made by

⁴⁸ K. Robin, *Rethinking the History and Culture of Northeast India with Special Reference to the Maras of Mizoram*, Unpublished Report of UGC Major Research Project, 2015, p.7.

⁴⁹ Thasia T. Azyu, *The Maras and Their Language*, (mimeograph), 1988, P.2.

⁵⁰ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.1.

the Kolodyne river, which, after rising in the hills near Haka and flows to a southerly direction.⁵¹

Traditional Mara villages are generally built on top of the Hills in an easily defended position. Most of the Mara village are permanent and are rarely moved their village sites.⁵² Unlike the Lusheis of their northern neighbour whose villages were known by the Chief's name, the Mara villages were known by their place-names. Whenever the villages were moved to a new site, the omen is obligatory to be taken. The Mara villages are not laid out symmetrically and it is rare to find even one long street. There are no rules as to the orientation of the houses and the houses strangling over a considerable area.⁵³ The Chiefs house is generally more or less in the centre of the village and close to the *Tylyia* or ground the reason being that the invaders or raiders would not be able to penetrate there and harmed the Chiefs if the Chiefs house located at the heart of the village.⁵⁴ In the olden days, the Mara villages were often fortified and two warriors were stationed to check the incoming raids. These wooden fence were often built of tree trunks and saplings about 10 feet in height.

2.2.2. Daily life

The Maras, if not exaggerated, are clearly hard-working people since time immemorial. In this regard N.E Parry is not wrong when he said “while a Mara cannot be said to suffer from overwork, his day is always full and he has no opportunity of experiencing the boredom of having nothing to do.”⁵⁵ Like many Hill tribes of North East India, Mara women were on the whole busier than the men. They arise at dawn and pound out rice for the day in a wooden mortar hollowed out of a block of wood. After having pounded and winnowed the rice, they put the breakfast on to cook and go off to the spring to draw water.

⁵¹ N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers*, p.1.

⁵² Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, *the Lushei Kuki Clans*, TRI, Aizawl, third reprint, 2008, p.211.

⁵³ N.E. Parry, p.61-63.

⁵⁴ Mylai Hlychho, *Mara History*, Mylai Hlychho, 2009 p.24. (See also N.E Parry, the Lakhers, p.63.)

⁵⁵ N.E Perry, p.73.

The work day generally begin right after breakfast. The men would go off to the Jhum or to hunt while the women would collect the firewood and draw water. The women usually would go for weaving soon after freeing herself from other works. Cutting Jhums, building and renovation of the house rest with the men and all the necessities with regard to this has to be collected by men. The whole day all the villagers were busy doing their own work. At night the young man would go off to the houses of the girls they favour for courting and this has been a practice among the Maras for a young man to sleep in the house of the girl he is courting. It is called *Laiphocho*.⁵⁶ The women devote all their spare time to weaving so as the men to hunting. It would be hard to find busier people then an average village community in the hills.

2.2.3. Types of family

Family is perhaps the oldest institution in human history. As is the case with all other societies, family occupies an important and prominent place among the Mara society. The Maras family constituted a nuclear family. The family being consist of the father, the mother and the children. In the past, the father exercise arbitrary powers in the family. Being patrilineal in descent group, the father is the head of the family. In the family, the eldest son usually inherits the family properties and he is empowered to function as the father's in charge.⁵⁷ The main duty of the father, apart from his being the head of the family is to acquire the required jhumming tool so as to enable production.

2.2.4. Marriage

Among the Maras, the institution of marriage is one of the most important units in the society. Marriage among the Mara is also a civil contract. As a rule, a young man's bride is selected by his parents and it is only in comparatively rare cases, generally where a love affair has ended in an undesired result that a man

⁵⁶ K. Zohra, p.19.

⁵⁷ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.50.

chooses his own bride. As far as possible, the Mara men always want to marry into a higher clan so that it is by no means easy to find a suitable bride, and partly to the high rate of marriage price, which renders it necessary for a man's relatives to save up for years before they can afford to buy him a wife.⁵⁸ There is also a deep social gulf between the higher and the lower clans and every Mara wants to raise his status by marrying a wife from a clan higher than his own.⁵⁹

Very few restrictions are imposed on the choice of a wife. There is also no bar to people of the same clan marrying. The Mara marriage may be broadly divided into Chief marriage and Ordinary marriage. The Chief marriage is the most complicated and more expensive than the ordinary marriage.⁶⁰ The marriage price is considered as a primary or basic factor for blood ties or partnership for the lifetime among different families and thus marriage prices became a very important subject or issue in the family and society. Among the Maras, generally the bride price is very high in comparison to their neighbouring tribes. And also the price is a most complicated affair, and consists of several parts, each part in turn having a number of subsidiary prices attached to it. The payment of the marriage prices was very exhaustive for the family economy and thus it is known as '*Sahrophia*' meaning "*surrendering of all family possession*".⁶¹

Generally, among the Maras marriage negotiation should be initiated by the boy's family sending an emissary to the girl's family with marriage proposal. When the preliminary report bears favourable result, then the boy's parents immediately appointed two representatives, who were known as *Lyuchapa*. These representatives were sent to the girl's parents carrying with them, Dao, knife, pot, gong, etc. for marriage engagement.⁶² In return, the girl's parents also present a pig known as '*thuaso tiha*' to the boy's parents in honour of their daughter. After marriage engagement *thuaso* and the prices of the bride got fixed, the marriage day was finalised. The marriage prices as a rule was usually made at night for which it

⁵⁸ Zakhu Hlychho, *Mara te Tobul*, Zakhu Hlychho, Chaltlang, Aizawl, second reprint, 2011, p.98.

⁵⁹ N.E. Parry, p.292.

⁶⁰ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.52.

⁶¹ K. Zohra, p.44.

⁶² Mylai Hlychho.127.

was known as *Zatlaso* and *lyuchapa* were again sent at night to hand over the marriage prices to the girl's parents. The marriage prices as a rule consisted of several major or principal parts called *mato* and each part comprised of a number of subsidiary prices and small dues. The Maras marriage price can be clearly classified into four different categories depending upon the status and position of the clan. As the bride price is high, divorce is rarely found among the Maras⁶³.

2.2.5. Status of women

The status of the Mara women is not so different from the status enjoyed by their neighbouring counterparts. Like all hill-women, the Mara women have a good deal of hard work to perform. On the whole, however, the household labours, whether in the field or in the home, are very fairly divided between men and women.⁶⁴ Social relations between the sexes are easy and natural, men and women meeting freely on an equal basis. Colonel Lewin has made a remarked with surprise on the courtesy with which a Mara chief treated the women who accompanied him on a visit to the former's camp and how he refused to drink any of the liquor offered to him until the ladies of his party had been served first. A Mara man would beat his wife only when there is a clear proves or a good cause. Interestingly, among the Maras people who constantly beat their wives are looked down upon in the society. The high marriage price therefore has its good side, in that it tends to make marriages more permanent and the position of the wife more secure.

In comparison to the Lushei women, the Mara women can be considered as having enjoyed a more respectable place in the society. The positions of women are considered as high and in few cases they are almost equal with men.⁶⁵ A wife takes part in the sacrifices performed by her husband. In almost all the social events, the woman plays her part and helps her husband to entertain his guests. One very interesting fact about Mara women is the fact that they do not consider themselves as inferior being and for this reason they take part in all matters in which

⁶³ K. Zohra, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁴ Mylai Hlychho, p. 31.

⁶⁵ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.113.

the family is interested.⁶⁶ In this way, the Mara women enjoy a fairly considerable higher status than their neighbouring counterparts in the society.

2.2.6. Practices of Slavery

Sei is the Mara word for Slaves⁶⁷ and Slaves among them are the real slaves who are not so different from those slaves in the European world and are undoubtedly approximated more closely to what is generally connoted by the word slavery than did the Lushai *bawi* system. In the olden days, slavery was common among the Maras. There are many ways in which the slaves were acquired by the chiefs and the nobles. The most ordinary way of acquiring them is by capture in war and even common people were allowed to keep as slaves any captives they made after the first man they had captured had been handed over to the villagers. These slaves were mainly the result of inter-tribal feuds and inter-clan feuds which were common occurrence in those days. The chiefs and nobles could also acquire slaves by other means for example, when a man took sanctuary in the chief's house and he automatically become slaves. This kind of acquiring slaves is also very common among the Lushais. In other case, if a chief or noble brought up an orphan belonging to another clan from childhood, the orphan also became the slave of the man who brought him up. However, it was not possible for the man to enslave an orphan belonging to his own clan in this way.

In the Mara society, slave is equal to property. Slaves are also acquired as a part of a marriage price and also by purchase. On the whole, slaves were not treated badly among the Mara society. The children of a slave were also slaves and it was only on rare occasions that an owner would give a slave freedom. It is not infrequently happening that the people who have been slaves for some generations

⁶⁶ N.E Perry, P.277.

⁶⁷ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.109.

do not know to what clan they belong. Such people when freed generally adopt the chief's clan as their own.⁶⁸

2.2.7. Dress and ornaments

Like any other races of the North Eastern tribe, the Maras also has their own typical dress which distinguishes them from other tribes. Their dress code is very important and they served an important purpose for their everyday lives. Generally, both men and women wear their hair long. The men knotted their hair at the top of their forehead and the women bind in smooth bands on each side of the face, fastening it in a knot at the back of the head.⁶⁹ For men, there are different kinds of dresses. The most important article that of a men dresses is a loin cloth known as '*dua*' which are of two kinds. The first one being the *dua kalapa*, which is used for everyday wear and the second the *dua ah* for more ceremonial occasion.⁷⁰ The other end of the cloth is passed through the legs, pulled up tight to the back, and wound round the waist to the left passing over a portion cloth covering the genitals holding it in a place. The ceremonial *dua* is used exclusively during special ceremonies. The cloth is an ordinary white cloth but at each end is sewn on a metre length of a dark blue cloth, richly embroidered with patterns with different coloured silk.⁷¹

The Mara women wear far more clothes than the men, and when going to bed at night keep on the clothes they wear by day. Being unaffected by the modern fashions of the West, the Mara women used to wear a short chemise of white home-spun cotton covering the bosom and a long petticoat of dark-blue cotton stuff which is known as *chynahno*, reaching below the knee. For the ladies belonging to the royal house have a special cloth for ceremonial occasions called *Sisai a hno*, ornamented

⁶⁸ N. E. Perry, p.223-227. (See also Zakhu Hlychho, *Mara te Tohbul*, Zakhu Hlychho, Aizawl, 2009, p.110.)

⁶⁹ T.H. Lewin, *The Hills tracts of the Chittagong and the dwellers therein*, reprint by TRI, Aizawl, 2004, p.159.

⁷⁰ K. Mara, *Mara Phohpa nata Ryhpa zy*, K. Robin, Aizawl, 2007, P.5.

⁷¹ G.K. Gosh, *Tribals and their culture: Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram*, Vol 1, S.B Nangia for Ashis publishing house, New Delhi, 1992, p.93.

with cowries and different kinds of beads. Ordinary skirts and petticoats are wide enough to go once round the body only. They are held up by metal belts worn round the waist and over the buttocks. These belts are called *hrakhaw* and *chaiphiapa*. Apart from these, numerous belts are worn, and the number of belts is in an indication of the wealth of the wearer. The upper part of Mara women body is clothed in a small sleeveless jacket called *Kohrei*, open or very loosely tied in front, which barely hides the breast.⁷²

The Maras used various types of beautiful ornaments. Women wear necklaces, preferably, if they possessed. The *sisai* is necklaces of small, long, red, opaque beads. Thirty or forty of these are worn at a time. Another kind of necklace is *dapachhi* made of white glass beads shaped like *sisai* beads. Earrings are not worn by the elder men, but the younger men from the age nine up to their marriage wear a special kind of earrings called *Hawmirahy* which is worn by both the sexes.⁷³ Usually, there are three types of earrings namely *Hawmirahy* which is most valued, *Thorahy* which is made of wood and the *Takarahy* made of silver or white metal. The younger generation of men and girls have taken to wearing in their ears brass and bone collar-studs, which they prize highly. Both young men and girls sometimes wear orchid or other brightly coloured flowers in their ears. Among women, bracelets are also worn popularly by the Maras.

2.2.8. Dances

A common practice and popular amusement in any social event among the Maras is Dancing. It is a common form of amusement among the Maras, and both sexes perform dance while songs are being sung. They love to dance as much as they love to sing. Each of their Dances has their own charm, fascination and rhythm. The early Maras also considered Dancing as vitally significant in their socio-economic and religious life. They were good dancers as well as singers and both the sexes had practically involved in various folkdances and folksongs. Dancing takes place at all feasts and at weddings and wakes where married persons took part as well as the

⁷² N.E Perry, pp.38-40.

⁷³ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.34.

young men and girls. Rituals, feast, Sacrifices and ceremonies were considered partial without performing folk-dances and folk-songs.⁷⁴ The Maras still possessed folk and community dance which have been handed down from generation through the ages.

The following are the most popular dances of the Maras: *Sawlakia*, *Dawhlakia*, *Chochhiepa la*, *Athih la*, *Bei La*, *Mathyu La*, *Azao La*, *Pakhupi La*, *Pazita La*, *Rakha tla*, *Awhta pheichhua*, *Athairapupa La*, *Awpivyno La*, *Hmiakhupati La*, *Vao-ie tlo La*, *Saitlei La*, *Chakei lu ia La*, and *Awkhypa La*.⁷⁵ Amongst this, few dances occupied an important place among the Maras. *sawlakia* dance is considered to be the most prominent and wonderful dance among the Maras. *Sawlakia* dance which means 'the dance of the spirit of the slain' is usually performed during 'Ia' ceremony. The dance is led by the warrior who has taken the head wearing his best cloths and in his hair a plume of red horse hair called 'rabo'. In his right hand he holds the ceremonial *dao* known as 'vaina' and in his left a Mithun hide shield.

Rakha tla is another importance of the Maras which was performed when a man of importance or social order or rich man dies.⁷⁶ However, the origin of *Rakha Tla* is left in obscurity. For the Maras, it was *Ana* or taboo to perform *Rakha Tla* on other occasions like feasts, ceremonies and sacrifices. *Rakha tla* was also known to the *Lais* as *Rawkha Tlak* and also to the *Lushais* as *Cherawkan*. It literally means 'dance with the sliced bamboo'. It was performed mostly at funeral rite and erection of the memorial stone. Among the Maras, *Rakha Tla* was customarily performed in honour of the deceased chief or any wealthy or important person, who died of natural death.⁷⁷

Athih La had been customarily performed in honour of the deceased. It is believed that the *Athi La* dance was learned from the evil spirits, *Lyurahripa*. The story held that long ago, while the Maras were living in the southern Chin Hills, once a man named *Lavaw Photha* died. *Lyurahripa* visited the dead man at night while the

⁷⁴ N.E Perry, p.186.

⁷⁵ Pachi Hlychho, *Mara La nata Hlazy*, Spectrum publications, Guwahati, 1992, p.1.

⁷⁶ G.K. Gosh, p.100.

⁷⁷ K. Zohra, p.176.

deceased's relations and friends who sat inside the house were fast asleep except the two men the deaf and the blind. Then, *Lyurahripa* performed a sort of dance, while blind learned the beats of gong. After *Lyurahripa* left the house the two men performed the dance near the dead. It was said that from this time onwards, the Maras performed the *Athi La* dance only at *Riha* ceremonies.

Another important dance among the Maras is *Bei La* which was named after the grand series of feast known as *Beibei*. It was performed only in the events of *Beita* and *Beipi* the two grades or categories of *Beibei*. The origins of this dance was attributed to the people of Phezau village of the south Haka sub-divisions since the inception of the chieftainship of *Masi*, who belonged to *Chhaihlo clan*. *Bei La* dance was generally performed in honour of the host who organised the grand feast.⁷⁸

Awkhypa La is considered as one of the most enjoyable indigenous dance among the Maras. In the early period, it was usually performed at all beer parties, marriage ceremonies, festivals, feast, wakes, certain ritual sacrifices. Tradition has it that *Awkhypa La* originated and developed from the *Ao-La*, the oldest tune of the Mara folksong. Generally, the Mara dances are often accompanied by traditional Mara songs and musical instruments.

2.2.9. Religious beliefs

The Mara religious beliefs are often governed by taboos and superstition. They were very superstitious minded not only in religious sphere but also in their general life. They believed in one Supreme Being who they gave the name *Khazohpa* which literally means the father of all. The Maras believed that the world was created by *Khazohpa* and that the destinies of the universe are in his hands. They also believed that *Khazohpa* resides in the sky. He is believed to be far more powerful than the *Lyurahripa*, who are the spirits of the mountains, pools and woods. *Khazohpa* is possessed of all human attributes; he has a wife and child, though these

⁷⁸ K. Zohra, p.176.

latter have no names. He is a just benevolent being who deal with men according to their works.

The Maras also believed in the existence and activities of demons. The demons, in Mara, are called '*Lyurahripa*' who are believed to constantly affect the lives of the people. There are several kinds of spirits that can be classified under two categories: those which are naturally harmful to human interest unless propitiated, and those which are capable of giving material benefits to humans if offered sacrifices.⁷⁹ They believe that the good spirits either lived in the sky or below the earth. The Maras give names to the spirits according to the evil work caused by those spirits and places they abide. The former is called malevolent spirit and are believed to reside under huge rocks, in swamps and springs. The latter is benevolent spirits which reside in a high mountain, steep cliffs, and deep pools. Some of these are *Khasoh* village benefactor, *Rah-Hao* community and nature spirits, *Vahiah* tree spirits, *Lasino* animal spirit, *Sakha* animal guardian spirit, *Ahmawh* lust and jealousy spirits etc.

The Maras also believed in the existence of soul called *Thlahpa*. The Maras believed that during the day the soul lives inside the body, which it enters by mouth, but at night during sleep, the soul sometimes leaves its body and wanders about. It is generally believed therefore that the dreams arise, and as souls in their wanderings are able to foresee events, dreams often come true. According to the Maras, souls are of two kinds. The ordinary soul is called *Thlahpa* and *Thlahchhiepa* for bad or evil spirit. When any one falls ill, it is believed that his souls having been seized and detain by *Khazohpa* or *Lyurahripa*, so, as soon as sickness occurs, a sacrifice must be performed to the God or spirit that is believed to have imprisoned the soul.

Like many of their neighbouring tribes, the Maras also has *Ana* which means anything that is forbidden. It may be *Ana* to do certain things, to see, to touch certain things or to go to certain places. The Maras believed that if the prohibition is disregarded, the person defying the prohibition will die or be unlucky. The Maras

⁷⁹ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.81.

also observed many Ana that really encumbered them.⁸⁰ For them Ana was a natural precaution not to offend *Khazohpa*, the spirits and the Demons which had both social and religious implications.

2.2.10. Festivals

Like many of their neighbouring tribes, the Maras also observed many festivals in connection with their religious beliefs, cultural and social life. ‘*Cha-yipi*’⁸¹ is an equivalent word for festival in Mara and is applied to almost all indigenous festivals or grand feast held annually on certain calendar months or seasons. It is very difficult to trace since when the Maras began to celebrate festivals. But tradition has it that the *Cha-yipi* was originated from *Katlo*, a famous legendary figure of the feast. It was believed that very long ago, a rich man *Katlo* held a grand feast for his villagers and for this many domesticated animals were killed. All the villagers spent the whole day drinking, feasting, singing and dancing. It was from this day, the Maras observed *Cha-yipi* annually.⁸² However, in the modern days the name *Cha-yipi* began to fade away and it was known more popularly as the *Ku*.

There are several festivals observed by the Maras and they are invariably celebrated with pomp and gaiety by both men and women, including all the people of old and young. The more prominent among them are *Khutla*, *Chithie Ku* and *Sahria Ku*.

One of the most popular festivals among the Maras is *Khutla* festival which was popularly known as *Lyuva Khutla*.⁸³ The literal meaning of *Lyuva Khutla* is the feast of the Jhum clearing⁸⁴ that traditionally all the Maras are shifting cultivators by clearing the jungle to burn the cleared sites for cultivations. It was usually celebrated after the jhums had all been cut and a sacrifice called *Rialochhi* is also performed. All the villagers celebrated with great joy and it is generally taking place in the last part of *Pami*(march). On the feast day, a joint feast contributed by

⁸⁰ N.E Perry, p.353

⁸¹ K. Zohra, p.27.

⁸² K. Zohra, *Ibid.*, p.27.

⁸³ Pachi Hlychho, p.116.

⁸⁴ P.T Hlychho, *Maraland: Yesterday and Today*, P.T. Hlychho, Shillong, 2007, p.86.

the villagers was held and the villagers selected the house of the wealthiest man in the village as a place for public feast. For this, the villagers contributed with a pot of rice beer, *Sahma* for the feast. On this occasion, many domesticated animals were slaughtered to feast the villagers. On this day, young men and women would perform Folkdance known as *Pakhupi La* in the street and sang various folk song like *Pakhupi Hla*, *Zawchhy Hla*, *Bei Hla*, etc. The *Khutla* festival lasted for several days depending upon the number of rich men in the village, who could provide sufficient feasting.⁸⁵ Soon after the *Khutla* celebrations are over, the jhums were burnt.

Another popular festival among the Maras was *Chithie Ku*, a festival of the new crops. It this festival held usually during monsoon season when the harvest of crops like barley, maize and those of the earlier crops were already over. Every family in the village prepared steamed bread made out of sticky rice to entertain any visitor to their house during festival. The main objective of this festival was of twofold: firstly, it is a kind of thanksgiving festival after the first harvest of crops from the jhums. Secondly, the Maras believed that this was the only time when the dead can be contacted by the living people. It was believed that during this period the spirits of the relatives who have died in the recent past are expected to participate in the feast.⁸⁶ In the festival the entire villagers are expected to be present and participate in various functions.

Sahria ku was one of the most celebrated festivals among the Maras since time immemorial. *Sahria ku* implies simply the festivals of the harvest of rice and is held yearly in the last part of December after when rice harvesting is all over. It is sometimes called as *Chahdi Cha-ypi*. This festival resembles the festival of *Pawl kut* of the Lushais. In the events of the successful harvest, the chief suggested that they should hold public feast in order to appease, and for thanksgiving to *Khazohpa*. One of the most important attributes of the *Sahria Ku* was *Khohna kia* which means sharing of food and meat amongst the village folks. People would share food, meat, and dole out gifts to their relatives, friends and their neighbours. It was considered as disgraceful if a family had nothing to share with their relatives, friends and

⁸⁵ K. Zohra, p.29.

⁸⁶ P.T. Hlychho, p.87.

neighbours. For this occasion, the Maras would prepare themselves in advance so that they would have sufficient stock of food, meat and other requirements during festivals. Festival was celebrated with feast in which feast was divided into two kinds i.e. family feast and community feast. In the family feast a pig would be killed so that close relatives as well as distant relatives would be invited. Invited family would bring their food, meat and rice beer for collective consumption. And for the community feast a large number of mithun, pigs etc., would be killed for the celebration. The entire village irrespective of young and old would take part, sharing food, meat and all kinds of eatable things that they possessed. At the end of *Sahria Ku*, a pig would be killed and the meat was consumed in the midnight. However, women were never allowed to eat the meat.

2.3. Nomenclature of the Maras

The Maras are called by different names by their neighbouring tribes. They were popularly known as the Lakhers by their northern neighbours, the Lushais. It cannot be trace when the Maras were called Lakher by their neighbouring tribes. The word is purely Lushai origin which reads as plucking of cotton (La= cotton, Kher= plucking). The story held by elders says that once, a Lushai, on his visit to the Mara village saw a Mara woman plucking cotton and thus he named the Maras as Lakher. R.A Lorraine clearly justifies this contradiction when he writes in his book as, *“we have introduced them as the Lakhers, but this name is not the correct name for the people, and is both foreign in pronunciation and spelling to the whole language. Their true name is Mara but by the surrounding tribes they were known as the Lakhers, and under this name government has learned to know them and the name has come into such frequent use that is most unlikely that the civilised world will ever know them by any other. The Mission was also founded under that name, we at that time being ignorant of the fact that it was not their true name, but in a book of this character it is quite necessary that the readers should be informed on this matter, and as the surrounding tribe and the government have so firmly fixed this name upon the people it is expedient that they should be known to us under the word*

Lakher.⁸⁷ It appears that since the colonial government came in contact first with the Lushai, the Lushai people must have introduced to them by the name Lakher. Since then Lakher was popularly used to refer to the Mara people.

The Maras were also known as the Shendus by their southern neighbours, the Khumis and the Arakanese.⁸⁸ From various colonial documents and references, the word Shendu appeared variantly as *Samtu*, *Shendoo*, *Shindoo*, *Shindu*, and *Tseindu*. However, this word seems to be identical. It seems the term Shendus was very common and prevalent in the Arakan hill tracts which is used commonly to refer to the Mara people. It is averred that '*Sandu*' variantly known as *Shandu* or *Shendu* is an English corruption of the Khumi word *Samtu* which means 'hair knot' (Sam=hair, Tu= knot). It would not be wrong to say that the Khumis were the tribes with whom the Maras used to carry continuous raid upon. This can be proved by the name which they give to the Maras. It is held by elders that in the early days the Khumis frequently encountered the Mara warriors who wore lofty hair knots above their forehead and thus they named them *Samtu*. Therefore, it is probable that the British officials by following the Khumi identification called the Maras as *Shendu* or *Shandu*.⁸⁹ Thus, the British authorities and administrators used this term to refer to the Maras since then. In many of the colonial sources and references, the mentions of the Shendu can be found. Writing in 1841, A.P. Phayre⁹⁰ refers to the word Tseindu giving a list of thirteen clans, which were clearly identified with the Mara clans mentioned by N.E. Parry.⁹¹

In the early days the Maras were also known to the Chin as Zao, Zyu, yo.⁹² This is evident from references made by the colonial officials in their reports and other writings. Despite the fact that the origin of the term is ambiguous the term appeared frequently in the writings of B.S Carey and H.N Tuck where the word was used to designate the Maras. Accordingly, several Mara villages like Lochei,

⁸⁷ R.A. Lorrain., *Grammar and Dictionary of the Lakher or Mara Language*, Government of Assam, Guwahati, 1951, p.1

⁸⁸ Zakhu Hlychho, p.10.

⁸⁹ K. Zohra, pp.10-11.

⁹⁰ A.P. Phayre, *Account of Arakan*, journal I Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, no 17, 1841.

⁹¹ N.E Parry, p .5.

⁹² K. Zohra, p.10

Ngiaphia, Chapi etc. are clearly identified as Yo villages by the same authorities. To quote Shakespeare writings for this matter, “*the clan calls itself Mara, Lakher being the name used by the Lushais. The Chins, I believe call them Zo, and the Arakan name for them is Klongshai.*”⁹³

The Maras may have been known by different names by different tribes but they called themselves Mara since time immemorial. It is not known since when the Maras called themselves Mara. However, in the works of Prof. K. Zohra, local Historian who dealt quite extensively on the problem of nomenclature, it appears that the term Mara is an archaic word, and is commonly found in folksongs, folk stories, Traditions etc. *Saya Matheih* says that the term Mara is purely conventional, and is coined to design the Maras because of their costly demand of the marriage prices or costly bride’s prices. The designation Mara is a compound syllable of ‘Ma’ and ‘Ra’ meaning ‘costly demand of marriage price’ (ma-marriage price, Ra=costly demand.). Secondly, it is generally believed that the word Mara is synonymous with ‘Maliara’ meaning others’ land (*malia*= other people, *ra*= land). Thus, the term was coined to designate the Maras because of their frequent migration to new tenable and suitable land for better jhum cultivation. The term Mara is therefore, defined as dwellers of the alien fertile land. The word Mara is a correct name, the most conclusive generic term known among the Maras.⁹⁴

2.4. Origins and early settlements:

As the early Mara society was illiterate society, there was no historical record whatsoever which could support the evidence in the trace for their place of origin and migration pattern. It is because of this fact that the early Mara History was shrouded in mystery. In the absence of historical documentation and lack of sources, there is no definite idea about the origin of the Maras. But from the very few available sources and data collected from oral history, the early history of the Maras can be trace and reconstructed to some extent. In tracing the origin of the Maras one

⁹³ J. Shakespeare, *Lushei Kuki Clans*, T.R.I, Aizawl, 1988, p.211.

⁹⁴ K. Zohra, p.8.

has to study comparatively with their closely related tribes who are commonly known as the Chin with whom the Maras shared many common features.

The story of the origin of the Mara tribe as handed down by tradition is as follows: long ago, before the great darkness called *Khazohra* fell upon the world, men all came out of a hole below the earth. As the founder of each Mara group came out of the earth he called out his name. *Tlosai* called out, "I am *Tlosai*": *Zyhno* called out, "I am *Zyhno*": *Hawthai* called out, "I am *Hawthai*": *Sabyh* called out, "I am *Sabyh*": *Heima* called out, "I am *Heima*." Accordingly, God thought that a very large number of Maras had come out and stopped the way. When the Lusheis came out of the hole, however, only the first one to come out called out, "I am Lushei," and all the rest came out silently. God, only hearing one man announce his arrival, thought that only one Lushei had come out, and gave them a much longer time, during which Lusheis were pouring out of the hole silently in great numbers. It is for this reason that Lusheis to this day are more numerous than Maras. After all men had come out of the hole in the earth God made their language different, and they remain so to this day.⁹⁵

However, this tradition has similarities with legends and myths of originality among other Kuki-Chin tribes and other tribal of the North east India. Most of the north eastern tribal groups have hypothesized the myth of their origin from the Bowels of the earth. Especially the Lusheis who lived north of the Maraland and their related clans claims to have originated from Chhinlung Cave. For this purpose, many theories had been generated for the study of their origin. From various propositions, most of the scholars placed Chhinlung cave to have been located somewhere in the southern part of China. Mizo historian like, K. Zawla, supported Chhinlung origin and suggested that Chinlung might be somewhere in China and thus accepted the legend as a historical fact. Historians like Chawn Kio and Sing Kho Khai also believed that the Chin ancestors are either the Ch'iang or Ch'ing in Chinese history. Scholars like Than Tun and Gordon Luce went further by arguing

⁹⁵ N.E Parry, p.4.

that the Ch'iang were not just the ancestors of the Chin but of the entire Tibeto-Burman group.⁹⁶

A social anthropologist like Edmund Leach clearly opposed Chhinlung origin by asserting that “the hypothesis that the Southeast Asian peoples as known to have immigrated from the region of China is a pure myth.” In this regard, anthropologists, T.S. Gangte also dismissed the theory that ‘Chinlung’ is located in China and consider it as purely myth.⁹⁷

Local historian like Rev. Laiu Fachhai also believed that the Maras original home could have been somewhere in the southern part of China.⁹⁸ The same view was also put forward by L. Keivom when he says that the Maras migrated from China and settled in Chin Hills along with other Zo tribes.⁹⁹ However this could not be taken for granted as it lacks historical precision and evidence. It seems more probable that this view also following the theory of Chhinlung Origin. It is apparent that Chin and their sub groups first settled in the Chinwind Valley. This can be cemented by evidence in the form of inscriptions, dating to the time of the Pagan Dynasty of Burma, which had referred to the Chin of the Chindwin Valley. Vumson in his work, *Zo History*, also stated the fact that many remains of Chin settlements are still found today in the Chindwin valley. Thus, from all evidence, it is highly plausible that from around the close of the 13th Century, the Chins settled in Upper Chindwin of Kale-Kabaw valley where they are thought to have led an uninterrupted life for over hundred years. Thus, from this place many of the Chin groups moved to different hill areas of the Chin state in Burma, Lushai Hills (Mizoram) and Manipur in India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

It is commonly believed that the Tibeto-Burman group and Mongoloid stock, who now occupy Southeast Asia and Northeast India, migrated in three waves;

1. The Mon-Khmer (Talaing, Palung, En Raing, Pa-o, Khasi, Annimite.)
2. The Tibeto-Burman (Pyu, Kanzan, Thet, Burman, Chin, Kachin, Naga, Lolo.)

⁹⁶ K. Robin, *Rethinking the History and Culture of Northeast India with Special Reference to the Maras of Mizoram*, p.9.

⁹⁷ Robin, p.9.

⁹⁸ Laiu Fachhai, *The Maras: from Warriors to Missionary*, Bangalore, 1994, p.1.

⁹⁹ John Hamlet Hychho, p.27.

3. The Tai-Chinese (Shan, Saiamese, and Karen.)¹⁰⁰

Lian H. Sakhong argued that the Tibeto-Burman group initially moved towards the West and thereafter subdivided themselves into several groups. They follow different routes, one group reaching northern Tibet, where some of them stayed behind, while others moved on until they reached Burma in three waves. It is generally believed that the Maras were also a part of this migration as they were placed under the Chin group.

Many Local historians are also differed in their opinion regarding the origin of the Maras and generated contradictory views on this field. According to Rev. Albert Bruce Foxall, a missionary to Maraland, the Maras are a branch of the Hill tribes of Malayan or Malayalam and their original home would appear to have been somewhere in Malaysia.¹⁰¹ However, Bhattacharya claim totally different views regarding the origin of the Maras when he says that the original homeland of the Maras appears to have been in the eastern region of Tibet. They came down along with the River Irrawady, Bhutan plain, Myanmar and to their present land. However, these kinds of propositions are without evidence and simply postulation following the lines of Chhinlung origin theory.

In tracing the origin of the Maras one cannot overlook the influence of their neighbouring tribes with whom they share many common features. They shared much of the similarities with the Chin groups. It is also clear that they belonged to what Prof Max Muller has classed as a Lohitic subdivision of Bhotiya, generally understood as Tibeto-Burman. From their settlement at 'Chin Nwe', it appears that the Mara groups, whom Lian H. Sakhong identified as the Laimi tribe, moved to different areas as Thlantlang/Klangklang/Thlatla, Haka/Hiakha who at this time had followed customs partly Poi/Lai and partly Mara/Lakher. It is generally believed that it is from this place that some of the Maras moved towards southwest and inhabited Southern Part of the Lushai Hills while some of the Maras inhabited the hill tracts of the southern part of the Chin in Burma.

Tradition says that, the Maras came from the north, and it is certain that they all came to their present settlement from different places in the Haka Sub-

¹⁰⁰ Robin, pp.10-11.

¹⁰¹ Zakhu Hychho, p.5.

division of the Chin Hills. To quote the words of Dr. S.N Singh which say that according to the Mara tradition, all the human beings came out of a “*khaoh-laipa*” which means a big hole from a place named *Leisaih* in the north before the world witnessed the great darkness called *Khazohhra*.¹⁰² It is also generally believed that the Maras have lived for quite a pretty long period in this particular place which was situated at a place between Leitak and Zaphai in Northern Myanmar. This place was in fact argued as the actual beginning of the Mara history and this claim is strongly supported by many of the Local historian.¹⁰³

N.E Parry concluded that it is from *Leisai* that the Maras started their migrations and arrived at their present settlements. The *Saikao* and *Siaha* people are both *tlosai group* and trace their origin from this place. From *Leisai* they moved to *Saro*, and thence to *Chakhang*, both of which place are in *Haka*.¹⁰⁴ From *Chakhang* they crossed the Kolodyne and came to the Lushai Hills. After coming to Lushai Hills, they first settled at *Phusa* located on a high Hill between *Ainak* and *Siata* and thence they moved to *Khupi* on the *Tisi* River, then to *Theiri* and thence to *Bykhi*. It is in this place that the *Tlosai* group separate themselves into two groups, the former occupying various sites in the neighborhood of *Bykhi*, ending up at their present site of *Siaha*, while the latter, moved successively to *Saikao khithie*, *Khachitla*, *Zybykhi*, *Chhaolo* and *Khihlo*, eventually settling at *Saikao*. From *Saikao*, they have formed the other villages of the *Tlosai* group ruled over by the *Hlychho* chiefs. From the number of village sites they have occupied since coming to the Lushai hills, it is certain that they must have settled in the Lushai hills district between 200 and 300 years.¹⁰⁵

Another group of the Maras, identified as the *Hawthai clan* also claim to have originated at a place called *Chira* in *Haka*. From here they migrated to *Tisi* via *Saro*, *Siata*, *Paimi* and *Noh-aohtlah*. They are therefore more recent immigrants than the *Tlosai*. The *Zyhno* clan also traces their origin at a place called *Hnaro* from the same place at *Haka*. From here, *Zyhno* clan moved towards south west by crossing

¹⁰² P.T. Hlychho, p.15.

¹⁰³ N.E Parry, pp.1-2.

¹⁰⁴ P.T. Hlychho, p.16.

¹⁰⁵ N.E Parry, p.2.

the River Kolodyne and settled on a high range called *Kahrie tla*. They moved in succession to *Hloma* near *Syhm* and *Chy-o* on the banks of river *Tisi* and then settled on their present site of *Savang*(Zyhno).

The *Sabyh* group who are also identified as the *Chapi* clan also originated at *Thlatlah* village in Hakha district of the Chin Hills. From *Thlatlah*, they moved to *Ngiaphia* and then to *Pazo*, *Khothlaw*, *Chorihlo*, *Chawkhu*, *Fachaw*, *Khiraw*, *Ravaw*, *Tichei*, *Pasei*, *Pemai*, *Sacho*, *Loma* and to their present site at *Tichho*. It is also asserted that the *Heima* and *Lialai* groups of the Arakan Hill Tracts are very closely allied and belonged to the the *Sabyh* groups. Apart from these, there are certain villages in *Haka* who may be classed as half-way between Lais and Maras and they are found in villages like *Hnaro* in Haka and *Iana* and *Siata* in the Lushai Hills.

Tracing the origin of a particular tribe is not an easy one. Especially for the Maras, belonging to the Chin group, who shared many common features with them. It is for this reason that many historians and scholars propounded diverse views and generated contradictory views on their origin. Even though there is no historical documentations and archeological evidence to support the views on the origin of the Maras which traces back their origin to Southern China. By observing physical features and cultural similarities, it is possible to trace their origin to some extent. From the above argument, there is no denying the fact that the Maras made a historical migration from Haka sub-divisions of the Chin Hills of Myanmar¹⁰⁶ and arrive at their present land in which they have been scattered around the Mara Autonomous District Council and the adjacent Hills of Arakan hill tracts.

2.6.The institution of Chieftainship:

Chieftainship originates in the physical and intellectual power of any person who used to command a large number of people and to repel any attack by other chiefs and enemies. In other words, one, who had the ability to organize a

¹⁰⁶ Robin, p.15

force, became a chief.¹⁰⁷ Thus, it appears from the above statement that the institution of Chieftainship emerged out of the collective needs of group life. But it is not known when and how in the past, this institution took concrete shaped. This statement also has a lot to do with the Mara chiefs in tracing the origin of Chieftainship among the Maras.

It is not known as to how and when the Maras came under the rule of the chiefs. On account of the unavailability of records and historical documentation, the origin and development of the Mara Chieftainship cannot be traced accurately. To understand their origin one has to turn attention on Oral History to be able to reconstruct Mara Chieftainship to some extent. It is generally believed that the Maras were still without Chiefs even when they occupied Chin Hills and were rule by Elders and Warriors.¹⁰⁸ The development of Chieftainship among the Maras however can be trace accurately from the time they left Chin Hills.

On their way to migration the Mara people felt quite unease and anxious because of the prevailing conditions of raids and fights and they were still without chiefs. Those days Chiefs were utmost important to protect their people from the enemy and it is around this time that the different Mara clan who came in different phases began to have Chiefs. It was indeed out of this general feeling of uneasiness and restlessness that the villagers felt the need to have Chiefs who would protect them and lead them at times of war. This can be corroborated by the existences of different ruling clans among the Maras right after they left Chin Hills in Burma viz: *Choza, Bôhia, Chhâchhai, Hlychho, Khuhly, Thlyuthâ, Zawthâ, Nôhro* etc.¹⁰⁹ After settling in the Maraland, these clans rule over different Mara clan.

The *Saikao* branch of *Tlosai* and *Siaha*, who were believed to be the earliest among the Mara tribe to have migrated to this land, are ruled by chiefs of the *Hlychho* clan respectively extending their regime by establishing new villages like *Amobyu, Theiva, Pala, Tokalo, Lomasu, Paitha, Lophia, Thiahra, Tisopi, Thosai* etc. All these *Tlosai* villages use the same dialect, but the customs of the *Siaha Tlosai*

¹⁰⁷ R.N Prasad, “*Traditional Political Institution of Chieftainship in Mizoram: Powers, functions, position and privileges*” in J.V Hluna (edit.), *History and Identity formation in North-East India*, Concept Publishing Company PVT.LTD, New Delhi, 2013, p.197.

¹⁰⁸ Mylai Hlychho, P.85.

¹⁰⁹ K. Robin, p.65.

differ in certain small details from that of *Saikao Tlosai*.¹¹⁰ It is generally believed that *Tlosai* group of Mara were responsible in pushing the Lushai people to the North.¹¹¹ The *Zyhno*, the last to submit under the British were rule over by *Bohia* clan. They were not spread out in the same way as *Tlosai* did but concentrated in Savang and two other villages namely, *Laki* and *Laikei*. The southernmost villages like, *Chapi*, *Chakhei*, *Sabyh*, *Mawhro* are of rule over by *Choza* clan. The *Choza* clans are very powerful clan. Their rule, although decidedly more despotic than that of the other ruling clans, seems to be on the whole just, as well as firm, with the result that their villages are the least litigious of all. The smallest of all the Mara groups is the *Hawthai*, whose Chiefs belongs to the *Nohro* clan. Only *Tisi* village is ruled by a *Nohro* chief. Although there are many villages inhabited by the *Hawthai* clan, these villages, however, were under the chief of the *Hlychho* clan.

The Chief or *Bei* is the head of the village. He is the leader at the times of war, the owner of the land and also the protector and the father of his people.¹¹² The Mara chieftainship is hereditary, and both inheritance and successions is by primogeniture, the eldest legitimate son succeeding. His power and privileges come from his birth.¹¹³ The Maras are monogamous to the extent that they have only one legitimate wife and although a good many men have one or more concubines in addition, it is more usual for men to have only one wife. A chief usually has one or more concubines.

The Chiefs has full authority over their villagers. They can deliver punishment in the form of fines and in case the villagers refuse the Chief's order, the Chiefs can refuse them to allow the offender to cultivate his lands any longer and can turn him out of his village. While the Chief gives his land for cultivation, in return the people must pay him certain dues, render him certain services and come to his aid when called upon by him for assistances. The Chief also represents the village in all dealings with the Government and other villages.¹¹⁴ In matters of all respect, the Chiefs were back up by *Bei Khybyh* in administration of the village. In this way the

¹¹⁰ N.E Parry, p.230.

¹¹¹ T.H. Lewin, *The hill tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers therein*, p.158.

¹¹² N.E Parry, P.230-248.

¹¹³ Nohro Hmoko, *Mara Losohpa: Valua Hlychho*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2015, p.104.

¹¹⁴ N.E. Parry, P.249.

Mara chiefs rule over five different Mara clans until the annexation of Maraland to the colonial regime in 1924.¹¹⁵

2.7. Mara language:

The Mara society is ethnically homogenous and they consist of five principles Sub-group viz: The *Tlosai*, the *Hawthai*, the *Zyhno*, the *Chapi* and the *Vytu*. These groups speak different dialect but they all can understand each other. The dialect spoken by the largest number of persons is *Tlosai* and this is also the language taught in the *Saikao* School. *Tlosai* language is also the common language of all the Mara tribe. Like their neighbouring tribes, the early Mara society is also illiterate Society and has no written language. However, according to one Legend, in the story of Nara, it is related how Nara, before he drowned himself in the ocean, threw all his possessions into the water, among them the art of writing, which was picked up by the foreign soldiers, who thus learnt to write, though the Maras themselves lost all knowledge of the art.

Sir George Grierson classified the Mara Language as a member of the central Chin Sub-group of the Kuki group of the Assam-Burma branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.¹¹⁶ Linguistically, according to the Linguistic survey of India, 1904, the Chin Language is divided into four major groups.

1. The Northern group: Thado, Ramhau, Sokte, Siyi, Ralte, Paite.
2. The Central group: Tashon, Lai, Lakher(Mara), Lushai, Bangjogi, Pankhu.
3. The Old-Kuki group: Rangkhoh, Kolren, Kom, Purum, Hmar, Chakma.
4. The Southern group: Chin-Me, Chin-bok, Chin-pun, Khyang.¹¹⁷

The first record of the Mara Language was made in 1852 by Capt. S.R. Tickell in his drew up short vocabulary. And again in 1869, Capt. Lewin drew up a list of common Shendu(Mara) words. It was only in 1908 that a grammar and dictionary of the Mara language was published by Rev. F.W. Savidge who was

¹¹⁵ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.1.

¹¹⁶ N.E Parry, p.501.

¹¹⁷ G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic survey of India, vol. 3: Tibeto-Burman Family*, Delhi, 1967, p.67.

working as a missionary at Lunglei.¹¹⁸ In spite of all its development and renovations in the last few decades of the 19th century, it was R.A Lorrain who perfected it as it was today. R.A Lorrain managed to reduce Mara language into writings and created alphabets in the year 1908.¹¹⁹ In fact, this Alphabet was created for the common usage of all the Mara tribes with *Tlosai* dialect as its base. Since then, the Maras use this Alphabet in writings and record keeping for every activity till date. One interesting fact which we should remember here is the fact that unlike *Lais* of their neighbouring tribes whose language has much been assimilated by the Lushai language called *Duhlian*, the Maras still manage to check this kind of assimilation to some extent and their language is use freely in the Mara Autonomous District Council.

2.8.Christian Missions and its impacts

The year 1813 marked the entry of Christian Missionaries to India following the Passing of the Charter Act of 1813 which allows the Christian Missionaries to enter into British Indian Colony.¹²⁰ Though Mission works had already been started in the early part of the 19th century in the Indian Sub-continent, North East India remain untouched for many decades. The earliest Christian Missionaries to have worked in the Northeast were the Protestant Missions namely; the Welsh Calvinistic Mission operated in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of the then Assam and the London Baptist Missionary Society worked in the Chittagong division of the then Eastern Bengal. Indeed, the Missions work in Mizoram could be attributed to these two Missions.

Amongst the various tribes living in the Lushai hills it was the Lushais who first came in contact with Christianity when Rev. William Williams who was working in the Khasi Jaintia Hills under Presbyterian Missions came to visit Aizawl

¹¹⁸ N.E Parry, p.510.

¹¹⁹ R.C. Nohro, *The Lakher Pioneer Missionaries nata Hriatuhpa zy*, E.C.M, Siaha, 2000, P.18.

¹²⁰ Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar., *From Plassey to partition*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2004, p.80.

as early as 1891.¹²¹ This was followed by the coming of Baptist Missionaries Rev. F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H Lorrain, who were sponsored by Robert Arthington of London. By mutual arrangement, the Baptist and the Presbyterian Mission made geographical demarcation of Lushai hills for their respective area of operation. Northern part was occupied by the Presbyterian with Aizawl as its Headquarters and southern part was taken care by the Baptist with its capital at Lunglei.¹²² But the Southernmost part of the country occupied by the *Lakher* or Mara was left untouched for sometimes.

The formation of the Lakher Pioneer Mission in 1905 by Mr. R.A Lorrain,¹²³ the younger brother of Mr. J.H Lorrain of Baptist Mission stationed at Lunglei, was indeed the turning point in the history of the Maras as the entire history of the Maras would seek new beginning hereafter. The Lakher Pioneer Mission was founded in London with the help of a group of committed missionary minded believers from among the relatives and friends of R.A Lorrain, who belonged to different denominational groups, especially to reach these unknown people. Thus, the Lakher Pioneer Mission became purely a voluntary Mission Organization. After very long journey Mr and Mrs R.A Lorrain entered the then Lakher Land on the 26th September 1907 at *Saikao*. The missionaries immediately approached Mr. *Thylai Hlychho*, the then Chiefs of *Saikao*, in the evening. It is very interesting to note that the Chief, without hesitation, allowed the Missionaries to occupy one of the strong and nicely built Huts at further end of the *Saikao* village.¹²⁴ And it is from here that R.A Lorrain started his Missionary works to evangelise the people of Maraland.

The first few years of their stay were spent on learning the local language as well as acquainting and adapting themselves with the local environment.¹²⁵ The Maras experiences tremendous changes through education, medical Mission and evangelization which was consider the three pillars of Mission

¹²¹ Rohmingawii, “*Christianity and society in Mizoram*” in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingawii (ed.) *Mizo narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2013, pp.191-192.

¹²² Rohmingawii, “*Christianity and society in Mizoram*” in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingawii (ed.) *Mizo narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, p.190.

¹²³ R.C. Nohro, *The Lakher Pioneer Missionaries nata Hriatuhpa zy*, E.C.M, Siaha, 2000, P.2.

¹²⁴ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.170

¹²⁵ K. Robin, pp.77-81.

work.¹²⁶ Within a short span of their stay R.A Lorrain able to reduce the *Lakher* language into writing in the year 1908 which became an important mechanism in propagating Christian doctrines among the Maras. Although he was not fluent in Mara language in the beginning, with the request from local elder he open school in his compound in 1908. Keeping in mind the necessity of Bible translation for better convenience in evangelizing the people R.A Lorrain translate few books of the Bible into Mara Language. Schools were open and many people quit drinking which was prohibited by the Church. Moreover, as a part of mission works the Missionaries often visit the villagers and nurture the sick people.

Apart from their work on literacy, the missionaries often administered medicine to the people and in this way the medical work supported the Christian Mission to large extent. This can be seen from the report made by one of the missionary Rev. Albert Bruce Foxall in the year 1963 that, there were as many as 4739 persons receiving free medicines and treatments.¹²⁷ Through restoration of their physical health, their traditional world view and beliefs system were obliterated and instead restored their already broken relationship with creation and the creator.

The traditional value system of the Mara went through a tremendous change after Christianity. The status of *pasaipha*, possession of slaves, human and animal heads were no longer considered honour and power. The Christian teachings to love one another influenced the people greatly.

The most significant impact of the working of the Mission can be felt in education. Through education the Maras came in contact with the outside world and their outlooks was completely changed. The emergence of the educated elites among the Maras could also be attributed to the Missionaries. The Maras were illiterate people before the coming of the Christian Missionaries. However, with the coming of Christian missionaries, both day and night classes were initiated in almost all the villages. Once schools were established, the people made great progress in learning. Considering the fact that the Maras began to have many book in their language only in 1920, the progress made by them in the field of education is tremendous. The working of the Christian missionaries bears a fruitful result as many Maras began to

¹²⁶ Rohmingmawii p.230.

¹²⁷ R.C. Nohro, pp.30-31.

work as a doctors, administrator, lecturers, teachers, and produce imminent politicians. In fact, the Maras became one of the most literate tribes in Mizoram¹²⁸.

It is the Missionaries who, in every way of life, encourage the young educated elites in driving the wheels of the Mara community even at the times of India's independence when the fate of the Mara was tested. Though the Missionaries could not save the then Lakher Land from the breakup following India's independence, the teachings and encouragement that they rendered upon the Maras could still be seen in the subsequent years when the Maras demanded a separate autonomy to safeguard their political interest which they achieve in the form of District Council in 1972.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.329.

¹²⁹ Zakhu Hlychho, p.176.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL POLITICS

This chapter attempted to trace the origin of political consciousness among the Maras which ultimately led to the demand for autonomous district council within the framework of the sixth schedule. An attempt would also be made to highlight important issues which tempted the Maras to demand separate District. In order to understand the beginning of the political consciousness among the Maras and their cultural politics, one needs to have clear understanding of their past. This chapter would analyse the early contacts with the British through which the Maras came familiar with the modern concept of autonomy or self-rule or self-determination.

3.1.Early relations with the British:

Maraland or the land of the Maras was left untouched for a long period of time even after the British came in contact with them in the early part of the 19th century. The British conquered Maraland much later than their neighbouring tribes. In the beginning, the colonial Government was not interested in taking over the administration of the Lushai hills. They did not simply wanted to involve in the internal tribal feuds and conflicts on the ground that they could not gain anything by interfering with the internal administration.¹³⁰The colonial government completely misunderstood the tribal motives and the tribal in and around the British occupied territories were enjoying raids and creating trouble for the British government in the North East which inevitably forced the British Government to take some measures around this area. It is apparent that because of the continuous raids and disturbances caused by the Lushais in the British occupied Cachar and Sylhet, and never-ceasing raids on the south carried out by the Lakhers(Mara) in the Chittagong Hills let to the annexation of Lushai Hills.

¹³⁰R. Hmingthanzuala p.26.

As early as in the 1841, in the writings of Lieutenant Phayre, the Maras were first mentioned in which the author gives a list of thirteen Tseindu clans¹³¹. In a note on some Hill Tribes on the Kuladyne River,” written in 1846, Lieutenant Latter says, “the Most powerful among them are the Shendoos, who, being beyond our frontier, are known to us only by their devastations on those tribes which pay us tribute: the suddenness, secrecy and never-failing nature of which it would be impossible to give an idea. The Khons, who are likewise beyond our frontier, are employed by the Shendoos as guides and spies, and are on that account obnoxious to the vengeance of those clans who may owe a blood feud to the Shendoos.”¹³²

The first account of the Lakhers as a separate tribe seems to have been written in 1852 by Capt. Tickell who stated that “and among these, the Shendoos, though well known by name and repute in Arracan, have never yet been visited by the people of the plains, nor has a single specimen of this race been seen. I believe, by either Mugh or European in Arracan until 1850, when two emissaries or spies from them met me at a hill village some distance up the Kolodyne River.”¹³³ Mackenzie, in his book ‘the North east Frontier of Bengal’, writes about the Maras as a formidable nation living to the North-East and East of the Blue Mountain. All the country south of the Karnafuli has for many years been exposed to their ravages.¹³⁴ The respect with which the Maras were regarded must have been due to lack of knowledge and the impossibility of getting into touch with them. Though the colonial authorities were not much disturbed at the beginning, the above statement clearly shows the atrocities and ravages carried out by the Maras which have already reach the minds of the colonial officers even before the British encounter them.

In the year 1760 Mir Kasim ceded Chittagong to Lord Clive of the east India Company and trade was opened up with the adjacent and intensely jungly hill tracts to the south Lushai hills inhabited by the Chakmas, the Tripuras, Mros, Kumis and others. This kind of economic development in the Chittagong hills attracted the

¹³¹ To know more about Tseindu or Shendoos or lakher (also refer to Chapter 2, page number. 22)

¹³²N.E Parry, p.6.

¹³³N.E Parry, p.1.

¹³⁴A. Mackenzie, p.331.

Hill people of the South Lushai Hills particularly the *Lakher*s and the *Pawis*, who spend most of the time between November and May for raiding. The process of assimilation in this part of the world to India can be said to have begun as early as 1777, when the chief of Chittagong reports to Warren Hastings the bad behaviour of the mountaineers, who committed great hostility on the company's landholders, who live far the interior parts of the Hills, who have not known the use of firearms and whose bodies go unclothed. Since then, the Maras intrude Chittagong hill tracts very often. The first known *Lakher* raids was noticed in 1838 against the Khumi village called *Hlengkreing*, when thirty to forty people were killed and thirty-eight women and children carried into slavery. Again in 1847, a *Shendu* foray was reported when the subjects of Kalindi Rani and of the *Phru* were raided. It was reported in the year 1865 that the *Shendus* and other tribes regularly raided the Chittagong Hill Tracts to loot and to take heads. It was about this time that Lewin who really laid the foundations of the British rule in the Lushai Hills and who was the first English man to establish intimate relations with the Hill tribes in this part of the world appears on the scene and he is undoubtedly the first Englishman to get in touch with some of the Mara clans like *Zyhno*.¹³⁵

The successive expedition to the Lushai Hills and the Chittagong Hills does not necessarily affect the Lakher Land. In the early years of 1871, the Maras again attacked the *Pyndoo* outpost which was unsuccessful and in 1874-75 they made an attempt at a raid, which was frustrated. In the first Lushai expedition two columns entered the Hills, one from Cachar and the other from Chittagong. However this expedition dealt with the Lushais and left the *Lakher land* untouched.¹³⁶ The following years after the first Lushai Expedition, the *Lakher*s remained comparatively quiet until 1888, when a raiding party of *Shendus* under *Hausata* murdered Lieutenant John Stewart of the Leinster Regiment. In fact, these raiders, though referred to as *Shendus* were not *Lakher*s. This outrage may be said to be the immediate cause of the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1888-89, which led to the occupation of Chin and Lushai Hills.

¹³⁵T.H. Lewin, pp. 31-32.

¹³⁶A. Mackenzie, p.312.

The Second Lushai expedition of 1888 put some of the *Lakher* village under the colonial regime. But there are still un-administered areas lying between the Lushai Hills, the Chin Hills and the *Arakan*, containing the *Zyhno*, *Saby* and *Lialai* groups with certain villages who are still involve in raids. These villages often Jhum beyond their boundaries in the British occupied areas of *Lakher* land which often creates disputes and trouble among chiefs. In consequence of this intrusion by the un-administered villages, Mr. Whaley, the then Sub-Divisional Officer of Lunglei marched through the un-administered tract and came to an official agreement with their chiefs, but for practical reasons these areas were left as it were. In 1906, *Zyhno* again raided *Paitha* village which was under the British administration and carried off some runaway slaves. For this purpose, an expedition was proposed but before it was ready to start the captives were released and operation was postponed till 1907. Until 1917, there were no raids whatsoever around the un-administered hill tracts of the Chittagong Hills, when the *Zyhno* had raided the Arakan *Lakher* village *Tybu*. As a result of this forays and fulfilment of the early propose expedition a column was taken through the independent villages by the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills where *Chapi* and *Zyhno* villages were punished.¹³⁷

The year 1922 was indeed a landmark in the history of the Maras as it was in this year that a meeting was convened at Baw village (located at Myanmar) which was attended by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Deputy Commissioners of the Chin Hills and the North Arakan Hill Tracts. The meeting was a step towards formal demarcation of jurisdictional boundaries between the three districts and also incorporated all the, hitherto, independent villages into the British administration.¹³⁸ Subsequently, the whole area was divided into different parts among the three districts such as the Lushai Hills, The Chin Hills and the Arakan Hills tracts.¹³⁹ When the *Zyhno* village submitted to the British territory in 1924, the whole area was under the administration of the British and the villages which fell to the Lushai hills

¹³⁷N.E Parry, pp.9-12.

¹³⁸K. Robin, p-74.

¹³⁹K. Zohra, p.2.

have been loosely administered under the Chief Commissioner of Assam and form a part of the Lushai Hills.¹⁴⁰

3.2. Status of the Lushai hills prior to India's independence:

Prior to 1891, there was no proper administrative set up in the then Lushai hills instead it was still part of undivided Assam since pre –independence Era¹⁴¹. As a result of the 1891 Lushai expedition the territory of Lushai Hills was divided into two administrative sub-divisions namely North Lushai Hills which was placed under the government of Assam and South Lushai Hills under the government of Bengal. But in the second Chin-Lushai Conference which was held during 14th to 18th December, 1896 at Lunglei, the amalgamation of north and South Lushai Hills district was discussed. The conference passed a recommendation demanding the early amalgamation of North and South Lushai Hills. As a result, on 27th January, 1898, the British Government of India accorded its approval of the amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills¹⁴². Subsequently, the Lushai Hills District was brought under the administrative control of the Government of Assam with effect from 1st April, 1898.¹⁴³

The future of the Lushai Hills District was discussed in 1941. Many colonial administrator including Robert Reid suggested that the Hills District in North East should be combined together to constitute a separate administrative unit called the North East Frontier Province.¹⁴⁴ But the government rejected this proposal. Another proposal was made by Sir Reginald Coupland for creation of a sub-province for the hill areas of Assam. Although the Simon Commission advised the exclusion of the Assam Hills from the scheme of constitutional reform, N.E. Parry's suggestion for the constitution of the Hills of Assam and Burma into one administrative unit

¹⁴⁰N.E Parry, p.12.

¹⁴¹S.N. Sing, Tribes of *Mizoram*, Mittal, 1981, p. 113.

¹⁴²J. Zorema, "British policy towards the Mizos" in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii (ed.) *Mizo narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2013, p.144.

¹⁴³Doungel, Jangkhongam, *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2010, p.1.

¹⁴⁴R.N. Prasad, *Autonomy movements in Mizoram*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1994, p.3.

continued to possess the late British administrators and grew into a plan for the creation for a Crown Colony in 1947. On the eve of India's independence, the Superintendent of Mizoram wanted to bring the District Conference into existence in 1946. Before the establishment of the District Conference, no political activity of any kind was permitted in the Lushai Hills but it was Macdonald, who lifted this prohibition.¹⁴⁵ As a result the District Conference, with the advice of the superintendent, was constituted which consist of 20 representatives elected by the commoners and 20 representatives elected by the chiefs. The first District Conference was held in January 1946 and the second was held in 1947 which was boycotted by the Mizo Union.¹⁴⁶ Thus the situation of Lushai Hills District was still uncertain at this stage.

The Bordoloi Committee, consisting of Runath Brahma, A.V. Thakkar, B.N. Rau, the constitutional adviser to the Constituent Assembly and Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Minister of Assam and member of Constituent Assembly visited Aizawl in April 1947 to study the minds of the Mizo people, their administrative problems and the desire to have autonomy for their area. Around this time the Lushai Hills had no representatives in the Constituent Assembly. So the Committee co-opted Saprawnga and Khawtinkhuma from Mizo Union Party to represent Mizo problems.¹⁴⁷ At this point of time the Mizo Union Party was already divided into two factions such as, the Right wing led by Pachhunga and the Left wing led by Dengthuama. In spite of the developed factional fights and rift, both factions separately appeared before the Sub-Committee and submitted their views and demanded that in case the Lushai Hills should join Assam, there should be at least three representatives from the Lushai Hills.¹⁴⁸ In spite of animated discussions and verbal war in the constituent Assembly on the report of the Bordoloi Committee, the Constituent Assembly finally considered the matter on 7th September 1949, and adopted the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India which provides for creation

¹⁴⁵R.N. Prasad, *Government and Politics in Mizoram*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1987.P.77

¹⁴⁶Venkata Rao, Thansanga & Hazarika, *A century of Government and Politics in N.E. India, Vol 3, Mizoram*, S. Chand, New Delhi, 1987, pp.36-38.

¹⁴⁷, R.N. Prasad, P.79.

¹⁴⁸Venkata Rao, Thansanga & Hazarika, *A century of Government and Politics in N.E. India, Vol 3*, p.86.

of Autonomous District Council in the then Hill District of Assam.¹⁴⁹ After the Indian constitution came into force, the government of Assam set up the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council especially to advise the Government of Assam in matters relating to Lushai Hills.

The political development in Lushai Hills and around the North East has enormous impact on the political life of the Maras who were already in the process of safeguarding their political grievances by submitting memorandum to the Superintendent of the Lushai hills as early as 1945. This movement of politically conscious ideas that developed at the end of around 19th century particularly among the various tribes of north east who were in the course of stirring their demands for self-rule clearly affected the Maras. The educated elites among the Maras were also quite conscious of their political fate and adopted various measures to redress their grievances.

3.3.Genesis of political consciousness:

Political consciousness means involved or charged or concerned with, acts against a government or a political system. In the case of colonial setting, consciousness reflects a whole range of colonial experience in the third world countries. But if we look at compact dictionary, it explains the term consciousness as one's awareness of something or positive response of a person to the surroundings. These positive responses were often in the forms of indigenous and European discourses. The term political consciousness has been developed in the 20th century by many social movements and the writings of thinkers and intellectuals.¹⁵⁰

The movement for autonomy and the feeling of political consciousness in the North east India can be attributed to the early educated Khasi. It began in Jaintia hills, the most advances part of all the hill areas of the North east with the establishment of Jaintia Durbar in 1900¹⁵¹. It was set up as a socio-cultural

¹⁴⁹Kusumbhar Bhuyan, *Sixth Schedule in the North East India: A case study of Karbi Anglong District*, DVS publisher, Guwahati, 2008, p.103

¹⁵⁰ K. Zugman, 'Political consciousness and social movement theory', <https://www.jstore.org/stable/29768170>, Accessed: 23/04/2014 03:19, p.24.

¹⁵¹S.K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Orient Longman Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1973, p.66.

organization and the first of its kind in the North east. This gave a new light to the North east especially in terms of political worldview of the tribals. Politics or political consciousness came in the wake of the Montford reforms inseparably with social movements of different kind. The work of Christian missionaries has a deep impact on the lives of the tribal people in the early part of the 20th century and the result was quite outstanding as the Khasi gentlemen by the name Rev. James Joy Mohan Nichols Roy came to the front in awakening the people of their present status and their future position. Roy, being married to American lady, travelled widely and toured around every corner of the Khasi hills and initiated the establishment of the Khasi National Durbar in 1923. Even after he was elected to the member of Legislative Assembly in Assam government, he did not stop motivating the people and spreading political consciousness among the Khasi. As a result, there was an attempt made by the Khasi to have representation of the Khasi in the proposed Indian Federal legislature. This can be seen as an eye opening political ambitions of the early politically conscious Khasi Leaders and spread the news that Northeast India was no more isolated in terms of politics of mainland Indian Sub-continent. Therefore, in the early part of the 20th century, unlike other hills people, political consciousness had reached its maturity in the hilly region of the Khasi hills.

The only other politically conscious movement, seen in the form of social movement, was recorded in the second decade of the 20th century in the Naga Hills¹⁵². In the early part of 1918 with some officials of the Naga Hills and a few village headmen set up a Naga Club. This was clearly noticeable when Simon Commission mentioned that beyond Dimapur they had met representatives of the Northeast frontier people including the Naga. The Naga Club raises their voice demanding representatives to the Assam Legislative Assembly. At this time a round there was no mention of any other political activities in the hills.

In the Lushai Hills political awakening came in the form of Associations or Organizations in the early part of 1935 with the establishment of Mizo Zirlai Pawl, Young Lushai Association which later renamed as Young Mizo

¹⁵²S.K. Chaube, p,70.

Association. But if we look at the works of BB Goswami, in his book, *Mizo Unrest*, he said, “the first activity about which people often remember was initiated sometime in 1925, when a group of persons under the leadership of Telala of Ralte tribes, contacted the superintendent of the district, to initiate changes in the administration, so that they may participate in the Assam politics.”¹⁵³ Indeed, the Lushai political consciousness has been the result of the mission work which had already been in the Lushai hills since 1894. The Lushais, with the help of Christian Missionaries, began to develop political awareness among the larger section of the community.

Another important factor that aggravated the political consciousness was public arousal in demanding the removal of the oppressive chiefs in the early part of 1926. However, the Superintendent did not take the matter seriously instead imposed a fine of Mithun to those family who opposed the chiefs. This intensified the situation and the feeling of political consciousness spread across the hills demanding freedom from the oppressive chiefs. Around this time certain section of the Mizo individuals had already possessed the idea of having representatives in the Assam Legislative Assembly. In 1926, some of the politically conscious Mizo individuals, who were residents of Kulikawn, namely: Darchhingpuia, Thuama, Saikunga, Thanzuala, Chawngnuaia, V.Z. Biaka and Chhawngdailova submitted a memorandum to N.E Parry complaining about the imposed labour on the commoners. At the same time, they consulted the local advisers in Shillong for help on the issue of having representatives in Assam Legislative Assembly. However, on their arrival they were arrested as political movement was totally prohibited by the District authority in the Lushai Hills. It was clear from the fact that the Lushai hills was not far from being attracted by the kind of political activities prevalent in the neighbouring areas of Assam and Bengal. Ultimately, in 1946, the first Mizo political party, Mizo Union was established. Since then, the whole idea of political consciousness implanted among the masses which continue till today.

The political activities in the Northern part of the then Lushai hills was mounting in staggering pace which left no stone unturned for the Maras who live in

¹⁵³ B.B. Goswami, *Mizo Unrest*, Aelekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1979, p.128.

the southernmost part of the Lushai hills to sense the wave of the progress. Unlike their neighbouring tribes, the Maras tends to develop a unique system of political activities in the first half of the 20th century. However, we can say that this area had been less developed and had not been attractive to the political development in the Lushai hills. It would seem that the Maras were less exposed to the contemporary social and political awakening in the hills because of its isolation from the rest of the Hills district. The British Indian government also followed a policy of non-interference in the Southern Lushai hills right from the beginning which created an atmosphere of utmost pleasant space for the tribe to live in isolation for a few more decades than the rest of the hill tribes. It may be reiterated that because of its isolation, the Maras seems to experience political consciousness which may be different from their neighbouring tribes.

In case of the Maras, the process of political consciousness took a drastic change after the coming of R.A Lorrain, a Christian missionary in 1907¹⁵⁴. Although the Maras had experience autonomy or self-rule since time immemorial, they have never experienced a modern concept of autonomy. They believe in their tradition and culture thus leading a simple way of life and they had never been exposed to modern political system until they came in contact with the western world. Thus, any political consciousness hardly existed in the hills of southern Mizoram before the coming of the British. According to Mylai Hlychho, local historian and politician, “the process of the Maras political consciousness began only after the coming of the Christian missionaries, R.A Lorrain and his wife on 26th September, 1907.”¹⁵⁵ He attributed the work and contribution of the Christian missionaries as the root cause for the development and emergence of political consciousness in Maraland. His assumption became the most accepted views on the beginning of political consciousness among the Maras. But how far the Christian missionaries contributed for the cause of political awakening could never be underrated.

¹⁵⁴ R.A Lorrain, *Five years in Unknown Jungle*, First Indian Facsimile Reprint edition, TRI, Aizawl & Spectrum publication, Guwahati, 1988, p.70

¹⁵⁵ Mylai hlychho, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 15th August 2015.

But there are some local historians who still believed that the Maras already developed a nation for themselves prior to the coming of missionaries. Prominent pastor, Rev. Laiu Fachhai asserted that the Mara people's understanding of nationhood was different from the modern concept of nation-state. Even before the coming of the Christian missionaries, the Mara people already have a sense of nation-building in their own rights. Each people or tribe was a nation in its own right by virtue of speaking a distinct language, having its own ruler, territory. But this statement does not necessarily conclude that the Maras have political consciousness even before the coming of the missionaries, instead it clarifies the fact that the modern concept of political consciousness has been the repercussion of the development which already started prior to the coming of missionaries. According to Rev. T. Laikai, "the Maras had already developed a sense of having a separate administration or autonomy as early as 1907 when the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries came to South Lushai hills". He believed that the rhythm which has been started got boosted by the Christian Missionaries of whom he believed, moulded and cemented the already developed ideas i.e. Autonomy¹⁵⁶.

3.3.1. Contribution of the missionaries:

The coming of the European Christian missionaries to a far-flung area had a far-reaching effects and impact on the mostly populated areas of the Maras. Like their neighbouring tribes of the North, who often jeered at the sight of the missionaries who carried their own packs because they could not get anyone to help¹⁵⁷, the Maras were also not ready to welcome the missionaries. The bad and fearful feeling towards the British colonists made the Maras reluctant to receive them. The difference in their skin colour and foreignness in the walks of life was another factor. They were even suspected to be the advancing British agents. The Lorrains therefore labored hard to gain the confidence of the Maras, by learning and

¹⁵⁶ Rev.T. Laikai, interviewed by V.B. Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 24 March 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Rohmingmawii, p.195.

speaking their language. Their medical ministry to the people also helped tremendously in gaining confidence of the people.¹⁵⁸

The first missionaries R.A Lorrain arrived in the hills in 1907 with his wife. Since then, many Maras embraced Christianity quite rapidly. Even S.K. Chaube remarked that, ‘in the Lushai hills Christianity has achieved the highest record of success in India.’¹⁵⁹ Parry remarked that Christian mission was a more active instrument of change than the government. This statement clearly clarified the fact that the Christian missionaries’ activity in this areas drawn attention of the hills people in transforming their way of live. They work tirelessly in the hills thus arousing the feeling of political consciousness among the Maras.

The greatest and the most remarkable contribution of the Christian missionaries to the Maras was the introduction of education. The Mara language was reduced into a written language in 1908¹⁶⁰ only after one year of their stay among the Maras. This written language in Roman script was approved and accepted by the committee of the different chiefs of the Mara clans in 1913. Education has been a part and parcel of the Missionaries and was the intension of missionaries there by educating the people; they would be able to read the bible and would be used for evangelical work. The efforts of the missionaries soon bore a fruitful result when the Christian school was established at Saikao (Saikao). However, the school was not actually an educational institution in the true sense of the term. They only learned how to read and write in the newly introduced Roman script. In 1909, the number of students increased from 3 to 7, gradually the number increased year by year. Later, a few more schools were opened in other Mara villages which were supported by the villages themselves and the missionaries. The students who had completed their studies in the mission schools were often sent to these places as a school teacher. Riahto completed his schoolings in 1910 and he happens to be the first literate and English educated man among the Maras. In the early part of 1912, Mara dictionary was prepared by the missionary and the translation of the whole book of New

¹⁵⁸ Laiu Fachhai, *The Maras from warriors to missionaries*, ECM, siaha, 1994, p.19.

¹⁵⁹ S.K. Chaube, p.70

¹⁶⁰ R.A. Lorrain, p.68

Testament into Mara language was completed.¹⁶¹ Even women were not lacking far behind, in 1929, a night school for women was opened and Mr. Lorrain often persuaded their parents to send their daughters to the night school¹⁶².

It was a period of transition in the hills of the southern Lushai hills where Christianity only began to take shape in the early part of 20th century. By looking at their neighbouring tribes of the north, the Lushais, the younger Mara generations recognize the fact that they were lagging far behind in terms of education and there began to emerge a large gap in the social position of the Maras and the Lushais. The fact that many Lushais holding high official post in the government offices in Aizawl and Lunglei, made the Maras a feeling of insecurity in their land. McCall recorded that mainly due to missionary effort the rate of literacy in the Lushai Hills, reached in 1931, 12.9% and in 1941, 14.3¹⁶³. Out of this figure the Maras would account for only few points to the total population of the Lushai hills. This encouraged a feeling of inferiority among the Maras. They realize the fact that the backwardness of the Maras was due to absence of any formal education in their areas. The only school available was a mission school funded by the missionaries. On account of this, some students even went to mission school at Saikao for want of higher education. Until 1947¹⁶⁴, not even a single government primary school was established in the southernmost part of the Lushai Hills.

However, in spite of the absence of schools and higher institution, many Maras, person like Riato, went to Serkawn and other mission school for further studies and when they came back, they, brought along with them, new ideas and concept which ultimately influence their educated elites of the villages. The ideas and philosophical principles of great political thinkers like Aristotle, Plato, Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau etc. became familiar with the educated elites and wanted to apply them in their society to safeguard their grievances. These turned out to be a changing factor for the Maras in developing political consciousness. Sudhakar Bhat

¹⁶¹ Rohmingmawii, p.207.

¹⁶² John Hamlet Hlychho, pp. 170-176.

¹⁶³ McCall, *The Lushai Chrysalis*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute (TRI), Reprint, 2003, p.40.

¹⁶⁴ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.32.

in his book, *Challenge of the North East*¹⁶⁵, writes, “The hill people of the North-east region today feel justifiably indebted to Christianity and Christian missionaries for making them aware of their rightful place and status in independent India.” Indeed, the missionaries do not bring political consciousness to the land but it was rather the ideas and concepts which came in the midst of education were responsible for the emergence of political awakening among the Maras. “After 37 years, since the arrival of the Missionaries, the Maras became aware of their status and demanded better status to the Superintendent of the Lushai hills, and it was, indeed, the result of encouragement given by the Christian missionaries” said T.A Chhohu¹⁶⁶, former Senior Executive Secretary, MADC.

3.3.2. Role of the Mara chiefs:

The contributions of the Mara chiefs in the process of political consciousness cannot be undermined as they were the leaders even before the coming of the British and continue until decolonization of Indian sub-continent was over and furthermore, their sons and grandsons lay their lives for the cause of the Mara people. Since time immemorial, the Mara Hills were ruled and owned by the chiefs. Each Chief ruled over each own village and Chiefship was hereditary. He was assisted by his Abei Macha(elders), council of elders, chosen by him from amongst those who were rich, well-informed, broadminded and influential persons in the village. In this way the chiefs look after the village administration as an independent ruler and the commoners were loyal to their chiefs. There was strong relationship between the Chiefs and the commoners. In the case of the Lushais, many chiefs were autocrats and it was because of this common people often uprising against their chiefs. “The common Mizo people could not tolerate”, writes Goswami, “the idle chiefs sitting at the top of the village hierarchy and using power and authority because of British safeguards.”¹⁶⁷ The British often support the chiefs in administering the Lushai hills thus, while the powerful church backed the

¹⁶⁵ Sudhakar Bhat, *Challenge of the North east*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, p.45.

¹⁶⁶ T.A. Chhohu, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 13.02.2019.

¹⁶⁷ B.B Goswami, *Mizo unrest*, Aelekh, Jaipur, 1979, p. 40.

commoner's movements against the autocratic rule of the chiefs, the administration opposed the same.

Among the Maras, the Chiefs were the first to come forward in demanding better status for the Mara people with the Christian missionaries behind their back. Among them, Chhohmo, chief of Saikao happened to be the first Mara chief to conceive the idea of having separate administration for the Maras. Right from his father, the Chhohmo became very close to the missionaries and the missionaries often enlightened and helped him in demanding special status for the Maras. Regarding this, Mr. Valua Hlychho, asserted that it was the chiefs of the Maras in the south, among all the Lakhers and the Pawis, the political consciousness originated and not from the commoners. Saikao chief Mr. Chhohmo often reiterates his ambitions and visions for the Maras in having separate autonomy for themselves in their own land. Initially, the commoners were not even aware of the situation where the Maras were in and were completely ignorant about the ideas of political affairs. Even among the Chief, only few of them felt the need of a separate administration for the Maras. Mr. Chhohmo was, back then, the most influential and outstanding figure not only among the Mara chiefs but also all of the Southern chiefs including the Pawis. Among the commoners and one of the educated elites, who acknowledge the idea of Mr. Chhohmo was Mr. Chhalie, retired Circle interpreter (C.I).¹⁶⁸

The politically conscious Chhohmo call for Mara chief conference at Saikao on 4th January, 1945 and 23 chiefs participated in the conference. They unanimously adopted a resolution demanding a separate Mara Hills district administration and drafted a memorandum which state as "*we are very hopeful that you will please consider this word that we ask you. We, Lakher tribe, ignorant and knowing nothing to you, our mother and father. the British government we make our petition. Now that we know the wisdom and good news concerning other tribes, we are very desirous to also state our wants. The Lakher tribe is divided into three*

¹⁶⁸ Nohro Hmoko, *Mara Losohpa: Valua Hlychho*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2015, pp.104-105.

sections and amongst other tribes, in Lushai Hills one section, in Chin Hills one section and in the Arakan Hills tract there is also one section, therefore, that we may show us as a distinct tribe, please make us a separate district of the lakher hills and in that have an officer who shall rule us in the Lakher language is what we want. The situation of Lakher tribe is as far as the Sekul chhua in the Arakan hill tracts and in the Chin Hills as far as Hnaring and in the Lushai hills as far as Cheural and down to Diltlang. In this we probably have about 130 miles in width what we desire most is to have a Lakher District with an officer and for him to use the Lakher books(Language) then, as before the war came on we asked our ruler in schools amongst the Lakher in the more important places. We ask that this petition of all the Lakher Chiefs be reported to the government of Assam with all possible power”¹⁶⁹.

Since then, the commoners welcome the ideas and ambitions of Mr. Chhohmo and this subsequently led to the spread of political consciousness among the Maras. By 1945, many villages of the Maras became aware of the fact that they needed special status to protect their culture and grievances.¹⁷⁰ Even after the death of Chhohmo his sons and relatives continue to participate in demanding separate administration for the Maras. Prominent politician such as Zakhu Hlychho(L), Mylai Hlychho, Valua Hlychho(L), I.P. Junior, who were descendants of Mara chiefs were very active in politics.

3.3.3. Impact of the world wars:

The two world wars were indeed a global war as it involved great powers and its impact was felt even in the remotest part of the erstwhile British Empire in the Luhsai Hills. Its impact opened an avenue for a tribal group like the Maras to participate in the world affairs thereby enhancing their worldview and left an imprint on the lives of the individuals and Maras as a whole. In the First World War many people enrolled themselves in the Army Bearer Corps as stretchers. Apart from the Army Bearer Corps, a Labour Battalion consisting of 2100 men from Lushai hills

¹⁶⁹ T.A. Chhohu, ‘*Eima vaw pahno hra awpa ta*’, T.A. Chhohu, Saiha, 2018, p.17.

¹⁷⁰ Nohro hmoko, p105.

went to the war. Of the total volunteers 500 men are from the South¹⁷¹. Though the statistics show 500 men volunteer from the south, the number of the Maras participation was precisely unknown. However, the first Maras to enrolled themselves in the British Indian Army were Mr. Hniaka of Iana village and Mr. Hiado of Tisi village. Though the number of the Maras who participated in the first world war were not exactly known, it is clear from the oral sources collected from various intelligible person across Maraland, that quite a handful of them participated in the first world war¹⁷².

The Second World War shows a larger participation by the Maras. The superintendent order to send volunteer from each of the community from the Lushai hills and demanded 200 volunteers from the Lushai and another 200 from the Maras. But since the Maras could count only 100 volunteers the rest was filled up by the Lais and the Lushai.¹⁷³ In the war the volunteers from the Lushai hills participated in different capabilities. On the eve of the war, many Lushai had already served in the 1st Assam Rifles and a few more hundreds were already enrolled themselves in the Indian Army Medical corps¹⁷⁴.

The impact of the war was so much so that the life of the Maras was going through a lot of changes. The war widened the outlook of the participant and their world view was changed. It also developed admiration for the Europeans and zeal to copy their lifestyle. After coming back from the war, the volunteers now realized the need for political autonomy for the Maras after seeing their Lushai counterparts holding high post even in the Army. Though majority of the Armies were illiterate, the ideas and the experience they have brought means a lot for the Mara people as they were never exposed to the outside world. Persons like, Sakia Khuhly¹⁷⁵ played a very important role in demanding separate Autonomy for the Maras. When the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was constituted in the South, he was also elected as Executive Member and even hold the post of Chief Executive

¹⁷¹ Rohmingmawi, p.265.

¹⁷² M. Zakawnia, *Mararam chanchin*, M. Zakawnia, Saiha, 2011, p.130.

¹⁷³ Mylai hlychho, *Mara politics athaotohna*, published in Maraland.net, 2012, p.2.

¹⁷⁴ M. Zakawnia, *op.cit.*, p. 132

¹⁷⁵ M. Zakawnia, *ibid.*, p.62.

Member for seven Months after the death of Zochhuma. Some volunteers work in the school there by spreading the feeling of political consciousness among the students. The feelings of being foreign to the Lushai people because of the language difference and the thirst for a proper system of education gone through the minds of the Maras. The feeling of inferiority haunted the Maras and ultimately turned their attention to achieving autonomy for themselves. This sentiment found its expression in the minds of the Maras especially during the 1940s. Though the dreams for having a separate administration for the Maras in those days vague and hazy. But then after the wars the Maras became very much conscious of their identity. Since then this issue became the main agenda for the Maras until 1972. Rev.T. Laikai asserted that it was after the war that the Maras became very active in moulding and cementing the idea of having a separate administration. He concluded that it was in the early 1940s that the Maras even began to demand a separate administration¹⁷⁶.

3.3.4. Contribution of the British administrators:

The contribution of the British administrators in the Lushai hills proved to be instrumental in the emergence of political consciousness among the Maras. The village of Saikao, epicentre of Christian missionary's activities, was occasionally visited by the British administrators from Lunglei and Aizawl. During the Second World War, many European military Officers frequently paid visits to Lorrain Villa, Saikao and these officers began to familiar with the Maras.¹⁷⁷ The most intimate Officers among them were L.L. Peters, Sub-Divisional Officers, Lunglei, who later became Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Captain A.I. Bowman, Officer commanding, Tipa Out-post. Who later became Sub-Divisional Officer Lunglei.

The political consciousness that was a mere spark in the minds of the Maras was reignited by Capt. Bowmen when he visited Saikao in 1945 to inspect the records of the village court. He was surprised to see that judgments in the village court were recorded and written in Lushai(duhlian) language. He then asked the

¹⁷⁶ Rev. T. Laikai, *Mara chi nata Pho*, in Nozuah Souvenir, MCHP, 2007, p.21.

¹⁷⁷ Nohro Hmoko, p.105.

Chiefs of Saikao, Chhohmo¹⁷⁸, why the court judgments were not recoded and written in the Mara language. The chief explained to him that Lushai was the official language. Taking the advantage of the incident, Chhohmo expressed to the Officer that the Maras people desired so much to be under a separate administration just as the Lushais had. Capt. Bowmen, being an Army officer, was posted in Tipa during the Second World War and was very much familiar with the Maras. He felt that the Maras were completely different from the Lushais and their language was far more difficult to comprehend as compare to the Lushais which makes them unique. He was deeply moved to learn that Lushai language was prevalent in majority Mara speaking population and he rebuked Chhohmo to demand better status for the Maras¹⁷⁹.

In the same year, the Mara chiefs organized a conference at Saikao in which more than 30 chiefs attended the conference. In the conference the Mara chief unanimously adopted a resolution demanding separate administration for the Maras. In the early part of 1946 R.A Lorrain received a letter from Capt. Bowmen who was in Shillong at that time, informed him that he met the Governor of Assam and told him all about the Mara tribes seeing that they were distinct tribe inhabiting a compact area of territory in the southern tip of the Lushai hills and also about their loyalty to the British government during the world wars and that they had an inspiration for a separate administration. Capt. Bowmen also requested R.A Lorrain to inform the matter to Chhohmo and to appraise him of writing a letter to him if he so desired. The matter was discussed with Chhalie, retired Circle interpreter, and a letter was brought to R.A Lorrain for translation in English. Capt. Bowmen was requested to contact once again with the governor of Assam in the matter and represented the Maras on their behalf.¹⁸⁰

Rustumjee, advisor to the governor of Assam, Shillong, visited Aizawl in 1948. All the members of the advisory Council were informed to meet the advisor in

¹⁷⁸ In many books, he is often referred to as Chhumhmunga which is a Lushai translation of his name.

¹⁷⁹ K. Robin and VB Nopha Azyu, '*Movement for Autonomy among the Maras; a Historical study*', in Jangkhongam Dounyel, '*Autonomy Movements and the Sixth Schedule in Northeast India*', Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2016, p.93.

¹⁸⁰ Nohro hmoko, p.103.

Aizawl. To discuss the matter, Mr Chhohmo met L.L. Peters, Superintendent of the Lushai hills, in his bungalow before participating in the advisory meeting. L.L. Peters advised Chhohmo to express before the advisory committee that the Maras were distinct tribes and they desire for separate administration. In the meeting Rustomjee explain to Chhohmo that the Maras were too small in number and the case could not be considered. However, at this juncture, L.L. Peters explain before the Advisor that the Maras were a distinct tribe inhabiting the extreme south of the Lushai hills and were quite different from the Lushais. He further stated that the Maras deserved a separate administration taking into account their ethnic differences. At this point, advisor was impressed by the statement given by the superintendent and assured Mr. Chhohmo that the problem of the Maras would be taken into account and make sure that he noted down in his notebook.¹⁸¹

Adam, an ICS officer, recognized the fact that there were several tribes distinct from one another in the Luhsai hills. Therefore, he recommended the establishment of a council for each tribe. He also suggested that all hills affecting the welfare of the tribals should be referred to the tribal council for its opinion. N.E Parry, the superintendent of the Lushai Hills also thought of introducing some amount of autonomy in the tribal areas of the south Lushai hills.¹⁸² These officers were more sympathetic to the Maras and wanted to help the tribe in getting their grievances answered from the government. By this time, the feeling of political consciousness spread in the length and breadth of the south Lushai hills. With the help of British administrators, the feeling of political consciousness gains momentum and even other tribes such as the Lais, the Chakmas etc began to mobilized themselves in demanding separate administration for themselves in the south.

Mr. T.S. Gill, the deputy Commissioner, Mizoram was a good and sympathetic towards the Mara people during the Interim Mara District Council period. When the Mara Freedom Party boycotted the Pawi-lakher Regional Council and run a separate District Council, he would help them escaped infliction of penalty for their illegal running of the administration. The likes of Mr. K. Saigal, Mr. S.J.

¹⁸¹ Nohro hmoko, p.110.

¹⁸² K. Robin and VB Nopha Azyu, p.93.

Dass and Mr. B. Bhuyan who came after another as Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram respectively encouraged and help them in solving the political aspirations of the Maras.

3.4.CULTURAL POLITICS

On the eve of India's independence most of the tribal of the north east India became aware of their status and movement for autonomy spread very quickly among the tribals. A sense of uncertainty and apprehension about their political future gripped the minds of the educated elites among different tribes. The interim government of India 1947 realized the critical situation and the political aspirations of the tribal people of the hill areas of Assam in the backdrop of assurance given by the outgoing British rulers. The government further thought of providing regional autonomy for the hill people in the hills district of Assam so that they might participate in policy-making, manage their indigenous local affairs and safeguard their interest.

On 26th January 1950 the constitution of India was enforced but the immediate formation of the district council was not possible.¹⁸³ But the government in order to look into the grievances of the tribal people, appointed a sub-committee of the constituent Assembly known as the North-eastern Frontier Tribal and Excluded areas Committee under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam. Even when the Bordoloi Committee visited Lushai hills, the Mara chief raise the same demand to the committee. After careful study, Bordoloi Committee recommended the creation of the Lushai District Council and Regional Council for the solution of the Lushai hills problem. However, the Maras were not impressed by the creation of Regional Council for the tribals of the southern Lushai hills. Because they have been demanding separate administration even before the Second World War. The Maras were made to accept the offer as they were also already worked with the Pawis when the Pawi-Lakher Company¹⁸⁴ was formed. The

¹⁸³ Jangkhongam Doungei, *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2010, p.208.

¹⁸⁴ For more information on the Pawi-Lakher Company, see also chapter 4, page no.

Maras knowing that they could not get a separate administration now turned their attention towards Regional Council with the Pawis.

Owing to the demand of the two tribes, the government of India constituted Pawi-Lakher Regional Council within the Lushai Hills District. However, right from its inception, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was confronted with a number of problems. Even before the first general election which was scheduled in the early part of 1953, conflict and misunderstanding arose among the Pawis and the Maras over the allotment of seats to be contested. This marked the reestablishment of cultural politics which was already started by the Maras in the wake of the 20th century. The situation got worse in the 3rd general election to the Regional Council when the Maras boycotted the election and formed the first political party in Maraland, Mara freedom Party in 1960. Since then, the movement for autonomy reached climax among the Maras and many factors attributed to the movement.

3.4.1. Ethnic base

Since time immemorial, the Maras consider themselves as different from the rest of the tribal in the Lushai hills. They belong to the mongoloid stock of the Tibeto-Burman family. They were distinct, independent, ethnic people group by themselves. The affirmative statement had been given by many administrators and officers working in the Lushai hills. The first documented account of the Maras as a separate tribe seems to have been written in 1852 by Capt. Tickell. He wrote an article titled “notes on the Heuma or Shendoos, a tribe inhabiting the hills north of Arakan” which was published in the *journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol-XXI*¹⁸⁵. The people referred to here are none other than the Maras, Heuma being one of the Mara groups. J.H Lorrain, a missionary working in Serkawn, noted “...Mr. Parry’s book ‘the Lakhers’ is a fascinating work containing much interesting information concerning the Lushais as well as their neighbours, the Lakhers. Amongst these latter tribe folk-who speak a distinct language of their own.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ N.E parry, p.6.

¹⁸⁶ J.H lorrain, Dictionary of the Lushai, 1940, p.1

Hutton in his interesting introductory notes to Parry's *the Lakhers*¹⁸⁷ where he mentions that the Mara people "include in their composition more perhaps than their immediate neighbours of the races that preceded them, of which the Indonesian race, everywhere submerged by the Mongolian flood, appears to have been one, while Bodo, Mon-Khmer and Melanasian elements seem to be definitely traceable." Lewin classified the Maras as Shendoos or Lakhers, a tribe entirely independent and representing more of a nation than a tribe¹⁸⁸. The Maras scholars seems to have reached consensus that six groups of the Mara people together belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. Taking into account ethnic differences, the Maras were not ready to assimilate and work under the Lushais.

To Nirmal Nibedon, the various uprising and autonomy movement in the North east India constitute 'Ethnic explosion'. *He observes the ethnic base of the tribal movements in the North east India thus "...the feeling of being ethnically and racially different from the rest of the subcontinent was the decisive factor for one major group to launch a defensive guerrilla war. Of course the strong feelings of being different would be further galvanized on the mountain by the westernized Christianity...but strangely, it was ethnically that was the prime mover, the fundamental cause for the battles of the future. At best religion played a secondary role. It was not the other way round as claimed later by the plainsmen when the tribal tornado struck."*¹⁸⁹ This is of course a strong observation of the ethnic base of the tribal movements, yet it is genuinely true particularly among the Maras though the transformation of Mara into a common ethnic-cultural identity is still an on-going process.

Ethnic differences dominated the early politics of the Maras and every effort was made to achieve political autonomy for the Maras. At the same time, the British officers such as Capt. Bowmen and L.L Peters reignites the feelings of differences when they referred to them as a separate and distinct tribe as compare to the Lushais. N.E Parry was of course no different from the rest in his opinion

¹⁸⁷ N.E parry, p.2

¹⁸⁸ T.H Lewin, p.281

¹⁸⁹ N. Nibedon, *North-East India- the ethnic explosion*, New Delhi, Lancers publishers, 1981, p.16.

regarding the Maras. They feel that they were being treated as foreigners by the Lushais due to the difference of language, social customs and practices¹⁹⁰. The fear of assimilation by more advanced and educated Lushai is so real that they even think if the process of economic development is harmful to their ethnic culture and identity, because they are aware that the native economic components are often disturbed and dislocated. Ethnic differences of the Maras from the rest of the tribes in the Lushai hills constitute a strong base for autonomy movement.

3.4.2. Language:

In the context of Indian mainland, language is not only a factor of separatism but also politically recognised base for state reorganization since 1917. Language was then recognized as standing for and representing culture, race, history, individuality and finally sub-nation. In Mara politics, language, though not a prominent factor of autonomy movement, has its role in fostering it as a negative consequence of the Assamese linguistic chauvinism. In recent years it has become a subject of scholarly debate whether the Mara language belongs to the Chin-Kuki-Lushai language groups of the Tibeto-Burman family owing to the fact that Mara language is quite different from other Chin-Kuki-Lushai language.¹⁹¹

Barkataki in his extensive research of the tribes of Assam, rightly writes, “There is another major tribe called the Lakhers inhabiting the southernmost part of the Lushai hills district. Their dialect is altogether different from those of other sub-tribes.¹⁹²” there were several distinct clans among the Maras who speak their own dialects but conversably and understand easily each other even among themselves *Tlosaih* being the dominant language. There is no closed syllable or word, i.e. no Mara syllable or word ends with a consonant. It was for this reason that Mara language is uniquely different from the rest of other Chin-Kuki-Lushai language. However, the difference in language and dialects created a great gulf between the Maras and other communities in the Lushai hills. For the same reason, the Maras being minority in the district could not feel secure among the larger

¹⁹⁰ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.34.

¹⁹¹ Bobby beingachhi, p.42.

¹⁹² S. Barkataki, ‘*Tribes of Assam*,’ New Delhi, National Book Trust (NBT), 196, pp.82-83.

Duhlian(Lushai) speaking people. The feeling of differences which already started prior to the coming of missionaries was reignited by the likes of Capt. Bowmen when he visited Saikao and saw the record being done in Lushai language. On account of this incident he encouraged the Maras to demand for separate administration for their survival in the lushai hills District.

Language had become an important issue for the Maras since the advent of the British. The Maras do not understand the Lushai language and for this reason they often needed interpreter in dealings with the administrations and other official works. At the same time, Mara Language was made medium of instruction by the Christian missionary in the south and the Maras wanted to develop their language. However, in the district level knowledge of Lushai language was made mandatory by the district which created barrier for the Maras in dealing with the officials. This, ultimately, resulted into an important issue to support their movement in the demand for autonomy in the Lushai hills.

3.4.3. Economic:

The backwardness of the region would be another factor that prompted the Maras to demand a separate administration for themselves. The absence of proper academic institutions in the south contributed to its backwardness. The traditional Jhum practice was not profitable and famine occurred very often. In addition, there was no road for transportation and southern Lushai hills were cut off from the rest of the country. When the British occupied Lushai hills a few markets were established in few places in the borders which were almost unreachable for the Maras. After the first Lushai expedition of 1871-72, the government of India set up and renovated four Markets or Bazaars which were operated by traders from Cachar and Manipur. They were: Tipaimuk Bazaar on the river bank of Tuiruang, Sonai Bazaar on River Tuirial, Chnagsil Bazaar on river Tlawng and Tlabung Bazaar on river Khawthlangtupui¹⁹³.

¹⁹³ K. Laldinpui, 'The Frontier Markets and their role', in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii (ed.) *Mizo narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2013, p.136.

Tlabung Bazaar was the nearest Bazaar where the Maras use to go for trade and it usually takes more than a week to reach Tlabung. The introduction of Market was not favourable for the Maras as they lived in the remotest part of the south. Most of them would go for wage labourers at Lunglei and Aizawl and some of them would trade at Tlabung but the goods they bought were again transported through head loads from Tlabung to Maraland and this was the only way of transportation until 1972 when jeepable roads were constructed.¹⁹⁴

The Second World War saw drastic changes in the lives of the Lushai people. Many educated people began to work in the office and holds important post. This development, no doubt, put pressure on the Maras who were fighting for survival in the south. During this period only few Maras were acquainted with Lushai language and going to the Aizawl, Lungleh to get suitable job was very difficult for them because of language barriers. They also felt that the Lushai being majority and more advanced socially and economically looked down upon them as backward people. The people of the south, including the Pawis, began to feel that they were neglected by the government economically and no initiatives were taken to improve the condition of the people. The Maras were aware the fact that their primitive and village based economy of subsistence was inadequate and too fragile for the changed situation. One cannot avoid the fact that the British administration of the hills had done a little for the economic development of the people. It is true that McCall, Superintendent of the Lushai hills entertained certain ideas of improving the economic condition of the people of Lushai hills. But his ideas bear no fruits mainly because of lack of financial support in the absence of political commitment¹⁹⁵.

Economic issue became an important instrument which can stir up the people sentiment and ultimately became a political issue where Mara people were mobilized. In this regard R.N Prasad remarks that “the economic backwardness of the region wounded the sentiments of the people very badly which led some of the

¹⁹⁴ Zakonia, p.146.

¹⁹⁵ A. Ray, ‘*Mizoram: Dynamic of change*’, Calcutta, Pearl publisher, 1982, p.187.

extremist elements to venture even the life of the community for the cause of free self-determination¹⁹⁶.

3.4.3. Political cause:

The political aspiration of the Maras was manifested in a series of meetings and memorandum submitted to the superintendent and governor of Assam by the Mara chief. This was first evident in the form of chief conference called upon by Saikao chief, Chhohmo in 1945 where discussion was made on the future of the Maras. They made it clear from the very beginning that the Maras do not want to be under the administration of the Lushai. In this regard, the Mara chief submitted memorandum to the superintendent stating that the Maras occupied a vast stretch of land and express their desire of having separate District taking into account their ethnic difference.

The Second World War was over and Indian government was in the process of achieving independence. The Maras were very much aware of their future status and there was a dilemma among the political leaders whether to join the Indian union or to join Burma. This dilemma was prevalent not only among the Maras but also among the Lushai. On the eve of India's Independence, the Maras were less educated and politically unfit as compare to the Lushai. A few Political leaders of the Maras were convinced and felt of their miserable conditions amidst the growing Lushai society. They also felt that the Lushai were more educated and more advanced and this may result in the domination of the Maras by the Lushai. In the meantime, Mizo Union, the first political party in the Lushai hills was formed on 9th April, 1946¹⁹⁷ with the permission of the then Superintendent of the Lushai hills, McDonald. Right from its inception the party endeavours to protect the 'Mizo' identity and uniting all the sub-tribes of the territory and integrating the areas of Assam, Tripura, and Manipur predominantly inhabited by the mizo. The formation of Mizo Union was against the political interest of the Maras and badly disheartened

¹⁹⁶ R.N. Prasad, p.135.

¹⁹⁷ R.N. Prasad, p.244.

Mara Political leaders. But this further developed a feeling of secession from the Lushai district and encourages separatist feeling among other tribes.

The wave of the newly formed political party in the Lushai hills also had its effects on the Maras habited areas. They also heard about the movement and political activities in the Lushai hills and also knew the fact that Lushai hills would be under one district council. At the same time, Mizo Union leader, Ch. Saprawnga made his political tour in the Mara areas and inviting them to join the Mizo Union.¹⁹⁸ It created an atmosphere of uneasiness in the Mara areas because they were already prepared for having a separate district council. For this reason, the Mizo Union could not establish its Unit among the Maras. In the case of the Pawis the situation seems different as many Pawis willingly participated in the Mizo Union activities and paid membership fees.¹⁹⁹ Around this time, the Mara chiefs submitted another memorandum to his Excellency, Governor of Assam on 7th July 1947. The educated elites among the Maras often campaigned against unification and at the same time encourage a movement for separate district council for their survival.

3.5. Birth of Political party

In the midst of political parley between the representatives of the governor and the Chiefs, the Assam government decided to set up Advisory Councils in five of the hill district of Assam including the Lushai hills district. Subsequently, on 15th April 1948, the District Advisory Council in the Lushai hills was established to counsel the government of Assam in matters relating to the Lushai hills. Elections were held to form members of the Advisory Council in which the Mizo Union won landslide victory and Mr. Hengmang and Mr. Vako won from the south representing the Pawis and the Lakhers respectively. At the same time, Chhohmo was selected to represent the Mara chiefs.

The setting up of Advisory council does not really help the Maras in achieving a separate administration in the South. L.L. Peters then suggested Mr. Chhohmo to form a political party at the earliest in order that the Maras in their

¹⁹⁸ Nohro Hmoko, p.107.

¹⁹⁹ Mylai Hlychho, interviewed y V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 15th August 2015.

culture, customs and interest in particular could be safeguarded. Though the Maras chief had already submitted another memorandum during the visit of the Bordoloi committee to the Lushai hills, there was no guarantee for them to have separate administration. Mr. L.L. Peters further suggested Chhohmo that the name of the Political part to be named 'Tribal Union'. In this regard the Maras came into conformity with the Pawis because they were rejected of their demand earlier on account of least population. Therefore, the Maras and the Pawis set up a political Party called Tribal Union on 25th November 1948 at Lawngtlai. It was formed under the guidance of Mr. B.W. Roy, the then Sub-Divisional Officer, Lunglei. The following were the first office bearers²⁰⁰:

- 1) Mr. Hengmanga : President
- 2) Mr. Thatchianga : Vice President
- 3) Mr. Zavai : General Secretary
- 4) Mr. Vako : Treasurer

In spite of its inherent defects, the party generated political consciousness and awareness in the Pawi-Lakher people and also established democratic order in the region.

Meanwhile, L.L. Peters was replaced by Mr. S.N Barkataki, the first Indian Superintendent of the Lushai hills. The new superintendent of the Lushai hills soon became very familiar with the Chief of Saikao, Chhohmo, who was then a representative of the Chief from the South. The chief frequently conducted a formal communication with the Superintendent for furthering political movement among the Maras.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Nohro Hmoko, p.114.

²⁰¹ K. Robin, p.20.

CHAPTER 4

Sixth SCHEDULE and the PAWI LAKHER REGIONAL COUNCIL

On the eve of India's independence there was a movement among the tribal in different part of the country especially in the North east. They were in complete dilemma whether to join the Indian union or to part ways to join Burma. This had tremendous influence on the framers of the constitution of India. The sixth schedule to the constitution of India provides for special status to certain areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura in the North eastern part of India, in terms of administrative and functional autonomy. Although the District councils of the North east India were constituted under the Sixth schedule to the constitution of India, the problems of administration in the tribal areas were recognize much earlier than it may seem. The administration of this areas in this part of the world which were earlier known as 'backward tracts', has a history of its own.

4.1.HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The genesis of this special status for the tribal of the North eastern part of the sub-continent can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries through various constitutional developments adopted by the British government. As early as 1765, estates bordering North east regions came under the direct control of the authorities at Fort William as a result of the grant of Diwani of Bengal to the East India Company.²⁰² The richness of this region in Timber, Ivory, Wax, Muga etc. must have attracted the East India Company to develop trade relations in this part of the world. The company had appointed many of its officers in collecting public revenue but the actual collection was done through the Zamindars. In course of time, it was sometime in 1815 that there developed internal unrest among the Zamindars which soon led the authorities at Calcutta to make enquiries into the events. Following this unrest, it seems there was also some development in the Garo Hills which ultimately led to the

²⁰² K.L. Hansaria, '*Sixth schedule to the constitution of India*', Universal law Publishing Co., Delhi, 2005, p.1.

appointment of David Scott as a magistrate at Rangpur, who, after extensive toured, also submitted an elaborate report in 1816²⁰³. The recommendation of Scott was approved by the Governor-General in Council and soon after some of the areas were completely isolated from the district of Rangpur and placed under the special in charge of an Officer to be called as Civil Commissioner of North East Rangpur. Subsequently, the regulation 10 of 1822 was passed which seems to have led the foundation for the pattern of administration of the tribal areas of the North East India to be followed by the British.²⁰⁴

The making of Laws was entrusted to the Governor-General in Council by the Government of India Acts of 1833 and 1853 respectively. The Government of India Act 1854, enacted by the British parliament also brought about certain changes in the internal administration of the British Indian Government. Under this Act the areas of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Goalpara of erstwhile Assam were placed under the immediate authority and management of the Governor-General in Council.²⁰⁵ To validate the existing laws the Indian council Act of 1861 was passed. Again in 1869 when the Garo Hills Act was passed, these areas were excluded from the general administrative set up and the administration was vested in such officers as the Lt. Governor may from time to time appoint.²⁰⁶

On 6th of February, 1874, Assam was put under a Chief Commissioner by taking away its management from the Lt. Governor of Bengal. Therefore, Assam was constituted as a separate province. During the same year, the Scheduled Districts Acts was enacted in the month of April. The main objective of this Act was to remove the uncertainty which existed regarding the actual operation of Laws in various parts of the British India. C.L. Tupper in his book *Indian Political practice*, volume-1, stated that “ the term Schedule District was understood to mean those

²⁰³ S.k Agnihori in L.S Gassa's '*Autonomous District Council*', Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1997, p. 39.

²⁰⁴ S.k Agnihori p.1.

²⁰⁵ B. Chakraborty, *A Century of the History of Politics in Northeast India*, Self-Employment Bureau Publications, Calcutta, 2000, p.60.

²⁰⁶ S.K Agnihori, p.40.

remote or backward tracts or provinces of British India which had never been brought within or had from time to time been removed from the operation of the general Acts and regulations and jurisdiction of ordinary courts or in which that operation was not complete, and officers were supposed to be guarded by the spirit of indispensable laws or were actually guarded by such laws as had somehow or other been considered to be in force.”²⁰⁷ It may be noted that the entire Assam was included in the first Schedule District Act. Around 1880, a need was felt to render a separate treatment to certain frontier tracts of Assam, owing to the stage of backwardness prevailing in such areas. As far as the frontier tracts of Assam are concerned, a power was vested to the Chief Commissioner by the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation of 1880, to remove any part of that area from the operation of enactments in force therein.

In 1905, Bengal was partitioned and a new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into existence. However, the partition was reversed in 1912 but Assam refused to go along with Bengal and preferred to remain a separate entity. Again after a vigilant examination of the whole areas, the British Indian government comes up with another Act which would reform the administration of such tracts. For this matter, the Montagu- Chelmsford report of 1918 could be considered as one of its kind. The report stated that political reforms could not be applied to such areas whose people were still primitive and “there was no material on which to found political institutions.” The Government of India, however, displayed an anxiety to limit exclusion of these areas. However, they estimated the degree of backwardness of each of the tracts and recommended varying degrees of exclusion. The following year, in 1919, the Government of India Act was enacted to implement the recommendations of the report.²⁰⁸ Section 52A(2) of this Act provided that the Governor-General in Council may declare any territory in British India to be a backward tract and any Act of Indian Legislature shall not apply to the territories in question or shall apply subjects to such exceptions as is thought fit.²⁰⁹ The Governor-

²⁰⁷ C.L Tupper, *Indian political practice*, B.L. Publication, Delhi, 2005, p.230.

²⁰⁸ K.L. Hansaria, *Op.Cit.*, pp.4-5.

²⁰⁹ S.K. Agnihori, p.41.

General in Council under the provisions of the Act declares the following territories of Assam as backward tracts:

1. The Garo Hills District.
2. The British portion of Khasi and Jaintia Hills District other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment.
3. The Mikir Hills (in Nowgong and sibsagar District).
4. The North Cachar Hills (in Cachar District).
5. The Naga Hills District.
6. The Lushai Hills District.
7. The Sadiya Frontier Tract.
8. The Balipara Fronntier Tract.
9. The Lakhimpur Frontier Tract.²¹⁰

It maybe stated that these areas are the territories which were to be designated subsequently as tribal areas for whose administration Sixth Schedule was enacted. It is apparent that these Hill tracts were governed earlier as non-regulation areas until the reforms of 1919.

The prevailing position of these areas was examined in more details by the Indian Statutory Commission of 1930, commonly known as the Simon Commission. The Commission put forward many suggestions as to how the constitutional arrangement should be prevail in these areas. Its main recommendation was that there should be centralization of administration in view of the fact that no provincial legislature was likely to possess either the will nor the means to devote special attention to the particular requirements of these areas under them, because expenditure in the tracts does not benefit the areas from which elected representatives are returned.²¹¹ The commission then felt that the Centre could use the Governors for this purpose as the task was regarded as too large to be left to the single handed efforts of missionary or individual officials. Although the

²¹⁰ K.L. Hansaria, *Ibid.*, p.5.

²¹¹ K.L. Hansaria, *Ibid.*, p.6.

recommendations were not fully adopted, it was in pursuance of this report that these areas were devoted more in the Government of India Act 1935.

The Government of India Act 1935 abandoned the terminology of the backward tracts and instead introduced the new term describing these tracts as 'Excluded Areas' or 'Partially Excluded Areas.' The newly created excluded areas were placed under the personal rule of the Governors in their discretion. The partially excluded areas were placed under the responsibility of a minister specifically in charge of such areas while the Governor was assigned with certain special responsibility in the administration of these areas only in certain manner in respect of which he had the power to act in his individual judgment and to overrule the Ministers advice. In pursuance of the provisions of section 91(1), the Government of India (excluded and partially excluded areas) order, 1936, came to be promulgated by the Governor in Council. Accordingly, the following territories were included in the schedule dealing with excluded areas:

1. North-East Frontier (Sadiya, Ballpara and Lakhimpur) Tracts.
2. The Naga Hills District.
3. The Lushai Hills District.
4. The North Cachar Hills Sub-Division of Cachar District.

And the territories named below were included in the partially excluded areas:

1. The Garo Hills District.
2. The Mikir Hills in the Nowgong and Sibsagar District.
3. The British portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment.²¹²

In a statement on 16th may, 1946, the Cabinet Mission reiterated the need for special attention of the Constituent Assembly to these excluded and partially excluded areas and the tribal areas while drafting the new Constitution of India. An advisory Committee was planned on Fundamental Rights and minorities in such

²¹² K.L. Hansaria, p.7.

manner that it should contain due representation of all the interests likely to be affected, and should advise the Constituent Assembly on framing an appropriate scheme for the administration of tribal and excluded areas. Following the Advisory Committee meeting held on 27th February 1947, three sub-committee was set up- one to consider the tribal and excluded and partially excluded areas in Assam, another to consider the tribal areas in the North western Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and the third Sub-Committee to consider the position of excluded and partially excluded areas in the provinces other than Assam.²¹³

4.1.1. Framing of Sixth schedule

After India achieved Independence, there were demands by the tribal people in the hill areas of Assam for regional Autonomy and better status within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Even before India's Independence, the tribal areas had drawn special attention of the Authority since the Colonial period. The Interim Government of India, when constituted in 1947, also realized the critical situation and aspiration of the hill people especially the hill areas of Assam and wanted to look into the grievances and affairs of the tribal people so as to enable them to participate in policy and decision making and manage their affairs according to their own genius. This led the government of India to appoint a sub-committee under the constituent Assembly known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee under the Chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi.

1.1.The Bordoloi Committee

Following the provisions of the Cabinet Mission plan various committee were formed under the constituent Assembly. The desire of the committee was to see that the aspirations of the people were met on the one hand and making sure that these territories was assimilated with the main stream of the country. To assist the Assembly in this purpose, the Assembly set up an Advisory committee on fundamental Rights of the Minorities and tribals and excluded area with Sardar Vallabhai patel as its chairman. The committee set up four committees one of which

²¹³ B. Chakraborty, p.5.

was for the North east Frontier (Assam) Tribals and excluded Areas' under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi. Other persons who acted as full members of the committee were:

1. Shri J.J.M Nichols Roy,
2. Shri Rup Nath Brahma,
3. Shri A.V Thakkar, and
4. Shri Mayang Nokcha.

However, the committee popularly came to be known as the 'Bordoloi Committee'. The committee was formed on 27th February, 1947²¹⁴ and had its Camp office in the Assam Secretariat, Shillong and worked for more than a year. The Committee was assisted by a famous Anthropologist, Dr. B.S. Guha who maintain that no attempt should be made at assimilation nor there should be a sudden breaking up of the existing tribal institution²¹⁵. The committee extensively toured the provinces of Assam which included visits to the Lushai Hills District, North Cachar Sub-division, Mikir Hills and the Naga Hills District. However, the Committee could not visit the Garo Hills District and Jowai Sub-division of Khasi Hills on account of bad weather and difficult communications. In course of their visit the committee received a number of representations from different hill tribes. The committee noted the anxiety of the tribal people about their land and fear of exploitation by more advanced persons, especially the money lenders because of which control of immigration was desired.

4.1.2. Recommendation of the Bordoloi Committee

The Bordoloi Committee after great deliberations submitted its report on 28th July 1947 to the chairman, Advisory Committee on fundamental rights, etc. Shri Sardar Vallabhai Patel. The reports dealt quite extensively with various aspects relating to administration of the tribal areas which includes thoughts on development, special features of these areas, land, forest, jhuming, courts, finance, control of immigration, mines, legislation, representation, services, etc. the report also

²¹⁴ K.L. Hansaria, p. 7.

²¹⁵ H.C Thanhranga, *District Councils in Mizoram*, H.C Thanhranga, 2007, p.79.

recommended the establishment of District Councils and regional Councils for tribal in the provinces of Assam.

The idea of the scheme contained in the report of the Bordoloi Committee was to provide and protect the interest of the tribal people with simple and inexpensive administration of their own which would safeguard their customs and ways of life and also to assure their maximum autonomy in management of their own affairs. The committee felt that the tribal areas occupied a geo-politically important position and therefore, these people living in this part of the country should be free from the exploitation and domination by the more advanced people from the plain. The Committee was aware of the fact that the tribal people were sensitive about their land, forest and system of justice.²¹⁶ The committee also made provision for the tribes other than the main tribe. This scheme sought to build up autonomous administration in the sixth hill areas of Assam so that the tribal people could manage their affairs in their own traditional ways.

As regards the Financial powers of the District Councils, the Committee did not accept the demand of the Hill people that all power of taxation should be vested in the District Councils because that would deprive the provincial and central government. Therefore, the Committee recommended the allocation of certain taxes and financial powers to the Council. It also recommended that the people should enjoy certain powers of administering their own social laws and codifying them. With regards to minerals and mines, the Committee also recommended that revenues accruing from the exploitation of mines, should not go entirely to the central government and that the District Councils should get a share of it. At the same time, the Committee considered the problem of migration of the plains people into the hill areas.

4.1.3. Debate in the Constituent Assembly and birth of Sixth Schedule:

²¹⁶ Kusumbar Bhuyan, '*Sixth schedule in North east India; case study of karbi Anglong District*', Dvs publisher, 2010, p.101.

The Advisory Committee discussed the matter on 7th December, 1947 and 24th February, 1948. While forwarding the same to the president of the Constituent Assembly, the committee suggested two amendments. Firstly, the Assam high Court shall have power of revision in cases where there is failure of justice or where the authority exercised by the District Court is without jurisdiction, and Secondly, the plains portion were to be excluded from schedule 'B' of the areas which were recommended for inclusion in the Schedule by the sub-Committee. The Constitutional adviser Shri B.N. Rau incorporated the recommendations of the committee just before the discussion of the report.²¹⁷

The Constituent Assembly considered the matter on fifth, sixth and seventh September, 1949 and after extensive debate the draft constitution was adopted with various amendments. There was a heated discussion in the Constituent Assembly on the Bordoloi Committee report. Members of the Constituent Assembly like Rajeshwar Prasad of Bihar, Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri and Kuladhar Chaliha of Assam were completely opposed to the creation of District Councils. In this regard Chaliha also said that giving too much autonomy to the tribals would result in creation of 'tribalistan' just as Pakistan had been created. He was very sure about the provision that even an Act of parliament could not be made applicable unless the tribals consented to. And this group instead pleaded for assimilation of the hill areas with the plains²¹⁸. However, views of the then premier of Assam, Shri Gopinath Bordoloi, were given great weight not only because he was the chairman of the committee but because Bordoloi was known to be very kind and sympathetic to the hill people, so he had been very much respected by the hill tribes and had studied very closely the position of these tribal people. Other member like Jaipal Singh, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, A.V. Thakkar including chairman of the drafting committee Dr. B.R Ambedkar were in favour of Bordoloi's claim and supported the formation of district council. Supporting the view of Bordoloi, Shri A.V. Thakkar also claimed that the idea of autonomous district was the only proposal which was found acceptable not only to the committee but also to the various tribes.

²¹⁷ K.L. Hansaria, p.8.

²¹⁸ Jangkhongam Dounge, '*Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*', Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2010, p.5.

The most influential statement was made by Dr. B. R Ambedkar when he says “*the tribal people of Assam differed from the tribals of other areas. They were more or less Hinduised, more or less assimilated with the civilization and culture of the majority of the people in whose midst they lived. They had not adopted either the modes or the manners of the Hindus who surrounded them. Their laws of inheritance, their Laws of marriage, customs, etc., were quite different from that of Hindus. The position of the tribals of Assam was somewhat analogous to that of the Red Indians in the United States who are a republic by themselves in that country, and were regarded as a separate and independent people. So, Regional and District Councils should be created on the line which was adopted by the United States for the purpose of the Red Indians.*”²¹⁹ As the Constituent Assembly debated the draft by taking up each paragraph, it became apparent that the proposal of the sub-Committee which had been accepted by the drafting Committee was going to be approved. Above all, it was the view of Dr. B.R Ambedkar which carried the greatest weight. After along and heated debate in the Constituent Assembly and after handful of amendments were made, the Sixth Schedule finally emerged and found its place in the Constitution along with articles 244(2) and 275(1).²²⁰

4.2. PAWI-LAKHER REGIONAL COUNCIL

After the Indian Constitution came into force, the immediate constitution of the Autonomous District Councils was not possible. Therefore, the government of Assam set up an advisory Council in five of the six hills District of Assam including the Lushai Hills District. Though the Advisory Council had no statutory basis, they were treated as provincial district Councils. The District Advisory Council in the Lushai hills was formed on the 15th April 1948, to advise the government of Assam in matters relating to the Lushai Hills. In the Advisory Council the commoners had more representative than the chiefs.²²¹ The Pawis and the Lakher

²¹⁹ K.L. Hansaria, p.11.

²²⁰ Government of India, *Constitution of India as on 1st June, 1996*, department of publication, New Delhi, 1996, p.151.

²²¹ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.53.

of the south also had representatives in the Advisory Council and at the same time, both the tribes strived to get Regional Council for themselves. Therefore, when Lushai hills got the status of district Council, the Pawis and the Lakhers of the South were also given Regional Council in the south.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was a Regional Council established for the Pawi and the Lakher, who inhabited the extreme south of the Lushai Hills. The Pawis and the Lakhers were conscious of their identity and they also had their own ruling clans who were not influenced by the Sailo Chiefs of the North and Lunglei region of the South. Even before India's independence, the Pawis and the Lakhers demanded autonomy for themselves and submitted memorandum many times to the British administrators in the Lushai hills. Thus it was not a new phenomenon for them to demand autonomy status even after India's independence. Therefore, the quest for autonomy and aspiration for regional council of the Pawi and the Lakher resulted in the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

4.2.1. Genesis of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council:

The tribal areas had drawn special attention of the administration since pre-independence era. Therefore, the Cabinet Mission suggested that there should be an advisory committee on the rights of citizens, minorities and tribal and excluded areas. During the Second World War India fought in the side of the British in which the British were victorious. After the war, the issue of India's freedom from the British colonial rule reached its climax and all their powers in India was to be transferred to the Indians but before they left, it seems, they desired to settle the problems of the hills as much as they could. Even after India attained independence, there were demands for regional autonomy and better status within the constitutional framework by the tribes of the hill areas of Assam. By this time the demand for regional autonomy and better status grew stronger in the Lushai hills.²²²

The interim Government of India in 1947 realized the critical situation and political aspirations of the tribal people of the Hill areas of Assam in the

²²² Himansu Charan Sandangi, *Emergent North-East: A way forward*, Isha Books, Delhi, 2008, p.218.

backdrop of assurance given by the outgoing British rulers. The government further thought of providing regional autonomy for the hill people of the hill district of Assam so that they might participate in policy or decision-making, manage their indigenous local affairs and safeguard tribal interest. In the past, the district administration was concerned with maintenance of Law and order. Therefore, the attitude of the government towards the tribal was downbeat, preserving and protecting them. Education and health were left to the Christian missions. The effect of this policy was to encourage feelings of isolation and desire for independence.

On the eve of India's independence, the Lakhers were also very conscious of their political fate. Although they were under the British rule, they were not often visited by the British officials even after annexation of their land to the British Indian government by the early 20th century. The wave of political consciousness that swept across the north east Region of the Indian Sub-continent reaches the early educated Lakhers and wanted to have political autonomy within the Indian mainstream or complete Independent from India. In pursuant to their demand, the Lakher Chiefs and other educated elites among the Lakhers started submitting memorandum to the British officials even before the Pawis and other tribes residing in the south Lushai Hills began to demand for the same. The first British official to witness the already awakened political consciousness among the Lakher was Capt. A.I Bowman. In 1944, he visited Saikao and inspected records of the village which was recorded in the Lushai Language. On seeing this, Bowman question why record was made in Lushai language. He was moved so much with the incident that he rebuked Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao and advised him to demand better status for the Maras. This incident clearly points to the fact that the Lakhers never considered themselves as cognates of the Lushai and even to the outsiders they were different tribes who lives on the mountain ranges adjacent to the Lushai Hills. This reinforced the Lakhers demand for political autonomy during the 20th century.

To make the matters more genuine and to push forward their demands the Lakher Chiefs organized a conference in 1945 where more than 30 Chiefs attended the Conference. Their main objective was to organize the Lakher people under a single political leadership for protecting the interest and ethnic-cultural

identity of the Lakher people. In this conference, the Lakher Chiefs unanimously adopted a resolution demanding political autonomy for the Lakher and accordingly submitted a memorandum to the Additional Superintendent, South Lushai Hills, Lunglei. The memorandum reads as follows: *“we the Lakher Chiefs would like to express to you what we want most for your sympathetic consideration and immediate orders. We have been demanding that the government may be pleased to give us Lakher Hills District and also one English Officer may be appointed to conduct our administration. This is what we want most. We would like to be either Burma Government or Crown Colony. We the Lakhers should have a separate District administration, but not under the Lushai Hills District.”*²²³ It is no wonder why the Lakher Chiefs demanded autonomy as they already felt a sense of political consciousness beginning from the first half of the 20th century.

Politically, the Lais (Pawis) and the Maras (Lakhers) did not seem to have worked together in demanding autonomy for themselves. It was clear from the fact that the Maras were the first tribal group within the Mizo district to demand self-rule even before India’s independence. However, in the early part of 1945, the Pawis and the Lakhers came together in demanding regional autonomy for themselves. This collaboration can be seen from the fact that the employees of Pawis and the Lakhers, working in Lunglei Sub-Divisional Officer(SDO) office decided to come together to establish the Pawi-Lakher Group. They collected money, bought a plot of land and established a Company, which came to be known as the Pawi-Lakher Company. Thatchhinga of Tawipui and Lairua of Saikao(Saikao) were entrusted to be the managers of the Pawi-Lakher Company and the Company worked mainly for the welfare of both the community. On the other hand, the first political party in Mizoram, Mizo Union, also works earnestly for the unification of the Mizo-ethnic tribe under one umbrella. In 1947, Ch. Saprawnga, the then president of Mizo Union, campaigned against separatist movement, asserting that no separatist movement would be implemented. But the Pawis and the Lakhers were in different state of mind and were not in a situation to comply with the demand put forward by the Mizo Union leaders. It was at this juncture that the Pawis also convened a conference at

²²³ Zakhu Hlychho, p.40.

Lungpher on 2nd January, 1947²²⁴. The conference was attended by thirty members and formed a clan base political party called ‘Chin Association’. Mr. Z. Hengmanga was elected as the president of the party. He was further selected to contest the Lushai District Advisory Council. In the following year, 1948, the Pawi-lakher convention was convened at Lawngtlai. This incident happens to be the first political meeting between tribes. It was in this convention that that the matter of autonomous District Council was discussed but they could not proceed further because of the participation of the Mizo Union member, Dengthuama and Khawma.²²⁵

4.2.2. District Advisory Council

In the Lushai Hills an advisory Council election was held for the Chiefs for electing the Chiefs Representatives on 23rd March and for the Commoners for electing the Commoners Representatives on 15th April, 1948. Z. Hengmang of Sangau and Vako of Zawngling(zyhno) won from the Pawi-Lakher Region. The total numbers of members elected to the Advisory Council were 36. L.L Peters, the Superintendent of the Lushai hill was in charge of giving advice to the Advisory Council. After the election of the advisory Council, a meeting was called to frame the first District Council Constitution. However, it was boycotted both by the Mizo Union²²⁶. The UMFO also boycotted the meeting on the request made by the Burmese Government if their political aim of joining Burma was still in operation. The letter received from the Government of Burma reads as; “*If you and your party still thought of joining the Burmese Government and sign an agreement with our government, then, do not participate in the meeting.*” At the Same time, Lalmawia, the General Secretary of the UMFO requested Hengmang and Vako to support the boycott move of the UFO but they were in favour of demanding Regional Council for themselves.

²²⁴ Z. Hengmang, ‘*Ka Vahvaihpui Ram leh Hnam, political history of the Lais*’, Pawi District Council, Z.B.K. Press, Lawngtlai, 1988, pp.75-79.

²²⁵ R.T. Zachono, ‘*The Maras towards Autonomy*’ in Prasad, R.N. (ed.), *Autonomy movement in Mizoram*, Vikas Pulishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, p.145.

²²⁶ Jangkhongam Doungei, p.30.

The coming of Shri, N.K. Rustomji, and advisor to the Governor of Assam to the Lushai hills was an important event for the Pawi and the Lakher community. He was regarded as most sympathetic towards them. Elected members of the Lushai Hills Advisory Council flocked together to meet Rustomji. In the meeting, it was announced that every member was free to express what the system of administration each desired for their particular concerned area. Mr. Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao (Saikao) rose to his feet and told the advisor that the Lakher people wished to be under a regional Council within an independent India. It has to be noted here that Mr. Chhohmo met Mr. L.L. Peters in his Bungalow the day before the meeting of the Advisory Council was held. One has to keep in mind that Mr. Chhohmo had already developed a friendly relation with L.L. Peters when he was Sub-Divisional Officer, Lunglei. It was at this juncture in the meeting that Mr. L.L Peters himself stand in front of the elected members of the Advisory Council and explained to them that the Lakhers deserved a sympathetic consideration for a Regional Council as they were distinct tribe and quite different from the Lushais, who were occupying an area in the extreme south of the Lushai hills. In this meeting Mr. Chhohmo was given assurance by the advisor that the case of the Lakhers would be taken into consideration.²²⁷

In this meeting Mr. Hengmang and Vako did not express any opinion with regard to the future of the two communities. It was probably because the two representatives were commoners who seem to be less important in the purview of the British administration. Only the chiefs were officially recognized by the British and Mr. Chhohmo was very well acquainted with the Superintendent as he was the leading Chiefs among the Pawi and the Lakhers. After the meeting, it seems, Mr. Hengmang approached Chhohmo for his courageous effort in expressing the grievances before the Advisory Council members.²²⁸ Soon after the demand for a Pawi-Lakher Regional council came to the notice of the Leaders of the Mizo Union and UMFO, they persuaded Hengmang and Vako not to proceed with their demand for the sake of Mizo integration. But they were firm in their determination not to

²²⁷ Valua Hlychho, *'The Maras before their present home'*, (mimeograph), p.3.

²²⁸ Valua Hlychho, p.13.

retreat. Mr. L.L Peters advised the Pawi-Lakher leaders to form a political party to achieve their objectives. At the Convention of the Pawi-Lakher leaders, the new political party was established on the 25th October 1949 at Lawngtlai. The main aim of this party was to integrate the Pawis and the Lakhers into one administrative unit, obtaining the Regional Council for the tribes and managing their local affairs independently of the Mizo District Council, safeguarding and maintaining their customs, culture, dialects and ethnic identity. This is the period when the party could bring the tribes to the party fold²²⁹.

In the meantime, the Lushai Hill Advisory was changed into Lushai Hills Advisory Committee after one year of service. At the same time, Z. Hengmang and Vako were still accommodated in the downsized Advisory Committee. The Party worked very hard in pressurizing the government for Regional Council. At the same time, Mr. Chhohmo does not stop his demand for Regional Council for the Lakhers by meeting the newly appointed Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Mr. S.N. Barkataki, who was also the first Indian Superintendent of the then Lushai Hills. In course of time, both the communities often argued in their attempt to achieve their demands. However, in the later part of 1950, the second Pawi-Lakher Convention was convened at the village of Maubawk. It was in this Convention that the Pawis and the Lakhers agreed to demand a joint District Council under one political party Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. It may be pointed out that demand for Regional Council which was made first by the Maras in the early part of 1945 came into reality with the creation of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

The Governor of Assam granted the demand of Pawi and Lakher people and created the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council(PLRC) within the geographical area of the Lushai Hills District in exercise of his power conferred by sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 1 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India vide letter No TAD/R/10/50 DT. 31st July 1951²³⁰. The Governor of Assam then

²²⁹ R.N. Prasad, p.260.

²³⁰ Lalrintluanga, 'The Genesis and the Functioning of the Mizo District Council', in Jangkhongam Doungel(ed.) 'Autonomy movements and the Sixth Schedule in Northeast India', Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2016, p.28.

constituted an Advisory Council to frame the first Constitution for the Pawi-Lakher Regional council with the following members:

1. Mr. B.W. Roy, Sub Divisional Officer, Lunglei : Chairman
2. Mr. Z. Hengmang of Sangau village : member
3. Mr. Khuaimawnga of Vawmbuk village : member
4. Mr. Vako of Zawngling (Zyhno) : member
5. Mr. Mangsaia of Chahwnhu village : member
6. Mr. Chhohmo of Saikao (Saikao) : member
7. Mr. Thangkiphei of Ngharum village : member
8. Mr. Anonda Chakma of Sumsilui village : member
9. Mr. C. Zochhuma, accountant (SDO's office, Lunglei) : member

The first constitution of the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution of regional Council) Rules, 1952 was made by the Governor of Assam, notified vide letter N. TAD/R/3/52/15 Dt 20th May, 1952. The rules provided that there shall be 9 (nine) elected members and 3(three) nominated members. In the early part of 1952, the Tribal Union Assembly was convened at Lawngtlai where delegates of Pawi, Lakher and Tlangau etc., came together to discuss about the candidates to be set up for the ensuing elections to the Regional Council. After having a deliberate discussion, the Assembly resolved that any member who is interested to contest the elections as an independent candidate may do so, and those elected members would be regarded as the Tribal Union members. The first general election was conducted in the month of December, 1952 but the council began to function only after its official inauguration. The elected nine members are as follows:

1. Mr. Zavai of Saikao(Saikao)
2. Mr. Khaido of Zawngling(Zyhno)
3. Mr. K.L Pakhai of Saiha
4. Mr. Z. Hrngmang of Sangau
5. Mr. Tialupa of Bualpui
6. Mr. Tanmanga of Sangau
7. Mr. Tumhulha of Ngengpui Tlang

8. Mr. Thangkiphlei of Ngharum
9. Mr. Sangluaia of Mampui

Nominated members:

1. Mr. Chhalie of Saikao(Saikao)
2. Mr. Chhohmo of Saikao(Saikao)
3. Mr. C. Zochhuma of Bualpui.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was inaugurated by Mr. Ch. Saprawnga, the then parliamentary Secretary of Assam government on the 23rd April, 1953 at Dhobi Mual (C. Thuamluaia Mual) at Lunglei. He also handed over a sum of Rs 1,000/- (one thousand) as an inaugural gift, with which a community feast was prepared at the Sub-Divisional Bungalow, Lunglei.²³¹

4.2.3. The Working of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council:

The geographical area of the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Council comprised of the present Lai Autonomous District Council area, Mara Autonomous District Council area and the Chakma District Council area. It shared international boundaries with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Other than Pawis and Lakhers, PLRC consisted of other tribes, namely Bawms, Tlangaus, Pangs, Riangs and Chakmas. After settling the boundary dispute with Mizo District, PLRC Advisory Committee could not take immediate decision for the location of its Headquarter. Ultimately, the Committee resolved to locate Siaha as the Headquarters of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council but for time being, Lunglei was used as temporary headquarters.

4.2.3.1. First term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

On the eve of the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the elected members could not form the government on the ground that there were no educationally qualified persons having the idea of self-governing officials. Just after

²³¹ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.60.

its inauguration, the Assam government deputed B.W. Roy the then S.D.O(Civil) Lunglei as the first Chairman and Chief Executive member(CEM) of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council for a period of one year with effect from 23rd April 1953. To assist his work, another government servant from the office of S.D.O. Lunglei, C. Zochhuma was also nominated and elected as Vice Chairman of the Regional Council on 23rd April, 1953. Though the Regional Council had already start functioning at this time, they do not have Office building but fortunately Mr. Sorabuddin Khan donated his building in memory of his beloved father for the Regional Council Office. Around this time, Mr. C. Thuamluaia was employed as a session secretary with a salary of Rs. 250/- per month²³².

After one year of service as deputation, the Chairman of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, B.W. Roy convened a session on the 24th April 1954. It was in this session that the Pawi and the Lakher elected their own leaders to the key post of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and also marked the beginning of the proper functioning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Mr. Z. Hengmanga was elected as the first Chairman of the Council and immediately he was handed over in charge by the outgoing Chairman B.W. Roy. After taking charge, Mr. Z. Hengmang conducted election for the post of Chief Executive Member. Mr. C. Zochhuma was unanimously elected as the first Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Soon after holding the post of CEM, C. Zochhuma appointed Mr. Chali of Saikao as Executive Member. But after short service, during the session Mr. Chalia expired and the governor of Assam recommended Mr. Sakia Khuhly in his place and soon he was appointed by CEM as Executive Member. During this time, the elected members of the Council enjoyed a salary of Rs. 120 by the Chairman, Rs. 300 by the Chief Executive Member and Rs. 120 and Rs. 100 by the Executive Member and members of the District Council respectively. It was during the first term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council that the Headquarters was shifted from Lunglei to Saiha on the 25th September, 1955. Since they do not have good building for the Office, sessions were held at the Primary School Building in the early period.

²³² Jangkhomgam Doungel, p.40.

The year 1956 was indeed a year to witness as tragedy for the people of PLRC areas because of the demise of Mr. C. Zochhuma, the first elected Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The people of the land were mourning the death of their leader and at the same time welcome the new educated elites who were just graduating from the college. There were few graduates in these areas who could run the administration of the Council and the people of PLRC area badly needed educated elites for the service of the people. On the death of CEM, Mr. Zochhuma, Mr. Sakia Khuhly took over the Chief Executive Member post and ultimately became the first CEM from the Lakher community.²³³ Around this period, Mr. H. Kiautuma and Mr. L. Chinza had just graduated from the college in Shillong. They were also aware of the situation in the PLRC area and quick to respond to the letters they received from some of the elders of the PLRC. Before their arrival, Mr. J.K Khenglawt who was serving in the Council as Secretary was invited to the post of CEM but he declined. This event opens an opportunity for a young graduate Kiautuma of Chawnhu to snatch the invitation given to him. He soon joined the Council as Secretary before being approved of his appointment as CEM by the Governor of Assam. He was then elected as Chief Executive Member by unanimous vote on 15th January 1957. In the meantime, Sakia Khuhly also served as Executive Member under Mr. Kiautuma Leadership. After a few months of his service, major rift developed between Mr. Kiautuma and Executive Member, Sakia Khuhly and this led to the resignation of Sakia on the 7th of July 1957. This can be considered as the beginning of conflict between the two communities. Notwithstanding the resignation of Sakia, Mr. Kiautuma again appointed another Lakher, K.L. Pakhai as his colleague on 8th July 1957 and remained in the office till the end of the first term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

Despite handful of shortcomings in terms of administration, the first term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council can be considered as a successful beginning. It was indeed a great experience for the people of the PLRC region with new government and new opportunities in their struggle for survival in the 20th century. The Council suffered serious setback with the death of their leaders in a

²³³ Valua Hlychho, p. 116.

short period of service in the Council. But fresh graduate reinforced the administration with new outlook in their approach. During the first term, there was not much development work in the region probably because the Council Members were busy in framing Rules and regulations on customary laws of the land. As provided in the provisions of Sixth schedule to the constitution of India, in Paragraph 2, sub-paragraph 7(b), with the approval of the Governor of Assam, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council passed the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Procedure and Conduct of Business) amendment Act, 1954²³⁴. Thus, the first term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was running smoothly without much feud between the dominant tribes of the region.

4.2.3.2. The second term of the Paw-Lakher Regional Council

In the second term of the general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, steady development took place in the working and functioning of the Council. The number of elected members was increased from 9 to 10 members whereas the strength of nominated members was reduced from 3 to 2 members, of elected seats, 4 seats were allotted each to the Pawis and the Lakhers, one seat each to the Tlangau, sub-tribe of the Pawis and the Tuikuk-Chakmas.²³⁵ Like the first general election, even in the second general election also the candidates were contesting under the umbrella of one party, Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. They do not set up their own candidates for the election but any person belonged to the Pawi-lakher Regional Council area can contest as independent candidate. The government of Assam conducted the election for the second term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in February, 1958.

Soon after declaration of the election result, the S.D.O (civil) of Lunglei called for the meeting of the elected members at Lunglei to elect the Chairman and the Chief Executive Member. It was at this juncture that dispute started between the Pawis and the Lakhers on the issue of Chief Executive Member. The Lakhers demanded that C.E.M should be given to their community member and

²³⁴ R.T. Hnialum, '*Road to Pawi Autonomous District Council*', Lai Autonomous District Council, Lawngtlai, 1988, p. 21.

²³⁵ R.N Prasad, p.119.

this demand was made on the basis of the resolution regarding equal distribution of the offices which was adopted by the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. On the other hand, the Pawis also argued that the resolution was not passed at the Council meeting. Yet, the S.D.O refused to comply with the demand of the Lakher on the ground that it was unconstitutional and against the rules framed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. This created resentment among the Lakher elected members and boycotted the meeting. This created a much needed opportunity for the Pawis to dominate the rest of the elected member who in the future became their associates in the P.L.R.C. With no elected Lakher member present in the meeting, Lalchunga Chinza was elected as Chairman by unanimous vote and at the same time Mr. H. Kiautuma was also elected for the second time as the Chief Executive member. For some time, the Lakher elected members isolated themselves from the meeting to protest against the decision taken by S.D.O. Mr. Kiautuma offered the post of Executive Member to Mylai Hlychho, one of the educated and politically conscious member, but decline the offered. Feuds continue to persist for some time between the two communities. However, Mylai Hlychho accepted the offered after few months of peace talks and he was appointed as executive Member by the Governor of Assam on the recommendation of C.E.M. He served in the Council till the next general election. Soon after that the Lakher elected members started to participate in the Council. The P.L.R.C suffered major blow when Lalchunga Chinza, Chairman of the P.L.R.C resigned from his office. It seems he was not really entertained by the power struggle within the Council which left him no choice but to join Judicial Officer in the Regional Council itself.²³⁶ In his post Mr. F. Sangluaia was elected Chairman by unanimous decision on 3rd March 1959. Thus, H. Kiautuma, C.E.M, F. Sangluaia, Chairman and Mylai Hlychho, Executive Member continued in their office until the next general election held in 1964.

In the second term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Council passed Acts and enacted rules and regulations in order to carry out the functions of the Legislative, Executive, Financial and the Judiciary. The Council also saw maturity in terms of administration and its relationship with state government. Mr.

²³⁶ R.N Prasad, p.120.

Kiatuma proved to be efficient in his administration as many of the Acts, rules and regulations were passed under his leadership.²³⁷

Disunity and mistrust between the two communities has its roots in the early 1960's when the appointment of Council secretary took place. The issue of the appointment of secretary was rather a serious case in terms of ethnic politics is concerned. This incident necessitated the Lakhers to break away from the Tribal Union. At the same time, the Lakhers also put the blame on the Pawis for breaking the truce in the formation of the executive Committee of the Council. Even in the filling up of the official posts of the Regional Council, all responsible post was held by the Pawis. Around this time, only one L.D.C, Mr. K. Paichho was among the Lakhers holding the high post in the office. The appointment of the post of Secretary was made in 1962 where both the communities filed their own qualified candidates like Mr. L. Mark and Mr. R. Tintlunga respectively. The then C.E.M Mr. Kiautuma appointed Mr. Tintlunga, Pawis candidates without the consent of Executive member Mylai Hlychho. This aggravated the situation which Mylai Hlychho²³⁸, stated, was the cause of the beginning of clashes between the two communities. This feud was further accelerated by the establishment of Mara Freedom Party in 1963 at Zyhno. The Lakher leaders never satisfied with the way the Pawis tackled their problems and the administration. They felt that they were being deprived of their position by the Pawis within the Council. The dominance of Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union came to an end and the future of the Council became more ambiguous. The idea of having separate district council takes its roots with the coming of Mara Freedom Party. This ultimately became the driving force of the Lakher Political ideology even within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Mara Freedom Party was established with Mr. Valua Hlychho and Mr. Mylai Hlychho as the first president and Secretary respectively. Subsequently, the Mara Freedom Party boycotted the third general election to the Pawi-Lakher Region Council.²³⁹

²³⁷ R.N. Prasad, p. 120.

²³⁸ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.97.

²³⁹ R.N. Prasad, p.122.

Before the third general election to the Pawi-Lakher regional Council, some of the Lakher leaders met the Chief Minister of Assam in July 1964 to press the demand for separate district council for themselves. The memorandum was submitted personally by Mr. Valua and Mr. Leipo. In the beginning the Lakher leaders resort to peaceful agitation in the protest against the government but assure him that if their demand was to no avail, they would retaliate by establishing Mara District Council within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council area. They also threatened not to pay taxes to the Assam government. Even after this threat, the government of Assam was not ready to accede to the demand put forward by the Lakher leaders. The Assam government deputed Mr. A.C. Ray, the then Additional Deputy Commissioner of Assam to Saiha to discuss with the leaders of the Lakhers in matters relating to their problems. At the same time, Mr. Kiautuma also tried his best to disprove the demand put forward by the Lakher leaders by stating that the Lakher and the Pawis belong to the same ethnic origin and should not give a separate Council. The intention of Kiautuma was clear from the fact that he was just trying to impede the efforts of the Lakher political leader. To uphold their legitimacy in the Council, the Pawi elected leaders also tried their level best to pressurize the government repetitive to bar the Lakher from getting into the District Council. It was quite clear for this incident that the Pawis were content with the Pawi-lakher Regional Council.

4.2.3.3. The Third term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

The third general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council coincides with the Chinese aggression and the election was suspended for some time. Lakher leaders being out of the PLTU, Tribal Union was left with the Pawis and other sub-tribes. In retaliation to the Lakhers, the Pawis also established political Party namely, The Chin National Front. This ultimately ends the first political party of the south i.e. Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. The general election to the Pawi-lakher Regional Council was conducted in 1964²⁴⁰. Since the Lakher boycotted the election

²⁴⁰ Jangkhongam DOUNGEL and R.T. Hnialum, 'The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council', in Jangkhonagam DOUNGEL (ed.) 'Autonomy movements and sixth Schedule in Northeast India', Spectrum publications, Guwahati, 2016, p.40.

only the Pawis, the Chakams, Tlangau, Tuikuk, participated in the election. 6 members were elected in the election, 4 members belong to the Pawis and 2 members were elected from the Chakma area. One interesting facts about the third election was the visibility of the internal feud present within the Pawi leadership. As the Lakher were absent in the election the Pawis contested election against each other. H. Kiautuma and Lalchunga Chinza both of whom belong to the Pawis locked horns against each other in the election where Lalchunga Chinza emerged victorious. In the general meeting, Mr. H. Tanmanga was elected as the Chairman of the Council by unanimous vote. Subsequently Mr. Lalchunga Chinza was elected as the Chief executive member by unanimous vote.

The Regional Council left with no choice but to shift its Headquarter from Saiha to Lunglei for time being. In the meant time, the Lakher leaders also formed the Interim Mara District Council of their own as per resolutions adopted in the 5th assembly of the Mara Freedom party. Zakhu Hlychho and S. Hiato were appointed as Judicial Officer and secretary to the Council respectively. As stated earlier, the Mara Freedom Party collected taxes and revenue from the people. The parties also vowed to function as an administrative body for the Maras until the official recognition of the Interim Mara District Council by the government of Assam. For the cause of the Mara future, the following employees resigned from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council:

Sl.no	Name	Job	Sl.no	Name	Job
1	H.C Sado	Typist	9	SC. Hlychho	Peon
2	KT. Chialo	Typist	10	Rocho nohro	Peon
3	A.Khaichhy	Mohurur	11	Zamo	Peon
4	Elaiza	CS	12	A.Pawchi	Peon
5	Chhasia	CS	13	K.Paichho	Accountant
6	HC. Kiama	CS	14	S.Ngiado	Forest Guard
7	Rahmo	CS	15	K.Chaba	Forest Guard
8	N. Chiapo	Peon	16	A.Thalua	LDC

Subsequently, these employees directly engaged themselves in the Interim District Council. Because of the transferred of Headquarters, the Council's records and relevant papers were lost. This created a lot of problems for the functioning of the Pawi-lakher Regional Council but the State government was silent about this event. Mr. Saigal, the then Deputy Commissioner of Aizawl, came to Saiha with police to see the matter by himself but went back without taking any action²⁴¹. It was therefore clear that the Assam government seems to be sympathetic towards the Lakhers. This issue raised a conflicting query as to how such a political organization was allowed to function within the jurisdiction of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. It further developed disunity between the two communities which seems to be impossible to reconcile in the coming years.

In June 1965, the Patasker Commission arrived in Aizawl to have discussion with the Lakher Leaders with regard to their demands and grievances. For this purpose, a visit to Saiha was proposed but was not successful because of the inability the Helicopter. But the Mara Freedom Party leaders were interviewed by the Commission and again submitted memorandum which was already submitted to the Assam government earlier. The Mara Freedom Party was led by Mr. Leipo and other member includes Mr. Mylai Hlychho, Secretary and Rev. L. mark, an active member of Mara Freedom Party. The commission left Aizawl the same day because of the unhealthy political development in Lushai hills. However, the result of the report of the Patasker Commission was neither reciprocated nor known even after. In the midst of dispute and malfunctioning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, Lushai Hills witness the beginning of insurgency spear headed by the Mizo National Movement. This affected the politics of the South Lushai hills to some extent. The call for volunteers and recruitments made by the MNF had almost shattered the functioning of the Regional Council.²⁴² Mr. R.V. Pillai, the then Sub-Divisional Officer, Lunglei visited Saiha in later part of 1965. After coming to Saiha, he made a tour for western belt of the Lakher inhabited areas in order to assess the tempo of the Mara Freedom Party movements. He found that the Lakhers were very much united and mobilized

²⁴¹ Zakhu Hlychho, p.157.

²⁴² R. Hmingthanzuala, p.105.

in their political demand under single political party. On seeing this, he instead encouraged the villagers in their endeavours for political autonomy.²⁴³

When Mr. Lalchunga Chinza was holding the post of Chief Executive Member, he contested in the election of the Assam Legislative Assembly and won in the bye-election from Siaha to Lunglei constituency in 1968. He holds double responsibility as MLA and Chief Executive Member as per the representation of People Act, amendment, enacted by the Indian Parliament in 1956. As stated earlier, Headquarters of Regional Council was shifted to Lunglei and again with the election of Mr. L. Chinza as Member of Legislative Member, Regional Council was looked after from outside the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. This often creates problems in the administration of the Regional Council. Subsequent result of the MNF movement was the declaration of Lushai Hills as 'Disturb area' by the government of India. It hampered the food supply and results in the insufficiency of food and other commodities in the areas. On account of MNF activities the politics of the region also seemingly less active during this period. Despite internal disturbances within its administration the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council functioned till 1969.

4.2.3.4.4th term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

The next general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was held in 1970 under the chronic political instability prevailing in the Pawi-Lakher region.²⁴⁴ The Lakher after boycotting the 3rd General election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council re-join to contest in the election. The Lakher were represented by a single party, Mara Freedom Party, which was formed in the early part of 1963. They join the election thinking that prolonged boycott of the Regional Council might dwindle the integrity of the Lakher people in their movement for political autonomy. On the other hand, the Pawis had already joined Indian National Congress which established its District committee at Lawngtlai on 6th September 1969 with F. Manghnuna as the first President of the Party. The emergence of the National Party saw the merger of the Chin National Front which was formed in the early 1964 as the

²⁴³ Value Hlychho, p.124.

²⁴⁴ R.N. Prasad, p.124.

main basis of the Pawis within Pawi-Lakher region. One the eve of the 4th general election to the Pawi-Regional Council, the Congress was divided into two groups because of misunderstanding on the ticket distribution of the Party. The official candidates put forward by F. Manghnuna were strongly opposed by Lalchunga Chinza by creating their own candidates. The problem was clearly due to personal reason and lust for leadership between the two. The Congress was then had to face the election with two camps, namely, Lalchunga Chinzah(Congress L) and F. Manghnuna (Congress M)²⁴⁵.

Election to the Pawi-Lakher regional Council was held on the 23rd April 1970 and three Parties, The Mara Freedom Party, the Congress L led by L. Chinzah and the Congress M led by F. Manghnuna contested the election. In the election three MPF candidates Zakhu Hlychho, Khosa and S. Hiato were elected unopposed but in the Tuipang constituency S. Pailei had to face opposition from Pawi candidate Sailuaia backed by Lalchunga Chinzah but he won very easily. On the other hand, Lalchunga Chinzah, Lalchema and Ukmang Zathang were elected for the Chinzah faction whereas Sapliana Vandir was the lone elected member for Manghnuna faction. Mr. Arun Chakma Dewan and Mr. Atul Chandra Chakma were elected from Chakma area on Congress ticket. Arun Chakma joined Mr. Manghnuna group while Atul Chama joined Lalchunga group. During this time, Mr. K. Sangchhuma from Pawi community and Mr. Zavai from Lakher community were also given nominated seats.

Since there was gruesome tussle between the Congress candidates even before the election, the problems continued to persist even after election and the Pawis were completely divided in the formation of government in the Regional Council. It was at this juncture that the Lakher leaders came to the front with the help of Manghnuna group who were nowhere near to form coalition course with their counterparts Lalchunga's group²⁴⁶. The problem that arouse between Lalchunga and Manghnuna was personal and lust for leadership within the Congress. In fact, this election witnesses the emergence of the Lakhers into the forefront in leading the

²⁴⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 23rd may 2015.

²⁴⁶ Zakhu Hlychho, p.161.

Regional Council. After the election it was clear that Lalchunga would be once again elected as the Chief Executive member of the Council provided that he is a good administrator and by his bargaining capacity. But Manghnuna, on the other hand, wanted Lalchunga's defeat at any cause. On supporting the Lakher in the election, Manghnuna asked his three supporters Sapliana Vindir, K. Sangchhuma and Arun Kumar Dewan to side with the Lakher elected members on the selection of the Chairman and Chief Executive Member.²⁴⁷ With the support of Manghnuna group the Lakher strength goes to eight members in the Council. Following this, the elected members of the Regional Council met on 15th July 1970 at the government High school, Lunglei to elect the Chairman and the Chief executive member. Under the chairmanship of S.D.O Lunglei, the members unanimously elected S. Pailei as Chairman and Zakhu Hlychho as the Chief Executive Member.²⁴⁸ Zakhu Hlychho the appointed Sapliana as his cabinet colleagues on 16th July 1970. The holding of top post in the Regional Council proved to be a great achievement so far as the political aspiration of the Lakher was concerned. The Lakhers, at this point of time, realized the fact that they were heading on the right course in addressing their political grievances, autonomy being their target.

However, Zakhu Hlychho remained in the office for a very short span of time. Lalchunga Chinzah left no stone unturned in finding out ways and means to topple down the Lakhers leadership in the Regional Council. This move has a lot to do with ethnic base politics which was already developed between the Pawis and the Lakhers even before the Regional Council was initiated. Distinguished politician, Lalchunga refuse to remain a silent spectator in the Council and targeting the Manghnuna factions for resurrection of Pawi supremacy in the Regional Council. He then met Manghnuna group in secret and plot to dethrone Zakhu Hlychho who was just taking over the Chief Executive post for a while. The meeting was a successful one, where the Pawis, under the banner of ethnic communities came together once again to topple the Lakhers. So, Lalchunga group tabled a vote of no-confidence against the Zakhu Hlychho cabinet. The motion was passed and Zakhu Hlychho left

²⁴⁷ Z. Hengmang, *'Lai hnam Tobul'*, Lai Autonomous District Council, 1987, p.117-118.

²⁴⁸ R.N. Prasad, p.125.

his office because Manghnuna had already withdrawn his support in favour of Lalchunga Chinzah. Soon after, Mr. S. Pailei then tendered his resignation from the Chairmanship and Mr. Arun Kumar Dewan, Deputy Chairman conducted the session. Mr. S. Pailei delivered his speeches in Zawngling (dialect of lakher language) version, Mr. S. Hiato then used Hawthai (dialect of lakher language) version and Mr. Zakhu Hlychho used Tlosai version.²⁴⁹ It seems the deputy Chairman, Arun Kumar Dewan, was also confused with the kind of language they used inside the meeting hall. As a result, the chairman adjourned the session. The Lakher leaders finding ways to get back into the front tried their best to convinced Mr. K. Sangchhuma Mr. Sapliana to come to their side by offering them the post of Chairman and Chief Executive Member respectively. K. Sangchhuana somehow complies with the offers and elected as Chairman but before electing the Chief Executive Member he changed his mind and tried to prorogue the session. At this point the Lakher wanted his removal from the office and ultimately resigned from the post of Chairman²⁵⁰.

The chronic scramble continued in the Regional Council with no single party to form an Executive Committee. The absence of Chief Executive Member means the dismissal of the executive committee. The rules framed under the Sixth Schedule also clearly prescribed the election of the Chief Executive Member for the new Executive Committee within forty-eight hours by the Regional Council. But the Council failed to elect the Chief Executive Member within the given period after the exit of Zakhu Hlychho.²⁵¹ The situation became tense and there was no single party to take up the matters. Ultimately, the Government of Assam in accordance with the constitution of the Regional Council as provided in Para 16 of the sixth Schedule, appointed Lalchunga Chinzah as care taker Chief Executive Member of the Executive Committee to carry on the functions of the Regional Council until the new Executive Committee was formed. In the midst of political grumble and static functionaries of the Regional Council, the Government of Assam also made a number of investigations with regard to the memorandum submitted by the Pawis

²⁴⁹ R. Hmingthanzual, p.60.

²⁵⁰ Zakhu Hlychho, p. 164.

²⁵¹ R.N. Prasad, p.125.

and the Lakhers. At the same time, delegations were also sent by the Pawis and the Lakhers. Especially the Lakhers sent their representatives to the central government to pressurize on their demands even when they were in the Regional Council. The people of the Regional Council area also fed up of the political set up and put pressure on the government for a solution. Ultimately, solution came when the elected members of the Regional Council agreed to have a joint meeting on 17th March 1972 and re-elected Zakhu Hlychho as the Chief Executive Member. He selected S. Pailei, the then Chairman and Ukmang Zathang as members of the Executive Committee. We can see here that Ukmang Zathang was side with Zakhu Hlychho for having a place in the Executive Committee. Soon after the formation of Executive Committee, S, Pailei resigned from his post and in his place Lalchunga Chinzah was elected unanimously. Without any disturbances, the Council runs properly and each member holds their office up to 1st April 1972²⁵².

Right from its inception, it was clear from the fact that there exists a major rift between the two dominant tribes in the South, the Pawis and the Lakhers. Both tribes were fighting like cats and dogs for political power²⁵³. Each tribe, one way the other, wanted to dominate the other and wanted to get hold of the Regional Council power for their own benefits. It all started when there was a breach of agreements between the two tribes in the Council on the issue of appointments of the top post. Especially between 1964 and 1971, there was chronic political instability in the Pawi-lakher Regional Council. It appears that the Pawis emerged victorious in Executive Committee on the ground that they were supported by Tlangau, Bawm, who were ethnically closer to the Pawis than the Lakhers and also by the Chakmas. This irritated the Lakher politics within the Council and often led to dismantling of the Regional Council. The Chakmas, on the other hand, were far more backward than the two tribes and were less competitive politically during the Regional Council period. However, they were often sided by the Pawis in the election. There is no denying the fact that both the tribes developed a sense of antagonism,

²⁵² Laicho Notlia, p.22.

²⁵³ P.T. Hlychho, *Maraland; Yesterday and Today*, P.T. Hlychho, Shillong, p.134.

misunderstanding, distrust, and fear being inferior to each other²⁵⁴. The best alternative to avoid such perpetual conflicts was by having separate District Council. In the beginning there was no issue on the demand for separate District Council by the Pawis because they managed to uphold larger share in the administration and they were quite content with their status. But on the other hand, the Lakher realizing the fact that they were under the shadow of the Pawis could not imagine their future course under the Regional Council. They accepted that they were less educated in numbers than their counterparts but because of their ethnic differences they were not content with being minority in their own land. This created a sense of belonging among the Lakhers and strives to get District Council for the Lakhers²⁵⁵. For this purposes, they had submitted memorandum after memorandum to the officials who visited the Lakher areas one after another.

The Government of India considered new administrative set up in Mizoram and consequently proposed the creation of three Autonomous District Councils in the Hills. Pursuant to the Para 20 B of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitutions of India, the Government of India then amended in 1971 by which the difference of power between the Regional and the District Council was abolished and the same was incorporated in the North Eastern Areas (reorganization) Act, 1971.²⁵⁶ As a consequence, the Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972. Mizoram elevated to the status of Union Territory by the year 1972. This opened a new space for the dominant tribes of the south, the Pawis, the Lakhers and also the Chakmas to take benefits of the political development. Taking advantage of this, the Leaders of the three communities met the Chief Commissioner of Mizoram for setting up of the District Councils. The administrator of Mizoram as per the provisions issued an order called the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (reorganization) Order 1972 vide Notification No. CCMP 3/72/70/77-1 April 1972 under which the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated into three Regional Councils for major tribes such as the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas. Consequently, the Lakher Autonomous Region, The Pawi Autonomous Region and the Chakmas Autonomous region were

²⁵⁴ Zakhu Hlychho, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu

²⁵⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, '*Hundred years of Maraland*', JR. Construction, Aizawl, 2006, p. 163.

²⁵⁶ R. N. Prasad, p.129.

created and constituted under Section 4 (1) of Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (reorganization) Order 1972 in order to enable these tribes to develop their customs, cultures and dialects according to their own genius and ability.²⁵⁷

4.3. Powers of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

As the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was created by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India it has certain amount of power and functions prescribed in the Sixth Schedule itself. When the Sixth Schedule was enforced, the District Councils and the Regional Council were authorized to create and passed laws to be abide by the region of the Councils. The power and functions of the Regional Councils are prescribed in the Para 3 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. They can be divided into the executive, the legislative, financial and judicial powers.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was entrusted with law making powers as provided in Para 3 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India as the Regional Council for an autonomous region in respect of all within such region and the District Council for an autonomous district in respect of all areas within the district except those which are under the authority of Regional Councils, if any, within the District shall have the power to make laws with respect to the allotments, occupation or use, or the setting apart, of land, other than any land which is reserved forest, for purposes of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose likely to promote the interest of the inhabitants of any village or town. The Regional Council also can make laws with regard to the use or management of any forest, use of canal or water course for the purpose of agriculture, regulation of the practice of Jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation, establishment of towns and villages, public health and sanitation. Regarding the customary laws of the land, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was also authorized to make laws and also of the inheritance of property and marriage

²⁵⁷ K.L. Hansaria, p.514.

customs.²⁵⁸ However, the laws framed by the Regional Council are put up to the Governor of the state for its consent or signature and after that only the laws became valid and applicable to the people.

According to the Para 4 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, the Regional Council also has the power to constitute village Councils or Courts for the trial of suits and cases between the parties all of whom belong to Schedule Tribes within such areas. Para 4 (4) clearly states that a regional Council or District Council, as the case may be, may with the previous approval of the governor make rules regulating the constitution of village councils and courts and the powers to be exercised by them under this paragraph, the procedure to be followed by village councils or courts in the trial of suits and cases under sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph, the procedure to be followed by the regional council or district council or any court constituted by such Council in appeals and other proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) of this Para, the enforcement of decisions and orders of such Councils and courts, all other ancillary matters for the carrying out of the provisions of sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) of this paragraph.²⁵⁹ No other courts except the high Courts and the Supreme Courts of India had jurisdiction over the suits and cases decided by the Council courts.

The sixth Schedule also empowered the Regional Council to establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, road and waterways in the District and also give Regional Council to prescribe the language to be used as medium of instructions. In terms of Fund, the Regional Councils were entrusted with the responsibility to constitute autonomous Fund or Regional Fund and frame rule and regulations for their management. However, all the regulations and rules framed by the Regional Council should be applicable only with the consent of the Governor. The Regional Council has the power to levy taxes on lands and buildings, and tolls on person's resident within such areas. It also entrusted with the power to assess and collect revenue within its jurisdiction. Regarding shared of the royalties of natural resources like mines, the

²⁵⁸ K.L. Hansaria, p.443.

²⁵⁹ GAD files of MADC,

District Council share with the State government.²⁶⁰ The executive Committee of the Council exercised all the executive powers in the name of Council. Budget estimate is prepared by the executive Committee and passed by the Council-in-session. In regard to appointment of officers and staff, it was the duty of the executive. However, all laws, rules and regulations made under the Sixth Schedule by a Regional Council shall be published forthwith in the Official Gazette of the State and shall on such publication have the force of law. In addition, grants were given to the Regional Council for their administration and certain purposes like the constructions of the roads and communications, rural water supply, rural communications, rural health program and sanitation, maintenance of tribal culture and also of the forest development schemes which were inaudible.

When the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council came into being, the first initiative towards the development of the region was the creation of Laws, Rules and regulations. Subsequently, the Regional Council passed a number Acts, rules and regulations for the proper functioning of the Regional Council. As stated earlier, the function of the Regional Council was divided into the Legislative, the Executive, the financial and the Judiciary. Therefore, they were anticipated to elevate the village tribal communities, introduce primary education, culture, custom, agriculture, health, village communications, sanitation, economic and rural development.

4.4. The Working of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was the only Regional Council established under the provision of Paragraph 1 sub-paragraph (2) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Since the PLRC co-exist along with the Mizo District Council, there are some similarities so far as the administration is concerned. The laws enacted by the District Council sometimes has to be carefully studied before being implemented in the assembly on the ground that the laws might be unsafe to the functioning of the Regional Council. The administrators of the Regional

²⁶⁰ K.L. Hansaria, *Op.Cit.*, p.449.

Council also keep an eye on the Laws enacted in the District Council to check the autonomy of the Regional Council. For the same purpose, the Regional Council was entrusted with the powers to enacted and passed laws for the administration of the Council. Its powers and functions were deliberately framed to meet the demands of the Council region and also for the benefit of the tribal people and to bring about development in the village life of the tribal society.

The composition of the Regional Council was not fully democratic. As per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, one fourth of the strength of the Regional Council was to be filled by nominated members. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, the Council had strength of 12 members of whom 9 were to be elected directly on the basis of adult franchise from single member constituencies and not more than three persons to be nominated by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Executive Member. If we look at the situations of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, one can see the violation of the term of conduct when none of the Chakmas were nominated during the lifetime of the Regional Council. The nominated seats would go to the Pawis and the Lakhers. Even before the elections, there seems to develop cooperation between the two dominant tribes regarding allotment of seats in the Regional Council. In the first general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Lakhers with 3 elected members got 2 nominated seats whereas the Pawis got 4 elected members including 1 nominated member. However, in the second general election the members of the elected seats was increased from 9 to 10 but the strength of the nominated seat was reduced to 2. Even in the second general election there seems to be no difference in terms of allotting seats where the nominated seats belong to the Pawis and the Lakhers.

The first rules, made by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, that regulates the functioning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was enacted by the Governor of Assam in accordance with the provisions of the Sixth Schedule and called it the Paw-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution of the Regional Council) rules, 1952 and also made the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (Procedure and Conduct of Business) Rules, 1952. This rules necessitated the Council to meet once

in six months. But the Regional Council always failed to maintain continuity in terms of meeting of the Council Members. Consequently, the executive body of the Regional Council started functioning in the Council and ultimately went on to pass 33 other legislations during the period of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.²⁶¹ In effect, all the laws, rules and regulations made by the Regional Council were administered or executed by the Executives Committee headed by the Chief Executive Members. Most of the laws, rules and regulations passed by the Regional Council served as a means to codify the social customs and practices of the tribal people and were enacted along the line of the tribal customs. These rules and regulations also extended its authorities over the administration of justice, village Council Acts, and rules for the election to the village council and for the levy of taxes and revue as well.

The first important Acts, regarding the collection of revenue, was enacted by the PLRC on 5th December as the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Reduction of Fathang) Act. Prior to the passing of this Acts, the Mizo District Council enacted the same law which was rather precursor to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council Acts. The main objective of this Act was the reduction of the taxes on paddy and other traditional dues which were compulsory for the tribals to pay to the Chiefs. This was indeed great achievement for the establishment of social equality within the Pawi-Lakher Region. According to Hengmang Zathang, the Pawis and the Lakher Chiefs still collected Fathang from the villagers till 1954. However, with the enactment of the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Council) Act, 1954, the situation was altered completely. The year 1954 was remarkable for the people of Lushai hills as the Government of Assam enacted the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act on 28th June 1954 which ultimately abolished the traditional heredity of Chieftainship with effect from 1st April 1955. The following year, in 1956, in accordance with the same provisions of the Act, the Chieftainship within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council area was altogether abolished with effect from 15th April 1956. This move was an important event not only for the Pawis and the Lakhers, it was also a great leap forward for the

²⁶¹ Z. Hengmang, p.103.

people of the Lushai Hills in the process of modernity in the new world. The Chiefs, once the despotic rulers of the land, were reduced to a mere puppet at the hands of the commoners.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council area covered with vast tropical forest was deemed to be protected by the Act of the PLRC. In the year 1954, the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Forest) Act was enacted by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council on the 22nd of November. According to this Act, the Regional Council may constitute any forest land at the disposal of the Regional Council Forest Reserve in the manner here-in-after prescribed. Accordingly, sand and stones were treated as forest products and nonpersons could exploit the forest products without the issue of permit or license by the Regional Council.²⁶² The forest became the main source of revenue for the Council. This Act was consequently amended in the year 1957 and 1961. Any person violating the provisions of this Act was made punishable with a fine of Rs. 50 or in accordance with the amount of damage caused by the person. The land which was once owned by the Chiefs became protected by this Act and the villagers were barred from exploiting the forest according to their will. In pursuance to the provision provided in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, Paragraph 11, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also framed the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1954, for revenue collection and record keeping of the revenue sources. According to this Act, taxes were collected from tolls, lands and building or houses.²⁶³

Another important landmark in the history of law making in the Pawi-Lakher Region Council was the framing of the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Inheritance of property) Act on the 15th of June 1959. This Act democratizes the existing tribal practices in which the eldest male member of the family inherits the property. By this, a daughter may also be considered qualified or have equal rights with her brother in inheritance of property. Being patriarchal society, the eldest son of a family inherits the property among the Pawis and the Lakher family. It was

²⁶² R.N. Prasad, p.141.

²⁶³ R.N. Prasad, p.152.

practice since time immemorial and this Act revolutionize the inheritance rights by framing certain laws for the welfare the two communities.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also enacted the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Jhum) Regulation on 6th November 1956 to regulate Jhum lands in the region. This Act was passed in order to check the rapid increase in the disappearance of the forest land and also to see the sufficient way of practicing Jhum cultivation in the region. Subsequently, in the year 1960 the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Agricultural Land) Act was passed by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. This Act empowers the executive body of the Regional Council to allot the vacant lands for either cultivation or gardening purposes. In this way, the Land was properly maintained and protected by the administrator within the Pawi-lakher Region.

In order to look after the administration of the villages, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also enacted the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Councils) Act on 24th November 1954. The main provisions of this Act were to see that the villages were looked after properly by establishing Village Councils, where the villagers can have their own representatives. The Village Council mainly consists of 3 to 9 members depending upon the number of households in the village. In pursuant to this, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council enacted the election to Village Council rules on the 18th February 1955. This enables proper functioning of the Village Council.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also passed the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Administration of Justice) Rules on 1st March 1954. The main objective of this Act was to bring about the administration of justice in the region. Under this rule, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council set up two tier courts of judicial administration i.e. the Village Court at the Village level and the Regional Council Court for the entire region stationed at the Council capital, Saiha.²⁶⁴ Although there were no qualified or trained judicial officers in the region, the Council appointed any person other than the magistrate of the state government posted at Saiha as the

²⁶⁴ R.N Prasad, p.148.

judicial officer with the approval the governor. One of the most important branches of the proper functioning of the Regional Council was Finance department. For this purpose, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council also enacted certain rules for the management and appropriation of the Regional Funds, better known as the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (Fund) Rules in 1962. It contained all receipts realized by the Regional Council and also included liquid assets, surplus revenues, customary receipts, cash balance and Bank balance. However, all these powers were run by the Executive Committee of the Regional Council.²⁶⁵

So far as the provision of the Sixth Schedule is concerned, the Regional Council suffered from certain shortcomings. Since, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was independent in their functions, the state government could hardly intervene in the administration of the Council and in this way they were free from the rules and regulations passed by the state government. But this makes them more susceptible to misgovernment of the administration and often leads to malfunctioning of the Council. One of the most important defects of the provision was the fact that the Regional Council was not authorize to run primary school within its jurisdiction. Their rights were taken away by not allowing them to read and write in their own dialects especially the Lakhers whose language had already been used as medium of instruction by the Christian Missionaries at Saikao (Saikao).

Mention can be made after analyzing the Regional council that the Councils failed to develop Jhuming, construction and maintenance of roads, dispensaries and markets. If we look at the reports of the Committee, appointed by the Assam government to look into the financial conditions of the Regional Council, we can see the unsatisfactory reports in which the Council failed to utilize funds it received from the State government. There was also diversion of developmental grants or funds to non-development scheme and other works. The local revenue it generates could not meet the demands of the Regional Council as a result the Council has to rely heavily on the State Government for assistance. If one would try to look into the failures of the regional Council, one would see the existence of one-party

²⁶⁵ R.T. Hnialum, '*Collection of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council Acts*', LADC, R.M. Press Lunglei, 1991, p.107.

system within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council as an important issue where the two separate tribe forming one party to run the administration of the Council. This created a sense of stagnant development within the Council where one party dominates and run the Council. Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union was not taken seriously because of ethnic clash that occurred time to time. The Pawis would try to dominate the rest in their struggle for supremacy in the Council. On the other hand, the Lakhers would do the same. Right from the beginning the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was not functioning properly where both the Pawis and the Lakhers would fight for power. This led to the growing suspicion among them and eventually leads to the boycott of the Regional Council by the Lakhers. Ultimately, the power struggle and fight for supremacy in the Regional Council between the two dominant tribes led to the eventual trifurcation of the Regional Council into three separate District Council in the year 1972²⁶⁶.

²⁶⁶ Jangkhongam Doungel, p.46.

CHAPTER 5

MARA AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL

5.1. Political condition of the Lushai Hills prior to India's independence

The Lushai expedition of 1889 led to the division of the Hills into two administrative districts. But the South Lushai Hills and the North Lushai Hills were again amalgamated into one administrative district known as the Lushai Hills District under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam. During this period all areas of the present North Eastern states of India except the then princely states of Tripura and Manipur were under the Chief Commissionership of Assam. In 1905, Bengal was partitioned²⁶⁷, and a new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into existence. However, the partition was reversed in 1912 but Assam refused to go along with Bengal and preferred to remain a separate entity. It maybe stated that these areas are the territories which were to be designated subsequently as tribal areas for whose administration Sixth Schedule was enacted. It is apparent that these Hill tracts were governed earlier as non-regulation areas until the reforms of 1919. The prevailing position of these areas was examined in more details by the Indian Statutory Commission of 1930, commonly known as the Simon Commission. The commission then felt that the Centre could use the Governors for this purpose as the task was regarded as too large to be left to the single-handed efforts of missionary or individual officials. Although the recommendations were not fully adopted, it was in pursuance of this report that these areas were devoted more in the Government of India Act 1935.

The Government of India Act 1935 abandoned the terminology of the backward tracts and instead introduced the new term describing these tracts as 'Excluded Areas' or 'Partially Excluded Areas.' The Lushai Hills was also included in the excluded Areas. In a statement on 16th may, 1946, the Cabinet Mission

²⁶⁷Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar, *From Plassey to partition*, p.80.

reiterated the need for special attention of the Constituent Assembly to these excluded and partially excluded areas and the tribal areas while drafting the new Constitution of India. An advisory Committee was planned on Fundamental Rights and minorities in such manner that it should contain due representation of all the interests likely to be affected and should advise the Constituent Assembly on framing an appropriate scheme for the administration of tribal and excluded areas. Following the Advisory Committee meeting held on 27th February 1947, three sub-committee was set up- one to consider the tribal and excluded and partially excluded areas in Assam, another to consider the tribal areas in the North western Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and the third Sub-Committee to consider the position of excluded and partially excluded areas in the provinces other than Assam.²⁶⁸

The Advisory Committee, popularly known as the Bordoloi Committee, then toured the entire provinces of Assam and was convinced that the Hill people, even in the remotest part, were not lacking political consciousness. Thus, especially after India's independence, there was a feeling of necessity to have separate state among the peoples of various tribes of the North east. The Maras were no exception in demanding separate autonomy for themselves in the southern region of the Lushai hills. They were very active in demanding separate autonomy even before India's got independence and for this purpose memorandum was submitted to the government many times. To them it was the only way to catch up with the more advanced sections of their counterparts in the north and India as a whole. In the Lushai Hills no political activity was allowed until 1946 and it was because of this there was hardly any public gatherings in the Lushai hills. When the transfer of power was imminent, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, McDonald thought to bring the District Conference into existence in 1946.²⁶⁹ By this time political party was already establish in the Lushai hills called the Mizo Union, the first of its kind.

After India's Independence the immediate formation of the District Council was not possible. Amid political parley between the representatives of the

²⁶⁸B. Chakraborty, *A Century of the History of Politics in Northeast India*, Self-Employment Bureau Publications, Calcutta, 2000, p.5.

²⁶⁹ R.N Prasad, p.77.

governor and the Chiefs, the Assam government decided to set up Advisory Councils in five of the hill districts of Assam including the Lushai hills district. Subsequently, on 15th April 1948, the District Advisory Council in the Lushai hills was established to counsel the government of Assam in matters relating to the Lushai hills. Elections were held to form members of the Advisory Council in which the Mizo Union won landslide victory and Mr. Hengmang and Mr. Vako won from the south representing the Pawis and the Lakhers respectively. At the same time, Chhohmo was selected to represent the Mara chiefs.

The setting up of Advisory council does not really help the Maras in achieving a separate administration in the South. L.L. Peters then suggested Mr. Chhohmo to form a political party at the earliest in order that the Maras in their culture, customs and interest could be safeguarded. Though the Mara chief had already submitted another memorandum during the visit of the Bordoloi committee to the Lushai hills, there was no guaranteed for them to have separate administration. Mr. L.L. Peters further suggested Mr. Chhohmo that the name of the Political part to be named 'Tribal Union'. In this regard the Maras came into conformity with the Pawis because they were rejected of their demand earlier on account of least population. Therefore, the Maras and the Pawis set up a political Party called Tribal Union on 25th November 1948 at Lawngtlai. It was formed under the guidance of Mr. B.W. Roy, the then Sub-Divisional Officer, Lunglei.

Meanwhile, L.L. Peters was replaced by Mr. S.N Barkataki, the first Indian Superintendent of the Lushai hills in December 1949²⁷⁰. The new superintendent of the Lushai hills soon became very familiar with the Chief of Saikao, Chhohmo, who was then a representative of the Chief from the South. Mr. Chhohmo honoured him at his first visit to Saikao by feast. The chief frequently conducted a formal communication with the Superintendent for speedy implementation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council²⁷¹.

²⁷⁰ Laicho Notlia, p.10.

²⁷¹ See also chapter 4 for more details.

The first general election to the Lushai Hills district Council was held on 4th January 1952 for eighteen seats. The first political party of the hills, the Mizo Union won majority by taking 15 seats and formed the government with Lalsawia as the Chief Executive Member and Dr. Rosiama as the Chairman respectively. Finally, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was officially inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, the then Chief Minister of Assam at Aizawl on 26th April, 1952. The name of the District Council was changed into the Mizo District Council as the political leaders felt that the term 'Lushai or Lusei' did not cover different tribes of the Zo ethnic group. Though the Pawi and the Lakher leaders were vigorously persuaded by the Mizo Union and the leaders of the UMFO not to proceed with their demands for Regional Council, they were not successful as the Assam government constituted the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council vide notification No.TAD/R/10/50 dated 1951. Through the regional Advisory Council, the first general election was held in 1953. Ultimately, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was inaugurated by Ch. Saprawnga, the then Parliament Secretary to the Government of Assam at Lunglei with Headquarters at Saiha on 23rd April, 1953²⁷².

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was confronted with several problems. Even before the first general election which was scheduled in the early part of 1953, conflict and misunderstanding arose among the Pawis and the Maras over the allotment of seats to be contested. It was in the second general election that the split, suspicion and discontentment between the two dominant tribes exposed when the meeting of the elected members to elect Chairman and C.E.M was boycotted by the Lakhers. The Lakhers demand for the post of CEM and other executive post was denied by the S.D.O on the ground that it was unconstitutional and against the rules of the Sixth schedule of the constitution. Earlier, at the Conference, which was organized by the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union on 25th November, 1948, an agreement was made between the two communities that the CEM would be given to the Pawis in the First term of the Regional Council and followed by the Lakhers in the second term. The agreement was pleasantly signed by Mr. Huny Satly for the Lakher community and Mr. Hengmanga from the Pawi

²⁷² Jangkhongan Doungel, p.34.

community. However, this agreement had never been fulfilled by the Pawis²⁷³. In order to show their dissatisfaction and resentment the two-council meeting was boycotted by the Lakhers though they joined again in the months later.²⁷⁴

The Maras and the Pawis were completely divided on the formation of the Executive Committee of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Subsequently, some of the Lakhers leaders met the Chief Minister of Assam to set up the separate District Council for the Maras.²⁷⁵ At the same time they also informed the Chief Minister that they would stop paying taxes and they would also run interim Mara District Council. This was the beginning of the idea of having a separate administration for the Maras got revitalized though the Chief Minister was indifferent of this warning. The movement for autonomy among the Maras coincides with the Hills state Movement within the Government of Assam and the Chief Minister was very busy dealings with the Hill leaders. The Mizo Leaders were actively involved in the movement and when All Party Hill Leaders Conference was formed in 1960 following the introduction of Official Language Bill in the Assam Legislative Assembly on June 22, 1960, R. Thanhlira the then Vice President of Mizo Union became its first Chairman²⁷⁶. This movement has a visible impact on the activities of the Mara leaders in demanding separate District Council as they believe that if Mizo District Council was upgraded to the status of Union territory or the State, they would inevitably get separate District Council for the Maras. It was because of this; the Mara Leaders often boycotted the Regional Council realizing the fact that the State Government of Assam would have little time to interfere in the internal affairs of the Council.

The Pawi Leaders failed to implement the agreement which was made solemnly between the two communities even before the formation of the Regional Council. In the agreement, before the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional

²⁷³ Zakhu Hlychho, p.43.

²⁷⁴ Zakhu Hlychho, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu.

²⁷⁵ S. Hiato, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, on 13th may 2014.

²⁷⁶ Rohmingmawii, "*Christianity and society in Mizoram*" in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii (ed.) *Mizo narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2013, p.297.

Council, the two communities agreed that the number of employees in the office of the Regional Council would be made equal as far as practicable. In veracity, only one Lakher was employed as LDC, one Circle Assistant and few grades IV staff. No Lakher was employed at the higher post. This aggravated the tense situation between the two communities. The Pawi Leaders flatly neglected a truce which has been signed earlier. Thus, the Maras were not given a chance to hold the post of Chief Executive Member and the Lion share of filling up the vacant posts in the Office of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council goes to the Pawis community. On the other hand, the post held by the Maras was inferior ranks such as Circle Assistant, Peon, Chowkidar etc. within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council areas, the medium of instruction was Mizo language which was opposed by the Lakhers as majority of the Lakhers could not understand while the Pawis students could speak and write in Mizo Language. This created lot of problems for the Lakher student²⁷⁷.

The Lakhers claimed that they were the first to demand for setting up of the Regional Council in the Lushai Hills and that the process goes back as early as 1945 when the Lakher chiefs submitted memorandum to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills²⁷⁸. Considering all their efforts in demanding Regional Council, the Lakhers feels betrayed and were not satisfied with situation they were in the Regional Council. They felt that their rights were taken away by the Pawis where the Regional Council was under their control. The feeling of betrayal and insecurity on the one hand and the fear of assimilation by the more advance neighbours prompted the Lakhers to turn away for the Regional Council. There also developed a major rift and disunity between the two communities which appeared to be unreconcilable under the same council. Not only this but such split and clash of interest disintegrated the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union.²⁷⁹

5.3. Mara freedom Party and the Interim Mara District Council

²⁷⁷ Hiphei, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Aizawl, 23rd may 2015.

²⁷⁸ S. Hiato, on 13th may 2016.

²⁷⁹ K. Robin and V.B Nopha Azyu, p.97.

In the later part of 1960s, the Maras began to realize the fact that the Council with its limited legislative and financial powers would never help them grow. At the same time, they felt that Mizo District Council which had powers over Regional council could still dominate their customs and dialects. They also realized that the Pawis being more educationally and politically advanced were holding responsible positions in the Council and they often breached the agreement which was signed at the beginning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Therefore, the Maras no longer wish to be under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and decided to seek other alternatives whereby they can safeguard their interest. It was during the period of hostility and suspicion that the Mara Leaders called for a convention in September 1963 at Zyhno village and decided to form a separate political Party, **Mara Freedom Party**.²⁸⁰ In the conference of 1963, many Maras came to attend from various parts of the South and elected the following leaders as office bearers²⁸¹

- 1) President - Mr. V. Hlychho
- 2) Vice president - Mr. Hiphei
- 3) General Secretary - Mr. Mylai Hlychho
- 4) Asst. Secretary - Mr. S. Pailei
- 5) Treasurer - Mr. N. Nyuhra

The main aim of the Mara Freedom Party was to possess an autonomous district Council for the Mara people. The party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the Mara customary Laws, culture and language. Except for a few Duhlian speaking family, the movement spread the news of autonomy across the Mara people. Mr. V. Hlychho, eldest son of Mr. Chhohmo, chief of Saikao and Mr. Mylai Hlychho were the backbone of the Mara Freedom Party.²⁸² The party strongly dedicated towards the integration of the Lakher into a single administrative unit, so as, to develop themselves according to local genius. At the same time, the Party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the lakher customs, culture and dialect. Since Mizo language was the medium of instruction in the Pawi-

²⁸⁰ Nohro Hmoko, p.118.

²⁸¹ R.N Prasad, p.269.

²⁸² R.C Nohro, *The Lakher Pioneer Missionaries nata Hriatuhpa zy*, E.C.M, Siaha, 2000, p.118.

Lakher Regional Council, the Party objective was to replace the Mizo language by introducing Lakher language as medium of instruction within the Lakher inhabited areas²⁸³.

Mara Freedom party, since its inception, had been trying to unite the Mara (Lakher) people under one umbrella and encourage the people to raise the party's status by advocating regional politics in the region. The main theme of the party was to carve out a separate administration for the Maras in the southern Lushai hills. On 3rd February 1963, Mara Freedom Party initiated a conference at Saikao. This conference has been a landmark in the history of the Maras as the conference passed a historic proclamation for the formation of the Lakher District Council. The conference also initiated the process of remapping the District Council Area and proclaimed that the Lakher District Council should cover the villages of Bualpui, Lungzartum, Tuipuikai, Paithar, Rulkual, R.Vanhne, Saizawh, Tuithumhnar, Bungtlang, Mualbukawnpui, Ngengpuitlang, Tlaotlah, Hmawngbu.²⁸⁴

In the early part of 1963 Mr. B. Bhyuan, A.D.C was posted at Saiha on account of the movement launched by the Lakhers. He was sent to embark upon the political problems in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Pawi leaders on the other hand wanted to get the Lakhers exposed of their ill practices of boycotting and tempering the Regional Council. However, Bhyuan was practical in his approach and saw personal differences between the two tribes. He also witnessed the Lakhers speaking their own language where the Pawis could fluently converse in the Lushai language. He believed that the standpoint of the Lakhers in their struggle for a separate District Council was imminent. During this period, in the later part of 1964, the then Sub-Divisional officer, Mr. R.V. Pillai also visited Saiha and toured the entire areas inhabited by the Lakhers to see the political mobilization and tempo of the Mara Freedom Party. He encouraged the Lakhers that if they persist in their movement, victory would be theirs someday. This gives a new inspiration for the Lakhers in their movement for a separate state.

²⁸³ Mylai hlychho, on 23 may 2014

²⁸⁴ Laicho Notlia, p.21.

The third general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was boycotted by the Maras on 5th February 1965 and decided to make the Council non-functional especially in all the areas inhabited by the Maras. To mobilize the Lakher people and to press the Assam government, the Mara Freedom Party passed a resolution demanding a separate Autonomy in its 5th General Assembly held on 5th February 1965 as *“as the Maras desire to preserve their Mara tribe and grow like other tribes of India according to their own genius and customs and not domination by any other tribes, as the existing Regional Council that had once given to the Maras, has been found unable to safeguard the Mara tribe from being dominated by their neighbouring tribes as the Mara as a whole, accept the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council no more and have stepped out of the regional Council, village councils, by boycotting the election of the Councils and setting up at the same time interim village Council within the Mara inhabiting areas and as the Assam government seems to have not moved by the appeals and demands of the Maras for a separate Mara District Council, we the Mara people, give and declared to ourselves Mara District Council on the 5th day of February 1965 at 10.40 A.M. under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.”*²⁸⁵ Henceforth, a major rift between the Maras and the Pawis became inevitable and soon found its expression in the form of hostilities between the two communities. Demonstration and picketing were an everyday life among the Maras thereafter, while the Pawis would often taunts from behind because the Pawis never believed that the Maras would get District Council. This pointed to the fact that the Pawis at this time had no intention of getting a separate District Council nor demand was submitted by them to the authorities. On the other hand, the Maras would continue to fight for autonomy, and it was a period when the Maras would ever get together as a tribe in demanding a separate District Council²⁸⁶.

The Assam government kept silent on the issue of the Lakhers and the Lakher leaders felt that more effective steps should be taken to press the Assam government. Subsequently, in 1966 an Interim Mara District Council was initiated

²⁸⁵ R.N Prasad, p.270

²⁸⁶ Laicho notlia, pp. 20-23.

which was considered parallel to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Interim Council represents the Lakher people and run the administration with its headquarters at Saiha. As a result of this, all the land settlement certificates were issued by the interim council and taxes were collected by the interim council. Cases were also tried by the interim council. At the same time, all the Mara employees were also resigned from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and were recruited into the newly formed interim council. It was during this period of political turmoil that the offices of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was burnt²⁸⁷. This resulted in severe strains upon the legal and moral order. However, despite resistance and problem caused by the Lakhers, the Assam government was unmoved and remained silent²⁸⁸. A question may rise as to how such an organization could exercise administrative functions without authority over the area where the constitutionally set up Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was having jurisdiction. The lakher should have been stopped right from the beginning before their demand was converted into physical action and for their total disregard of constitutional provisions. However, the liberal attitude of the Chaliha government of Assam on the one hand and the problem created by the Mizo District Council in demanding separate state from the Assam government further encouraged the Lakhers to prolong its struggle.

The leaders of the Mara Freedom Party submitted for the first time a memorandum addressed to the governor of Assam. In this memorandum the Maras demanded an Autonomous District Council and it was submitted to honorable Mr. B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam. The memorandum was submitted by Mr. V. Hlychho, President and Mr. Leipo, Vice President in Shillong in 1964²⁸⁹. They pleaded earnestly to the Chief Minister to provide with written statement which could guarantee a separate District Council for the Lakhers. The Chief Minister then penned down a written statement which states that the Assam government would investigate the demands of the Lakhers and learns more about its people. Subsequently, the Assam government sent copies of the memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram, Aizawl and to the Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-

²⁸⁷ P.T. Hlychho, p.35.

²⁸⁸ R.N Prasad, p123.

²⁸⁹ Mylai Hlychho, on 15th August 2015.

Lakher Regional Council for their comments²⁹⁰. In June 1965, the Patasker Commission was sent to Aizawl to have discussion with the Mara leaders regarding their political grievances. The Mara Freedom Party leaders, Mr. Leipo, Mr. Mylai Hlychho and L. Mark interacted with the Commission on that day but on account of the unhealthy political activities carried out by the Mizo National Front, the decision of the Commission was neither reciprocate nor known ever after²⁹¹. Subsequently, the central government often sent a series of Commission to study the situation of tribes in the South Lushai Hills.

The Mara Freedom Party again sent another delegate, Mr. Mylai Hlychho and Mr. Leipo, to meet the Chief Minister of Assam to submit a fresh memorandum. The memorandum states in details about the boycott of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and how interim Council was initiated by the Maras. The Chief Minister was pressed hard by the delegates and wanted an assurance of an Autonomous District Council from him. The delegates then solicited the Chief Minister to give reply to their demand in a written statement. The Chief Minister then replied with honest statement that the Government had been studying the memorandum and action on the points of the memorandum had been taken at the same time. While the process of acquiring autonomous district Council was engaged in full swing, L. Chinzah, Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was making strenuous effort to oust and baffle the movement of the Maras by reporting to the Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram stating that the Maras rejected to pay taxes and showing non-cooperation in his administration by forming the parallel Mara District Council. He even requested him to annihilate the Mara interim Council as it was against the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India²⁹².

The political activities of the lakhers turned more aggressive in the later part of 1965. It was because of this, the then Chief Executive Member, L. Chinza launched complain to the Deputy Commissioner, T.S Gill. At this point of time some

²⁹⁰ Nohro Hmoko, p. 119

²⁹¹ L. Mark, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, at Saikao, on January, 8, 2017.

²⁹² Nohro Hmoko, pp. 122-123.

of the Pawi leaders, including L. Chinza, were very confident that the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party would not be able to escape from their unconstitutional behavior in the Regional Council and their illegal practices. However, Mr. Gill was very liberal in his approach to the problem solving. Instead he advised the Lakher leaders not to impose taxes and collect fees from the people without their consent. He further extended his encouragement by suggesting them that it would be all right if the people paid taxes voluntarily to the Interim District Council.²⁹³ This was a severe blow to the Pawis as they never anticipated this kind of assurance given by a government representative to the lakher leaders. The Assam government sent another officer, Mr. K. Saigal, the then Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram, to Saiha to verify the political problems of the Lakhers. Before he came to Saiha, the Commissioner visited Saikao where he has intimate discussion with the Missionaries about the Lakhers. At the same time, he also studied about the Pawis. He was so sympathetic towards the Lakhers and in an interview with the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party, he took a piece of paper and draw the Map of Mizo district Council. Within the Map, he drew another map at the bottom and showed the picture to the leaders of Mara Freedom Party (MFP) and said to them “Is this good enough for your lakher tribe?”²⁹⁴. This is a clear indication that the government of Assam tried every possible way to solve the lakher problem at the earliest possible time. The MFP leaders were very much impressed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Mizo District Council.

5.4. MNF movement and the Maras

Despite all the efforts put forward by the leaders of the MFP and promises made by the administrators of the Assam government, a separate District Council for the Lakher was nowhere near its existence. The atmosphere of unwanted scene cropped up within the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council where the two communities get involved blaming each other and playing games with clan base politics. This kind of incidents was no stranger to both the communities as some Pawis also settle in Tuipang Area and its Headquarters, Saiha. The already estranged relation between

²⁹³ Nohro Hmoko, p.126.

²⁹⁴ Mylai Hlychho 15th August, 2015.

the Pawis and the Maras was further deteriorated by incident at Tuipang where the two communities clashed over the problem cause by Pawis and the political temperature mounted even further.²⁹⁵ However, when the political relationship between the Pawis and the Maras was at its worst condition, a political movement launched by the Mizo National Front in 1966 overshadowed the ongoing tension.

The Mizo National Famine front which was formed in 1960 with Dengthuama and Laldenga as its Chairman and Secretary respectively, after the famine was over, it changed to a political party known as Mizo National Front²⁹⁶. Since its inception, the MNF aimed at an independent status for the sovereign state for Mizoram. This ideology had been strengthened slowly by the incidents in the hills and negligence of the Mizos by the Assam government. During the Famine period, the attitude of the Assam government towards the Mizo Hills District was not so favourable and sympathetic. The devastation caused by Rats in the jhum field creates havoc to the Mizo society.

The sluggish responds from the Assam government while the rats invading the agricultural land further deteriorated the political condition of the period²⁹⁷. Not only this, the government proposal to introduce the Assamese language as the state language aggravated the already estranged political situation. On account of this, Mizo Union had withdrawn its support to the Congress in the Assam state. However, the Chaliha government, after withdrawal of Mizo Union, showed favouring Laldenga. The Chief Executive Member of Mizo District, Ch. Chhunga often reported the imminent danger of the MNF activities. However, the Assam government neglected the preparations of the MNF for armed rebellion. On February 28, 1966, the MNF volunteers were preparing for the zero hour. However, the attack was called off due to an accident that happened in the MNF volunteers Parties. The first action, however, took place at 10:30 pm on the 23rd February, 1966, when 500 to 1000 people attacked the Assam Rifles post at Lunglei²⁹⁸. The MNF

²⁹⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, p. 208.

²⁹⁶ C. Nunthra, p.195.

²⁹⁷ R.N Prasad, p233.

²⁹⁸ Lalthakima, pp.354-357.

General Assembly which was Scheduled to be held on 1st March 1966 was cancelled. Within a few hours following this, the MNF declared independence. The Government of India declared the MNF an unlawful organization and banned it vide Notification No. S.O. on 6-3-1966 which was published in an extraordinary Gazette of India²⁹⁹. Mizoram was declared a “disturbed area”³⁰⁰ by the government of India and soon after that supply of foods and other commodities was greatly hampered by the Mizo National Front movement.

Many people enrolled themselves in the Mizo National Army. However, the Lakher area was barely affected by the movement though many Lakhers drawn inspiration from the movement. It seems that the lakhers were never interested in the idea of having independence from the mainland India because they were once rejected of having a separate autonomy. Therefore, they concentrated more on achieving District Council for themselves. Though few lakher young men enrolled in the MNV in the later period, many lakher kept themselves aloof from the movement. However, unlike the Lakher, many Pawis actively participated in the movement and some of them even hold high posts in the underground Mizo Government. It must be noted that many Pawis join the movement for fear of being harmed by the MNV and also to keep their village safe from the MNA. The situation during this period was tense and fear of both the MNA and Indian Army haunted the people of southern Mizoram. In the south, Saikah village was burnt down by the security forces after firing with the MNA and there was also firing at Thingkah village.

Lakher area was not free from the ongoing disturbance in the Mizo District Council. Three Lakher civilians were killed by the Security forces and four persons were killed by the MNA. Following this incident, there was no mention of the Lakhers participating or enrolling themselves in the MNA. However, many villagers were force by the security forces to do labour works for them and at the same time they also work for the MNA³⁰¹. The attitude of the Assam government towards the movement of MNF was futile and it was because of this, the Assam

²⁹⁹ R.N Prasad, p.185.

³⁰⁰ R. Hmingthanzual, p.105.

³⁰¹ Nohro Hmoko, p.128-130.

government turned their attention towards the Maras and encourage them to oppose the MNF. At the same time, the Assam government also hopeful of giving separate District Council to the Maras which was later considered to be a bait to divert the attention of the Maras and to fight the ongoing MNF movement in the Mizo District Council. In the beginning, the Maras realized it as an offer from the Assam government and the Mara Leaders vow to send security guard in every Mara Villages to catch the MNA volunteers. In Kiasie (Mara village) one MNA volunteer was caught and handed over to the Assam Rifles at Tipa. The news soon reached the MNF Headquarters and send Capt. Pu Chuaudinga, along with 150 MNA volunteers to the South of Lushai Hills. Three Mara youth were caught by the MNA and there was a tussle between the MNA and the Maras. However, the two-party managed to compromise without further disturbances³⁰².

As the disturbance was ascending in the hills, the Mara Freedom Party also pledges to give moral support to the MNF movement though it was never their intension to give full support to the MNA. It was generally believed that the fear of burning of their villages by the MNA was the main reason for their support³⁰³. During insurgency period almost the entire population of the Lushai hills was participating in the movement in the form of volunteer or giving assistance to the MNA. However, the Lakher area remained approximately nonaligned because they were also fighting for a separate District Council and they were afraid of losing trust by the Assam government. It was during this period that the Lakher area was depicted as an 'Isle of peace' by the Assam Tribune³⁰⁴ though the MNA movement was at its peak.

Notwithstanding, the MNF independent movement was widespread in the Mizo hills District, the movement for a separate District was effortlessly going along with MNF movement. Some of the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party strongly believed that it was their stance of neutrality in the movement created an opportunity to impress the Assam government. During this period the Assam government showed

³⁰² Zakhu Hlychho, p.170.

³⁰³ Zakhu Hlychho, on 23 May2015.

³⁰⁴ Nohro Hmoko p.130.

leniency in their approach towards the political situation in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council areas. Though the MNF movement continued to uphold its cause for independence from the mainland India, the movements for a separate District Council for the lalkher had never been halted and move on alongside MNF movement.

5.5. Mara freedom Party and the climax in the movement for Autonomy

After prolong boycott of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and movement of the Mizo National Front, the Mara Freedom Party leaders fear that these events might dwindled the integrity of the Maras in the movement for District Council. In 1969, the Mara Freedom Party called for a general Assembly at Saiha. The assembly agreed to invite S. Hiato and Zakhu Hlychho, who were working in the Tipa high school and Siaha Government School respectively, to take in charge of the Mara Freedom Party. Both of them agreed to leave their Job and joined the Mara Freedom Party. In 1970, Mara Interim District Council was re-opened and S. Hiato takes charges as District Council Secretary while Zakhu Hlychho was given Judicial Officer post³⁰⁵.

Despite demanding separate District Council, the Mara Freedom Party decided to take part in the 4th general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. In the election Mara Freedom Party captured 4 seats including nominated seat. In the election not a single candidate came forward in challenging the candidate set by the MFP. It was in this election that the Chief Executive Member post was given to Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mara leader. Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mr. S. Pailei, Mr. S. Hiato, Mr. Khosa, Mr. Zavai were elected from the Mara community.³⁰⁶ However, the Maras were not satisfied with the Post of Chief Executive Member but wanted to have a separate District Council and for this reason many delegates mission was sent in between to the Indian Government.

The Assam government also keeps an eye on the movement carried out by the Maras and to solve the problems investigations were made several times. In

³⁰⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, p.175.

³⁰⁶ Nohro hmoko, p.125.

the meantime, the state government kept aloof from the ongoing issue within the district of Mizoram. In 1971, Mizo Union and the Congress party formed a coalition government in the Mizo District Council with Ch. Chhunga as Chief Executive Member. The District Council then demanded the central government to elevate the Mizo District Council to State. However, the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi offered them Union Territory with an assurance to be the best among the Union Territories in the Country. Nevertheless, the Mizo Leaders insisted the Indira Gandhi to give a better status for the Mizos i.e. full-fledged State of Mizoram. Around this time, the news of the meetings between the Mizo Leaders and the Prime Minister soon reached the Mara Leaders and the status of the Mizo District Council was imminent³⁰⁷.

Since the Mara Freedom Party could not find a solution from the District and the Assam government, to further extent their demands. For this purpose, their policy of entertaining the authorities was shifted towards the central government. Delegates were then dispatched in October 1971 to once again represent the Mara Community and to address the political aspirations of the Maras. Mr. Mylai Hlychho, Mr. Zakhu Hlychho and Mr. S, Hiato were sent to Delhi. The Pawis and the Chakmas, on knowing the dispatched delegates of the Maras, sent Mr. Manghnuna, Mr. Sapliana and Mr. Sangchhuma from the Pawi community and Mr. Atul chandro Chakma went from the Chakma community. It appears that the Pawis and the Chakmas were quite content with the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and they were never in favour of demanding a separate district council for themselves. During this time, Mizoram was in the process of elevation to the status of Union Territory and this was indeed an opportunity for the Maras and other tribes to strike the government in demanding separate district council. It was out of desperation in their attempt to divert the lakher attitude of demanding separate district council that they were also finding way to seek new fortune in the midst of Mara movement. It was no doubt, of course, the first time and the last time that the Pawis and the Chakmas came to the limelight along with the Maras. The Pawis, who for a long time developed rift with the Maras, came to the conclusion that it was the right time for

³⁰⁷ Laicho Notlia, *mara p[olitics]*, p.25.

them to side with the Maras to have a separate District Council for themselves because they also began to fear that they might be placed along with the Lushais within the Mizo District Council.

When the Mizo District Council was about to be elevated into the Union Territory, the Pawi Leaders seemed to have been frightened by the feeling that they might be placed under the Mizos within Mizo District Council. For this reason, the Pawis also directed their attention towards the Home Secretary and express their views on district council by stating that the Maras and the Pawis were of the same tribe and that they should not give nor create a separate district council for the Maras. However, their statement was disapproved very soon when Home secretary asked the Pawi leaders to converse with the Mara leaders in their language. They failed and changed their strategy by demanding a separate District Council for themselves.³⁰⁸

5.6. Split of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

Since there was no news from the government of India, in December 1971, the Mara Freedom Party call for an assembly at Saikao and resolve to send other delegates to the government of India. Mr. A.B. Roma and Mr. Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao, were sent to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister of India for the second time.³⁰⁹ On their way to Delhi they had interview with Mr. S.J Dass, the then Commissioner of Mizoram, in Shillong and express to him that they were on a mission to central government to demand district council for the Maras. The delegates also asked him for his favour in their quest for district council. The Commissioner was very open to them as he was already established friendly relation with Chhohmo when he visited Saikao and also expressed his concern for the Pawis.

When the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council leaders were in Delhi, Mizo District Council leaders were also present to initiate the gradual elevation of the Mizo District to Union Territory. After reaching the National Capital, without any problem, the delegates manage to meet Home Secretary because Mr. Dass had

³⁰⁸ Nohro hmoko..p.127.

³⁰⁹ Interview with A.B Roma.

already made an arrangement for them prior to their coming³¹⁰. The delegate expressed their demand to the Home secretary that the Maras were different from the rest of other tribes in Lushai hills and that they should be given separate district council otherwise they would be assimilated by the Lushais. At that time, Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District was also present on the other room where he interviewed with Home Minister and the delegates came to know that the Home Minister once asked the Chief Executive Member whether the Maras were different from the Pawis and also from the Mizo. They were told that even Chief Executive Member of Mizo Hill District did not deny the fact that the Maras were different from the two communities. However, the Home secretary replied them by saying “though you are not successful now in your demand, do not get disappointed. You will have to persist in your demand; repeated representation is required in democracy.” This statement is clearly an indication that there is chance for the Maras to get separate District Council in the future. After that, the delegates met Mr. Pimputkar, Special Secretary to U.T and demanded U.T³¹¹.

The main reason why the Mara delegates demanded U.T. at this time was the fact that the Maras got a separate administration within the Mizo District Council and also the fact that the Maras never protested against the government which is why, the Maras, they should also get U.T³¹². On the other hand, the Pawis were quite content with the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and had no objection of running the same regional Council. But this was rejected by the Mara leaders and the two community wrangled in Delhi. Taking advantage of this incidence, Atul Chadra Chakma spoke to the Special Secretary in Bengali and later referred them to Joint Secretary, Mr. Prabh. Later, when Atul was asked about what he had spoken in the meetings, he said, ‘if the Pawis and the Lakher would be given Autonomous District Council, the Chakmas should also be given.’³¹³ ‘as we the Chakmas, constitute ten thousand population in Mizo District, we need a separate District Council. We are different in all respects of conducts and social behavior. So, a separate District

³¹⁰ Zakhu Hlychho, *mara te tobul*, p.171.

³¹¹ A.B Roma, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, at Siaha, 17th February, 2015.

³¹² Zakhu Hlychho, p.171.

³¹³ F.C Chhuasa, *A biography of S. Hiato*, F.C Chhuasa, Siaha, 2019, p.56.

Council is required for us.³¹⁴ This happened to be the first instance when mentioned of a separate Chakma District Council was made. The Pawis and the Maras never considered the talking point of Atul Chakma very seriously as the Chakmas never stood up in a demanding machinery right from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council days. When the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was created, the Chakmas were never considered as a part of the Council. But when the boundary for the PL Council and the Mizo District Council was drawn, a few Chakma population was also included in the Regional Council. Obviously, until 1970s, when the Mara leaders sent their representatives and delegates to the central government, the Pawis and the Chakmas hardly sent delegates to the government of India in demanding separate District Council. At the same time, the Mizo District Council leaders remained unmoved by the demands put forward by the Maras. It seems they were rather busy with their own government which the government of India would shortly elevate into UT³¹⁵. Longing for the new powers and administrative authorities that UT would bring to the people was very much attracted to the Mizo District Council Leaders. This led to negligence of the internal political problems and encourage the minorities like the Maras, to fight for a separate District Council within Lushai Hills.

Just before the separation of the Mizo Hills District from Assam, Ch. Chhunga, the then Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District and Congress Leader Dengthuama visited New Delhi in September 1970. Coincided with the visit by the Leaders of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, represented by F. Manghnuna, Sapliana, Mylai Hlychho, S. Hiato and Atul Chandra Chakma, Ch. Chhunga persuaded them not to proceed with their demand for a separate District Councils and told them *“after separation from Assam we would have our own government, as having different sets of administration may only make us weak, we decide to dissolve the existing District Council. Therefore, we would further, like to urge you, too, not to proceed with your demand for it.”* However, leaders of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council gives a common statement which reads as *“As we are different ethnic groups, we cannot think of not having a separate Legislature, you may also regret if*

³¹⁴ Jyoti Moy Chakma, ‘Formation and functioning of the Chakma autonomous district Council’, in Doulgel, autonomy movement and sixth schedule in north east. P. 59.

³¹⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, p.174.

you do not have a District Council.” Indian government fully recognized the fact that the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and the Mizo District Council was created out of the Sixth Schedule. It was because of this the Indian government sent a WT message to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council to give comment on the elevation of the Mizo District Council to the status of UT. On behalf of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the then CEM, Zakhu Hlychho writes “PLRC have no objection of elevating the Mizo District Council to UT. But at the same time, the Maras and the Pawis must also be given a separate District Council.” This statement was sent not only that it was his message but it was rather the ideas of the Mara Freedom Party³¹⁶.

In February 1972, Mr. Mylai Hlychho, the then Secretary of Mara Freedom Party, set out for Delhi in his own expense to meet Home minister. He made a strappingly plead for the cause of the Maras and earnestly urged him to expedite the creation of the Autonomous District Council for the Maras. The Home secretary replied to him that the problems of the Maras were not new to them and that the government has been working on in favour of the tribe. However, Mr. Mylai hesitated to accept verbal assurance given by the Home Secretary and asked for a written statement that promised District Council for the Maras. The Home Minister was shocked to see desperation in the face of the Mara leader and gave him a two-page printed Papers and told him to go through the pages. The papers read as “there shall be three Regional Councils in Mizoram for the Lakhers(maras), the Pawis and the Chakmas, and the three Regional Council shall be again upgraded to three District Councils.”³¹⁷ The central government, while considering the new administrative set up of the then Lushai hills proposed the creation of the three Autonomous District Councils in the Hills, North Eastern Areas Re-Organization to be placed in the parliament which later became an Act. Consequently, without conducting discussions with the Mizo Leaders and the people, the administrator, J.C Das released Re-Organisation Order under para 3. Mizoram was elevated to the status of the Union Territory of Mizoram in accordance with Para 6 of the Northeastern Areas Re-Organization Act 1971 and the Government of the Union

³¹⁶ Zakhu Hlychho, on 23rd may 2015.

³¹⁷ Mylai Hlychho, p.69.

territory (amendment) Act of 1971. As a consequence, the Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972³¹⁸.

In order to remove the gulf of power between the District Council and Regional Council, paragraph 20B of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India was amended in 1971. It was then incorporated in the North Eastern Areas (re-organization) Act 1971 and the Government of the Union Territories (amendment) Act 1971³¹⁹. As per provisions, the administrator of Mizoram issued an order 1972 vide Notification No. CCMP/3/72-77-1 under which the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was bifurcated into three Regional Councils for major tribes as the Pawi, the Lakhers and the Chakmas. The Pawi Autonomous Region, the Lakher Autonomous Region and the Chakmas Autonomous Region were created and constituted under section 4(1) of Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (re-Organization) Order 1972 in order to enable these tribes to develop their customs, culture and dialects according to their own genius and ability³²⁰.

The administrator of Mizoram framed rules under Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (reorganization) Order 1972 regarding the constitution of the three Regional Councils. Accordingly, the Lakher Regional Council was constituted on 2nd April vide notification No. CCMP 3/72/89 with a strength of six members, four members, Zakhu Hlychho, S. Pailei, S. Hiato and Khosa being elected members of the erstwhile Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Zavai and Leipo were nominated members. The administrator of Mizoram appointed Zakhu Hlychho as care-taker C.E.M of the executive Committee to discharge its functions³²¹.

Correspondingly, the Chakma Regional Council was also constituted by the administrator vide notifications no. CCMP 3/72/80 dated 2nd April 1972 with total strength of Six members namely Atul Chandra Chakma and Arun Dewan who were elected members of the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The other four members Gunadhar Chakma, Mauradhaj Chakma, Saitya Chakma and Ananda

³¹⁸ R.N. Prasad, p.129.

³¹⁹ The Mizoram Gazette, vol 1, part 1, Aizawl, 21st april 1972, pp-1-2.

³²⁰ The Mizoram Gazette, p.1-2.

³²¹ Laicho Notlia, p. 25.

Kumar Chakma were nominated to the Chakma Regional Council. Atul Chandra Chakma was appointed as care-taker C.E.M vide notifications no. CCMP 3/72/85 on 2nd April 1972. The Headquarters of the Chakma Regional Council was at Borapansuri but later shifted to Chawngte. Similarly, the Pawi Regional Council was constituted vide notification no. CCMP 3/72/90 at Lawngtlai with a strength of six members by the administrator of Mizoram. Four members namely Lalchunga Chinzah, Ukmang Zathang, Lalchema and Sapliana Vandir who were elected members of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council continued as members of the Pawi Regional Council. Lalchunga Chinzah was appointed as a care-taker Executive Committee vide Notification No. CCMP 3/72/87 on 2nd April 1972³²².

Enlisted in the North Eastern Areas (reorganization) Mizoram, adoption of Laws order 1972 and the government of Union Territory (Amendment Act 1971), the three Regional Councils were elevated to the status of the District Councils as The Pawi District Council, the Lakher District Council and the Chakma District Council respectively with a view to have more autonomy in managing their respective affairs. The government of Mizoram soon enforced this Acts vide notification No. LDD. 8/72/53,29 on April 1972³²³. With regard to the constitution of the District Council, all elected members and nominated members of the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Councils continued as members in the newly created District Councils.

5.7. The formation of the Mara Autonomous District Council

The Lakher District Council continued to be governed by the interim government until the general election of District Council in 1972. In the interim period Member of the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, Zakhu Hlychho, K. Khosa, S. Hiato and S. Pailei continued as members and Zavai and Leipo were nominated by the administrator of Mizoram. Since then, Members of Regional Council came to be designated as Member of District Council. Further, as provided under Para 20 of the North eastern Area (Reorganization) Act, 1972, the existing

³²² Prasad. R.N, n 1..p.131.see also H.C thanhranga, district councils in the mizo hills, Aizawl, 2007, p.42.

³²³ The Mizoram gazette, Aizawl, 5th May 1972.

Autonomous Region shall on and from that date be an Autonomous District in the Union Territory³²⁴. Therefore, the three Autonomous Region came to be constituted to the status of Autonomous District Council from April 1972.

Since the time of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Maras were constantly referred as the Lakhers. It was because of this that when they were given a separate District Council, they were recognized as Lakher. This was because when the Government of India gives notification on the recognized list of the Schedule tribes in the country the Maras were listed as Lakher. Subsequently, when they got a separate District Council in 1972 the Maras were recognized as the Lakher in the Sixth Schedule Para 20 Part III to the Constitution of India³²⁵. In spite of this recognition, the Maras regarded the appellation 'Lakher' as a derogatory term as they never identify themselves as Lakher³²⁶. The same thing happens to the Pawis who tended to changed it into 'Lai'. However, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (amendment) Act, 1988 of the Indian Parliament (No. 67 of 1988) by Notification no. DCA/E/154/81/40, the name was changed into the Mara Autonomous District Council in 1988³²⁷.

It is an interesting to note that the three Autonomous District Council, though having a separate administration, were under the administrative jurisdiction of the then Chhimituipui Revenue District till August 1998. However, Chhimituipui was bifurcated into two Revenue Districts i.e. Chhimituipui west District with Headquarters at Lawngtlai and Chhimituipui East District with its Headquarters at Saiha by the Government of Mizoram. Further, as per general administration Department Notification No. F.20016/2/99, dated 3/6/1999 of the Government of Mizoram, Chhimituipui East District and Chhimituipui West District were changed into Lawngtlai District and Saiha District respectively³²⁸.

³²⁴ MADC souvenir 1997, p.3.

³²⁵ Zaku Hlychho, p.179.

³²⁶ See chapter 2 for more detail.

³²⁷ Laicho Notlia, p.120.

³²⁸ Jangkhongam Doungel, p.72.

5.8. Functioning and working of the MADC

Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian constitution, the Mara Autonomous District Council had been given wide extensive powers. as provided in paragraph 2(6) of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, the government of Mizoram had enacted the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974, which then became the ultimate guiding principle of governance for the existing three Autonomous District Council within Mizoram. Not only this but the government of Mizoram also created a separate department in Secretariat known as “District Council Affairs Department.”³²⁹ The main duty of this department was to look after the affairs of the three Autonomous District Councils and to channelize the flow of funds for District Councils through State Finance Department. The structural organization of the Mara Autonomous District Council like many other District Council can be group into three main organs such as Executive, Legislative and Judiciary³³⁰.

Legislature: The Sixth Schedule has given the Autonomous District Council extensive power to Uplift the village tribal communities, in the domain of primary education, culture, custom, agriculture, health, village communications, sanitation, economic and rural development. The MADC can make Laws on the allotment, occupation or use, or the settling apart of land, other than any land which is a reserved forest, for the purposes of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose for promoting the interest of the inhabitants of any town or village. The council also empowered to manage any forest which is not a reserved forest and can regulate the practice of jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation. It can make laws for the use of any canal or water course for the purpose of agriculture. It can also establish Village or town committees or Councils and regulate any other matter relating to village or town

³²⁹ R.N Prasad, p.234.

³³⁰ Souvinier MADC. MADC, Siaha, 1997, p. 11.

administration. The Council can control money-landing and trading by non-tribals within the District Council. Further, the Council has power to make regulations for administration and control of primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads and roads transport and waterways³³¹.

As provided in rule no.15 of the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitutional Conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974, the post of Secretary was created. Accordingly, the appointing authority of the Secretary lies with the Chairman but not with the executive committee. The rules clarified that the Secretary must not be a member of the District Council. Therefore, He is the Head of the administration and shall assist the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman in all legislative affairs of MADC³³². The Legislative functions in the legislative Secretariat and some important assets of the Department are conference system, session hall properties, and electronic typewriter: fax machine and vehicles. The legislative department calls session and makes necessary arrangement for session of the District Council. The District Council has to summoned three session in a year and It has to see that four months shall not lapse in summoning session of the District Council³³³. It also receives questions for session from the Member of District Council and these questions has to be scrutinized by the Chairman. The Chairman has to see that the questions put forwarded by MDC's are concern of the District Council as provided in the Sixth Schedule. After that, they would be sent to the concerned department for preparing answers. Further, the legislative department also sends Bills for approval to the Governor after being authenticated by the Chairman³³⁴.

The legislative department managed and paid the salaries and allowances of the Member of District Councils and pensions of the Ex-MDC's. It also kept full report of the proceedings of the District Council at each of its meetings and prepared as soon as possible after the meetings. A copy of report, countersigned

³³¹ Hansaria, p.3.

³³² A compilation of Acts, rules and regulations under MADC, vol-I, MADC, Siaha, p.19.

³³³ A compilation of Acts, rules and regulations under MADC, vol-I, MADC, Siaha, p.30

³³⁴ Jangthongam Dounge, p.107.

by the Chairman, has to be sent to the Governor through the Secretary to the Government, Chief Executive Member, Deputy Commissioner and to all the Members of the District Council. A copy of such report, when confirmed and signed by the Chairman, shall be the record of the proceedings of the District Council. In addition to this, the Secretary has to take charge of all records of the District Council, to keep the Books of the District Council, to keep a list of business for the time being before the District Council, to make out for time to time a list of Committee sittings, and also to assist the District Council and all Committees in such a manner as they may direct³³⁵.

Executive: In 1972, when the District Council was introduced in Mizoram, the Council consist of Chief Executive Member and two Executive Member. But as time passed, the number of Executive Member also increased to 20³³⁶. The executive functions of the Mara Autonomous District Council are vested in the Executive Committee. Under rule 20 of the Autonomous District Rules, 1974, in each of the Pawi, Lakher and Chakma District Council, the Councils were given powers to constitute an Executive Committee headed by the Chief Executive Member³³⁷. Rule 21 provides that the Chief Executive Member shall be elected by the District Council and other members shall appointed by the administrator of Mizoram on the advice of the Chief Executive Member from amongst the Members of the District Council. Though the Executive Committee is headed by the Chief Executive Member, the administrative responsibility of the Committee lies with the Executive Secretary, who is appointed by the CEM. However, a person to be appointed as Executive Secretary shall not necessarily be a member of the District Council³³⁸. In terms of power, the executive Committee has power to establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle ponds, ferries, fisheries, roads and waterways. It also has the authority to determine the language and manner in which education should be imparted in the primary schools within its

³³⁵ A compilation of Acts, rules and regulations under MADDC, p.64.

³³⁶ N.T Vakaw, Executive Department: MADDC in Souvenir MADDC. P.12.

³³⁷ H.c Thanhraha, p.96

³³⁸ Jangthongam Doungel, p.109

jurisdiction. For this purpose, Mara language was the official language of the Mara Autonomous District Council³³⁹.

Generally, the Executive Committee dispose of all matters falling within its purview, except certain matters hereinafter specified which shall be referred to the Governor for final approval. It deals with cases involving any important change in the administrative system of the Autonomous District or any important departure from accepted policy or practice. Proposals for making regulations, rules or laws as authorized under the provisions of the Schedule lies with the Executive Committee. It also deals with cases which may seriously affect, or are likely to affect the Mara Autonomous District or affect or likely to affect relations with any such other District and cases affecting the relations of the State Government with the Autonomous District Council. The Executive Committee is vested with responsibility in dealings with all correspondence of importance with the State Government of India, all matters falling within the purview of the discretionary powers of the Governor under Paragraph 20BB of the Schedule when sought to be consulted under that paragraph by the Governor with the District Councils, appointment of all Gazetted officers and any other matter or matters which the Executive Committee may think proper to be placed before the District Council. All matters relating to District Council has to be send to the Secretary in writing for placing before the said Council³⁴⁰.

The responsibility of Chief Executive Member can be compared to the Chief Minister of the state in terms execution of powers and the same can be done between Executive Member of the District Council to the Cabinet Ministers of the State government. However, the CEM and Ems are responsible to the legislature of the District Council and they are bound to take approval of the legislature of the District Council for any work they have to perform as per the parliamentary norms³⁴¹. Each member of the Executive Committee is entrusted with specific subjects, the allocations of the subjects being made by the Chief Executive Member. The Executive Committee also collectively responsible for all executive orders

³³⁹ H.C Thanhanga, p.242.

³⁴⁰ A compilation of the Acts, Rules and Regulation of MADDC, p.24.

³⁴¹ Jangthongam Dounel (ed.), p.79.

issued in the name of District Council³⁴². In 1972, MADC has a few Department under Executive Department Namely General Administration Revenue, District Council Forests, Village or Local Administration and Development Revenue. But slowly, the government of Mizoram further make addition to the District Council³⁴³. In 1986, the government of Mizoram delegated more powers to the Mara Autonomous District Council under Paragraph 6(2) of the Sixth Schedule vide notification no. DCA/E-212/83/52 and entrusted few more Departments the Mara Autonomous District Council Namely Agriculture Department, Animal Husbandry, Community Project, Industry, Soil Conservation, Forest, Social Welfare Department³⁴⁴. Some of the departments under the executive as on 2010 are shown below³⁴⁵:

Sl.no	Name of Department	Sl.no	Name of Department
1	General Administration Department	13	Agriculture
2	Finance and Accounts	14	Agriculture and Horticulture
3	Planning and Development	15	Rural Development
4	Public Works Department	16	Industry
5	Public Health Engineering Deptt.	17	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary
6	Transport	18	Education
7	Sericulture	19	Social welfare
8	Information and Publicity	20	Co-operation
9	Environment and Forest	21	Soil and Water conservation
10	Sports and Youth Services	22	Land Revenue
11	Fishery	23	Local Administration Deptt (LAD)
12	Art and Culture		

³⁴² A compilation of Acts, rules, and regulations of MADC.p.24.

³⁴³ N.T Vakaw, Executive Department: MADC in Souvenir MADC, p.12.

³⁴⁴ L.Pakho, *Eima Thati Thokhazy*, T.A. Chhohu, Siaha, 2019, p.27.

³⁴⁵ Jangthogam DOUNGEL (ed.), p.79.

Judiciary: In exercise of power conferred by sub-paragraph (4) of Paragraph 4 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, the Mara Autonomous District Council, with the approval of the administrator of the Union Territory of Mizoram enacted the Lakher Autonomous District Council (administration of Justice) Rules, in 1981³⁴⁶. In case of the Pawi Autonomous District Council the same had already been set up in the early year of 1974. This rule enables the MADC to introduce three classes of courts in the areas within the District, to be constituted by the District Council for trial of suits and between the parties all of whom belongs to Scheduled Tribes within such areas. Namely, the Village Courts, the Subordinate District Council Courts and the District Council Court.

Village Court: The Village Council Courts shall sit as the Village Courts provided that when the Village Council sits itself as a court, the quorum to Constitute a Court shall be as nearly as may be, one half of the total number of members of such Court, subject to the minimum of two. The jurisdiction of a village Court shall extend to the hearing and trial of suits and cases arising within the territorial limits of the village. A village Council Court can try suits and cases of the following nature in which both the parties belong to Scheduled Tribes resident within its jurisdiction:

1. Cases of Civil and Miscellaneous nature falling within the purview of village or tribal laws and custom.
2. Criminal cases falling within the purview of tribal laws and customs and offences of petty nature, such as petty theft and pilfering, mischief, trespass of petty nature, simple assault and hurt, affront and affray of whatever kind, drunken or disorderly brawling, public, nuisance and simple cases of wrongful restraint.

However, village Courts is not competent to pass a sentence of imprisonment in any criminal case. It can rather impose fine for any offence for Rs 60. The fines and payments imposed and ordered under sub-rules (1) and (2) may be enforced by seizing of the property on the offender. The Village Court has the power to order attendance of the accused and the witnesses to be examined in the case and

³⁴⁶ A compilation of Acts, rules and Regulations, p.276.

to impose a fine not exceeding Rs. 25 on any person willfully failing to attend when ordered. If a person fails to pay fine within a given period, the Village Court may report the matter to the Chief Executive Member for necessary action.

A Village Court is authorized to try all suits and cases in accordance with the customary laws of the village. Cases were tried in open Darbar in the presence of the complainant and the accused and their witnesses. However, the full proceedings of a Village Court need not be recorded in writing³⁴⁷.

Subordinate District Council Courts: the MADC established two Subordinate District Council Courts at Saiha and Tuipang. Each Court is presided over by a Judicial Officer designated as Magistrate and appointed by the Executive Committee with the approval of the administrator and he or she also acts as Recorder of the Court. However, the conditions of service of the Judicial Officer in the Subordinates District Courts and staffs are regulated by the rules or orders made in this behalf by the District Council under rule 16 of the Mizoram Autonomous District Councils (Constitution and conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974.

A Subordinate District Council Court have original jurisdiction in all suits and cases in which both the parties do not fall within the areas under jurisdiction of the same village Court. However, a Subordinate District Council Court is not competent to try suits and cases:

1. To which the provisions of Sub-Paragraph (1) of Paragraph 5 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution apply, unless the court has been authorized by the administrator to exercise such power for trial.
2. In which one of the parties is not belonging to the Scheduled Tribes.
3. In respect of offences under sections 124-A, 147 and 153 of the Indian Penal Code and of giving false evidence as specified in section 193 of the same code.

³⁴⁷ A compilation of Acts, Rules and Regulations, p.290

4. Under Chapter X of the same code in so far as they relate to the contempt of lawful authority other than an authority constituted by the District Council.

Unless specially empowered by the administrator, by notification in the Gazette, a Subordinate District Council is not competent to exercise powers in-

1. Cases relating to the security for keeping the peace and good behavior similar to these contemplated under section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
2. Cases relating to the security for good behavior from persons disseminating seditious matter similar to those contemplated under Section 108 of the same code.
3. Cases relating to the scrutiny for good behaviour from suspected persons similar to those contemplated under section 109 of the same code.
4. Cases relating to the security for good behavior from habitual offenders similar to those contemplated under section 110 of the same code.
5. Urgent cases of nuisance of apprehended danger similar to those contemplated under section 144 of the same code.
6. Disputes as to immovable property of the nature similar to those contemplated under section 145 of the same code.
7. Cases in which a public servant who is not removable from office save by or with the sanction of the government or some higher authority is accused of any offence alleged to have been committed by him while acting or purporting to act in the discharge of his official duty.

The Judicial officer of the Subordinate District Council Courts are equivalent to first class Magistrate of the state government. Further, the Judicial Officer can refer certain cases to the Deputy Commissioner through the Chief Executive Member if he finds satisfactory that a dispute could cause a breach of peace. An appeal lies to the District Council Court from the decision of a Subordinate District Council Court in any case civil or criminal provided that such appeals are accompanied by a copy of the order appealed against and a clear statement on the grounds of appeal and are

filed within sixty days of the date of the order, excluding the time required for obtaining a copy of the order appealed against³⁴⁸.

District Council Court: The highest Court of justice constituted within the Mara Autonomous District Council Area is the District Council Court. It is composed of three Judicial Officers one of whom is appointed by the District Council as the President and Recorder of the Court. Any two or more Judicial Officers shall sit together as a Bench and the District Council may, by order, vest such Bench with any of the powers conferrable by or under this rules on a Judicial Officer and direct it to exercise such powers in such class or classes as the District Council think fit. The District Council Court is stationed at Saiha and the conditions of service of the Judicial Officers of the District Council are regulated by the rules of District Council under rule 16 of the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the District Councils) rules, 1974.

The District Council Court can call for and examine the record of any proceedings of the Subordinate District Council Court or of Village Court and may enhance, reduce, cancel or modify any sentence in finding passed by such Court or remand the case for trial if it appears to the District Council Court:

1. That affair and impartial inquiry or trial cannot be had in any Village Court or Subordinate District Council Court.
2. That some question of law, tribal or otherwise, of unusual difficulty is likely to arise.
3. That such an order is expedient for ends of justice or is required by any provisions of these rules or any law applicable to the case³⁴⁹.
4. That any offence be enquired into or tried by another Village Court of a Subordinate District Council Court.
5. That any particular case or classes of cases be transferred from one Village Council Court to another Village Council Court or from one Village Council Court to a Subordinate District Council Court.

³⁴⁸ A compilation of Acts, Rules and Regulations, p.287.

³⁴⁹ GAD, file of MADC

6. That any particular case or cases is/are transferred to and tried before itself.

The Court may also release an offender convicted by the lower Court on his entering into a bond with or without sureties to appear and receive sentence when called upon during such period not exceeding three years as the Court may direct and in the meantime to keep the peace and good behavior. However, the provisions of Sections 121, 124 and 372 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 shall apply, *Mutatis Muntandis*³⁵⁰ in the case of sureties offered in pursuance of the provision of this rule. In a criminal case the District Council or the Administrator may direct an appeal to be presented to the District Council Court from any order passed by a village Court or a Subordinate Court. An appeal under sub-rule (1) has to be presented within ninety days of the date of order appealed against excluding the time needed for obtaining a copy of the order³⁵¹.

Financial power: The Financial Autonomy of the District Council has been defined under paragraphs 7 to 10 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India³⁵². The Mara Autonomous District Council has power to levy and collect taxes for maintenance of Schools, dispensaries or roads; entry of goods into markets and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries; on animals, vehicles and boats, on professional trade, callings and employments. Further the Council also shall get a share of royalties occurring each year from forest, license or lease for the purpose of prospecting for or the extraction of minerals granted by the government in respect of any area within the Mara Autonomous District Council³⁵³.

The Mara Autonomous District Council enacted various Acts, Rules and Regulations for collection of land revenue and various other taxes as enshrined in Paragraph 8 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. However, it would seem that the three Autonomous District Council, though they were empowered by the Sixth Schedule, has not collected any taxes in this regard as they were not

³⁵⁰ A latin expression meaning with the necessary changes having been made or with consideration of the respective differences. (used when comparing two or more cases or situation)

³⁵¹ A compilation of Acts, Rules and Regulations, p.290.

³⁵² Hansaria, p.3.

³⁵³ A compilation of Acts, Rules and Regulations, p.250

familiar with the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. Nonetheless, in recent times, the Mara Autonomous District Council enacted rules and regulations to curb taxes.

Under paragraph 7(2) of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, rules were to be framed by the Governor for management of a District Fund, and for the procedure to be followed in respect of payment of money into the said fund, the withdrawal of money therefrom, the custody of money therein and any other matter connected with or ancillary to these matters. The Mizoram Autonomous District Council Fund Rules, 1989, framed by the Governor has been finalized. At the same time, the affairs of the District Council are once regulated under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council Fund Rules, 1962. However, the Mizoram Autonomous District Council Fund Rules, 1996, framed by the Governor of Mizoram were finalized and published in the Mizoram Gazette (Extra Ordinary) on 26th November 1996³⁵⁴.

In pursuance of paragraph 7(3) A of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, the form in which the accounts of the District Council are to be maintained was prescribed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in April 1977 with the approval of the President of India. As per the provision provided in paragraph 13 of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, the Mara Autonomous District Council receives fund from the Consolidated Fund of the State Government. Normally, the size of the annual outlay of the Mara Autonomous District Council is finalized in consultation with the state government before placing the budget for voting in the Mara Autonomous District Council Budget session. After passing the Budget, it was sent to the State government for incorporation with the annual Financial system of the state. The Mara Autonomous District Council receives grants from the state government installment-wise in three different heads: 1) Plan Grant, 2) Non-Plan Grant (share of Taxes) and 3) Transfer Fund³⁵⁵.

³⁵⁴ J. Pathy, 'Maintenance of Accounts of MADC', in souvenir MADC, 1997, pp.13-14.

³⁵⁵ A compilation of Acts, Rules and Regulations, p.240.

CHAPTER 6

Contemporary politics

The Maras enjoyed full autonomy in the form of chieftainship before the advent of the British. The Chief enjoyed a sovereign authority without any influence within his jurisdiction. The land which was commonly known in the colonial period as the Lakherland was now popularly known as Maraland, which became a generic term to designate the land inhabited by the Maras. For many decades, the Maras were fighting for their survival in the politics which they have never come in contact with in the pre-colonial period. The traditional political system was crashed by the colonial administrator. The Chieftainship of the Maras was also put to an end by the Government of India with effect from the 1st April, 1955 under the provisions of the Lushai Hills (Acquisition of Chief Right) Act, 1955³⁵⁶. Subsequently, the Maras has to search for alternatives to safeguard their identity and culture.

Since 1945, with the declaration of the meetings of the Mara Chief at Saikao, the Mara future seems to be uncertain as the process of decolonization began in India. After a laborious attempt to have a separate administration within the Government of India and the subsequent implementation of the Sixth Schedule, the Maras were given a separate Regional Council which they have to share with their neighbouring tribe the Lais and Chakmas. However, right from the beginning the Maras and Lais could not agree with decision making, and disunity and mistrust persisted within the Paw-Lakher Regional Council. Subsequently, in 1972, when the Mizo District Council was upgraded to the status of Union Territories, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated and the three district Councils were created, the Lai Autonomous District Council, the Mara Autonomous District Council and the Chakma District Council³⁵⁷.

³⁵⁶ MDC Sovinier, p.1.

³⁵⁷ See also Chapter 4 for more details.

6.1. Political Parties in Mara Autonomous District Council

Political parties are formal organizations for representing the aims and interest of different socio-economic forces in the political sphere though not all societies have a party in political system of government. The political parties are often being organizational means by which candidates for office are recruited and ideologies are propagated. It seeks to organize and dominate the organs of government and to provide national leadership³⁵⁸.

Until the coming of the colonial ruler, the Mara Autonomous District Council area was totally ignorant of the modern day concept of autonomy or self-rule, though they lived in isolation for many centuries. Not only this, but the whole area under the Lushai hills and the North East India was left untouched for many centuries except plain areas of Assam. Political consciousness of the hill tribes of Assam began only in the early part of the 20th century. The traditional Mara society maintained a static character until the external forces in the form of Christian Mission and colonial rule disturbed the balance. In fact, it was the coming of the Christian Missionaries that changed the history of the Maras and determined the faith of the Maras for their future endeavour³⁵⁹. Since then, the process of political consciousness moulded in the minds of the Maras and began to demand a separate Administration within the Lushai Hills.

Until 1945, the British administrator forbid any kind of political activities in the whole of the Lushai hills. However, in 1946 the first political party, Mizo Union, was established in 1946³⁶⁰. This created a sense of insecurity among the Maras and the Pawis who were in the process of savouring the feeling of political consciousness. This led to the formation of Political Parties in the South and many more parties came to established in the subsequent period. As far as Political Party is concerned, the early Parties confined to clan basis though in the later period saw the emergence of National Parties in the region. In fact, small parties concerned with the interest of a particular ethnic, linguistic or religious groups as in the case of the

³⁵⁸ Oxford dictionary of sociology, p.560.

³⁵⁹ K. Robin and VB Nopha Azyu, p. 92.

³⁶⁰ Lalchhuanawma, *Government and Politics of Mizoram*, p.120.

Pawis and the Lakhers. At the same time, such parties with autonomous aims depending on the political support of local people to realise their objectives and thereby survived but later disappeared from the political scene³⁶¹.

6.1.1. The Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union:

The Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union was the first political party established in the Pawi-lakher areas on 25th October, 1949. The establishment of this party has a lot to do with a kind of political activities that happened in the Lushai hills. It seems that in 1947, Saprawnga visited the Pawi-Lakher Region in the southern lushai hills, some of the Lakher and Pawi conscious leaders requested to arrange a separate representation of the tribes in the proposed Mizo District Council. He strongly disagreed with the request on the ground that tribe-wise representation would disintegrate the Mizos. Instead, he preached on the unity of the Mizo community under one banner. However, this incident took to a new level when both tribes reacted sharply and took him otherwise.

Around this time, UMFO president also made a trip to the South with a view to propagating Party objectives and thereby bringing maximum number of the Pawi and the Lakhers to the party fold. Again, both tribes demanded a representation in the Council. The president of UMFO played with the sentiments of the tribe thereby giving advice to form a political party to press the demand for the creation of a separate administration. It was because of this, many Pawis and the Lakher joined UMFO for time being till 1948³⁶². In the same year, Shri, N.K. Rustomji, and advisor to the Governor of Assam to the Lushai to have meetings with the Advisory Council. Representatives of both the tribes and chief Representatives from the south, Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao also present in the meeting. In the meeting, Chhohmo fearlessly express his desire and grievances of the Mara tribe and get lot of support from Mr. L.L Peters, the then Superintendent of Lunglei. Even Peters encouraged representatives of both the tribe and Chhohmo to form a political party³⁶³. Subsequently, the leaders of both the tribes call for a convention at Lawngtlai where

³⁶¹ R.N Prasad, p.243.

³⁶² R.N Prasad,p.260.

³⁶³ See also chapter 4 more information.

Dengthuama and Dr. Khawma came to Lawngtlai to attend the convention. At the convention, Dengthuama and his friend said with amplify that the region would not get a separate administration. Both MU leaders express that the future of the Pawi-Lakher would be decided by the Mizo Union. In order to counteract the activities of the Mizo Union in the region and to obtain the Regional Council, some politically conscious Lakhers and the Pawis and their chiefs took initiatives and led to organized both the tribes into political organization. So the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union was founded on 25th October 1949. The elected office bearers are as follows:

1. President : Mr. Z. Hengmanga(Pawi)
2. Vice President : Mr. Thatchianga (Pawi)
3. Secretary : Mr. Zavaia (Lakher)
4. Treasurer : Mr. Vako (Lakher)
5. Finance Secretary : Mr. K.L. Pakhai (Lakher)³⁶⁴

The main objectives of this party was the integration and unity of the tow tribes in demanding a separate administration form the Government of India for managing their local affairs independently of the Mizo District Council, safeguarding and maintaining their customs, culture, dialects and ethnic identity. Promoting the idea of achieving Regional Council for both the tribes, this party able to bring many people to their fold. It is worth mentioning that, unlike the Mizo Union and the UMFO, the party never advocated for opting out of mainland India. In terms of political participation, it is very interesting to note that the party never set up official candidates to contest election. However, members belonging to both tribes used to contest election as independent candidates opposing each other in the election. This method was practice to keep up party's unity³⁶⁵.

The Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union successfully demanded a Regional Council for both the tribes which was constituted in 1953. As both tribes resolved before the formation of the Pawi-Laher Regional Council that both tribes would equally share with the offices of the PLRC as far as possible. In course of time, the

³⁶⁴ Hmingthanzuala, p.57.

³⁶⁵ R.N Prasad, p.261.

Pawis began to cross the line by violating the already signed truce which was done before the formation of PLRC. The Pawis not only monopolised the post of Chief Executive Member but also most of the coveted departments or portfolios in the Council³⁶⁶. Feeling that the more educated and politically advances Pawis would never do justice to them, the Lakher demanded a separate administration within Mizo District Council. This ultimately led to the end of Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union and the Lakher part ways with the Pawis and forms a separate party known as Mara Freedom Party. Its worth mentioning that ins spite of its inherent defects, the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union generated political consciousness and awareness among the Pawi-Lakher people and also established democratic order in the region³⁶⁷.

6.1.2. Mara Freedom Party:

In the words of R.N Prasad, in his book entitled, *Government and Politics in Mizoram*, “Mara Freedom Party symbolises the political strength of the Regional Mara movement.” Mara Freedom Party was the first ever political Party to have established in Maraland. In order to look into the history and objectives of this party one has to go back in time when the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union was disintegrated. The original roots were in the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. However, the party short-lived due to contradiction in their opinion and later involved totally in the Clan oriented politics³⁶⁸.

The history of the formation of the Mara Freedom Party has a history of its own which already began in the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union. In reality, the Maras could never mingle with the Pawis and the Mizos. Since 1945³⁶⁹, a demand for a separate District Council was made by the Mara Chief and in 1947³⁷⁰, a memorandum was submitted to the Governor of Assam for the same reason. This memorandum clearly defined their desire for self-rule and their refusal to remain under the Mizo. In 1948, the Maras came together with the Pawis to demand a

³⁶⁶ L.H Chhuanawma, p.134.

³⁶⁷ R.N Prasad, p.260.

³⁶⁸ Mylai hlychho, on 23rd march 2015.

³⁶⁹ Laicho Notlia, p.6.

³⁷⁰ R.N Prasad, p.265.

separate administration for better upliftment of their community. For this reason, they made a truce with the Pawis even before the formation of the Pawi-lakher Regional Council that the two community would equally share with the offices of the PLRC as far as possible. However, the Pawis violated the agreement many times in the PLRC and the Maras were never given high post in the Council. This aggravated the anger of the Mara leaders and wanted to form a separate political party to demand a separate District Council. In the later period, they realise that the Council with its limited legislative and financial powers would never help the Maras to grow and developed according to their own ability. At the same time, the Mizo District Council had power over the Regional Council on matters like education, language, road, minerals and professional tax. Further, this kind of provisions in the District Council encouraged the Maras to move away from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Since then, they demanded a separate Administration from the government of India.

In an attempt to carry out their demands more effectively, the Maras leaders felt the need to organised themselves into political organization. Therefore, the Maras no longer wish to be under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and decided to seek other alternatives whereby they can safeguard their interest. It was during the period of hostility and suspicion that the Mara Leaders called for a convention in September 1963 at Zyhno village and decided to form a separate political Party, **Mara Freedom Party**.³⁷¹

The main aim of the Mara Freedom Parry was a total dedication to securing a separate Lakher Autonomous District Council from the government in order to have integration of the Lakhers into a single administrative unit. The Party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the lakher Customary laws, culture and dialects. Right from its inception, the party main goal was the introduction of Mara language as the official language of the Mara Autonomous District Council and also as a medium of instruction in the primary and middle school within its jurisdiction. Since its inception, the party worked very hard to unite the Mara people and encouraged them to raise their status by playing regional

³⁷¹ Nohro hmoko...p.118.

politics. At the same time, the party also pressed the government of Assam to create a separate District Council as early as possible.

Since the demand for separate Council underway, the government of Assam sent many delegates to the Lakher inhabited areas to study the matters. However, the meetings of government delegates with the Lakher leaders often failed and does not bear fruitful result. The first two term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council run smoothly in spite of misunderstanding between the two tribes. But the Lakher leaders boycotted the third General election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council so that they can put pressure on the government. The Mara Freedom Party made a declaration that *“as the Maras desire to preserve their Mara tribe and grow like other tribes of India according to their own genius and customs and not dominated by any other tribes, as the existing Regional Council that had once been given to the Maras, has been found unable to safeguard the Mara tribe from being dominated by their neighbour tribes as the Mara as a whole, accept the Pawi-Lakher Regional council no more and have stepped out of the Regional Council, village councils, by boycotting the election of the Councils and setting up at the same time interim Village Council within the Mara inhabiting areas and as Assam government seems to have not moved by the appeals and demand of the Maras for a separate Mara District Council, we the Mara people, give and declare to ourselves Mara District Council on the 5th day of February 1965 at 10:40 A.M under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.”*³⁷²

Subsequently, the Mara Freedom Party set up an Interim District Council at Saiha and many Maras who worked in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council resigned from the office and started to work under Interim Mara District Council. Since then, all taxes and revenues collected within Mara inhabiting areas began to divert into the Interim District Council for its support³⁷³. Despite the Assam government led by Mr. Chaliha showed reluctance to take legal action against the Mara Freedom party and the office bearers of the Interim District Council. The liberal attitude of the Assam government further encouraged the Mara Freedom Party leaders to continue their

³⁷² R.N Prasad, p.270.

³⁷³ Zakhu Hlychho, p.155.

struggle. This led the MFP to submit memorandum to the Pataskar, and another memorandum to Y.B. Chavan, Union Home Minister on 20th May, 1967. After struggle and persistently fighting to secure District Council, the Mara Freedom party leaders sent delegates to the Assam government and the centre government until 1972 when they received a news that the government is planning to trifurcate the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council into three District Council³⁷⁴. It is worth mentioning that the credit of attaining a separate District Council for the three tribe can be given to the Mara Freedom Party as they were the main players after The Pawi-lakher Regional Council was constituted, to demand a separate District Council. It would seem that, the Pawis and the Chakmas joined them in the later period in demanding separate Council.

However, the Party soon collapse after gaining separate District Council as there began to emerge disunity and grumble among its member. The Mara Freedom Party call for assembly at Tisi village in April, 1972 to discussed on the matter of giving candidates for the upcoming Assembly election. Its members were completely divided on the issue of giving candidates. In this Assembly, Mr. Valua Hlychho, former president of Mara Freedom Party invited Mr. Hiphei and Mr. S.Vadyu who were still studying in shilling and both of them participated in the Assembly³⁷⁵. The Assembly resolve that the party will not put up a separate candidate for the election and anyone from the Party could contest the election. Mr. S. Hiato, Mr. Hiphei and Mr. Mylai Hlychho were vying for victory in the election. However, as the assembly has stated anyone could help their respective favourites in the election. Hiphei won the election quite comfortably and was given Deputy Speaker post in the Mizoram government. Since then, there began to emerge disunity and clannism within Mara Freedom Party which led to its disintegration³⁷⁶. The party ceased to exist in 1980 when it joined the Congress Party of Chhimtuipui District³⁷⁷. New party began to emerge with the likes of Indian National Congress, Janata party

³⁷⁴ R.N Prasad, p.271.

³⁷⁵ Hiphei, on 23 may, 2015 at Aizawl.

³⁷⁶ Laicho Notlia, p. 27.

³⁷⁷ H.C Thanhanga, p.49.

and soon the Mara Autonomous District Council became a playground for the newly formed Party in Maraland.

6.2.Indian National Congress:

Indian National Congress is a National Party and one of the oldest and largest parties in the world. It was founded in December 1885 and is known as the Congress party or simply Congress. The Congress today is the oldest surviving political party in Mizoram since the older parties such as the Mizo Union, the United Mizo Freedom Organization, etc. have become defunct.

The evolution of the party politics in Mizoram entered a new phase in the 1960s with the emergence new political party called the Indian National Congress. Though it was a National Party. The INC had a little impact on the political interest of the Mizo people as there was Regional party which is a dominant trend in the hills. However, a branch of the Indian National Congress was established in the Lushai Hills on 11 April, 1961 and an ad hoc committee was formed with A. Thanglura as President, Lasawia as Vice President. Since then, party politics in Mizoram face a new challenge in the political arena. In the next year, a conference of the Congress workers was held in Aizawl in 1962 and elected A. Thanglura as President, Lalthanliana as Vice President, Hrangchhuana as Treasurer and Zalawma as General Secretary.

The party was, however, completely defunct and could not make much headway. Its president A. Thanglura himself was a defector and he was once elected to the Assam legislative Assembly in 1962 on Mizo union ticket. He was appointed as parliamentary Secretary under Chaliha government. When the Assam government introduced the Assam language to be the state language and passed the official Language Act, the E.I.T.U members of the Chaliha protested against the Assam government but A. Thanglura though he supported E.I.T.U in the beginning left A.P.H.L.C and form Indian National Congress³⁷⁸. It was because of the personalities of the A. Thangluara on the one hand and Party lacks of leadership in its hierarchical

³⁷⁸ H. Thansanga, p.145

organisation, the average masses of the area were not made aware of its policies and programmes. Further, Thanglura, the president of the District Congress Committee was still living in Shillong though he visited the Mizo District Council frequently. However, the people in majority or section of self-interested politicians except a few politicians used to regard it as an organisation of outsiders which could hamper the existence of Mizo customs and culture.³⁷⁹

The development of party politics in Mizoram since then became really interesting. Within the Congress party, there emerged groupism and could not function properly. However, the Congress party with its limited aims and objective manage to intrude into the political playground in the south. Since its inception, the Mara Freedom party run the administration of the District Council very smoothly. However, the internal problem began to emerge within the member of the party. This can be categorised as clannism which emerge out of the Mara Freedom Party. When MFP was going smoothly, Mr. Chahmo of Zyhno propagated the idea of clannism by saying “we are not Mara, we are Kaliah.”³⁸⁰ It’s not so surprising for the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party to hear this kind of proclamation as it already happen when they call for a convention at Zyhno. Chahmo form Congress party in maraland. However, the MFP leader fear that this incident might dwindle the feeling of the Maras and their unity might be estranged by clannism, sent Mr. Mylai Hlychho to meet Chahmo at Zyhno village. Mylai Hlychho, on reaching Zyhno, call for public meeting and campaigned against the Congress and strongly condemned Chahmo for his thought provoking ideas to dismantle the unity of the Maras³⁸¹.

However, the internal disputes that occurred among the MFP leaders was clearly visible right from the first term election to the Mara Autonomous District Council. Right from the formation of executive in the Council, some of the elected members of the Mara Freedom Party were at dismay and ready to quit anytime soon. Outlandishly, the founder of the Mara Freedom Party, Mr. Mylai Hlychho left the party and joined the Indian National Congress. This move was a surprise and

³⁷⁹ R.N Prasad, p.265.

³⁸⁰ Laicho Notlia, p.36.

³⁸¹ Files collected from the office of the Indian National Congress, Siaha.

shocked for the active members of the MFP as the one who splash against the Congress in previous encounter now became an active campaigner of the Congress. Soon after joining the Congress, Mylai Hlychho launched a heavy campaign for the Congress and toured the entire Mara Autonomous Region. Wherever he goes, he would form a Congress Unit and soon became popular among the Maras³⁸².

In the meantime, the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party wanted to merge with the Congress as they felt that the Maras, being minority in the Country, should be united. However, when the Mara Freedom Party leaders approached Mylai Hlychho for merger with the Congress Party, he declined to redress their demand. The MFP leaders then consulted the Mizo District Congress Committee and the party was merged together with the Congress. From each member of MFP one rupees each was collected as membership fee and if one's willing to be active member one has to pay Rs 2³⁸³. Almost the whole member of the Mara Freedom Party joined the congress and only few were left who would often criticised Mylai Hlychho for his treachery.

The Congress Party was soon followed by internal disputes in the next few months. There was a clear distinction between the original member of the Party and the newly merged member. However, both the faction call for an Assembly and elected Mr.Siatio Hlychho as its President and Mr. Roma as its Vice President. During this period, the Mara people also became conscious of their fate and could not trust the newly formed Party. Since then, Party politics began to play an active role in the Mara Autonomous District Council and at the same time, the Indian National Congress began to dominate Mara politics for many more years to come³⁸⁴.

6.3.Janata Party

Since India's independence, the Indian National Congress rule the central government for many decades until the rise of Janata Party. Many problem arises in

³⁸² Laicho Notlia, p.37.

³⁸³ S. Hiato, on 13th May, 2014.

³⁸⁴ Laicho Notlia, p.30.

India and Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, felt that without proclaiming emergency, India was in danger. Therefore, the President of India declared emergency and some of the political leaders in Delhi were arrested. For the betterment of India, which Gandhi believed, many Banks were nationalised and the Congress Party was doing anything to bring back the life of Indians to normalcy.

During this period lands were also given to the poor people and this kind of activities carried out by the Congress was strongly condemned by the upper class. The opposition party get hold of the upper class and started criticising the ruling government. The emergency period was followed by the general election and the Congress as expected loss very badly to the Janata Party. The newly elected Prime Minister, Desai arrested Mrs Gandhi and many other politicians were arrested, and soon constituted Shaha Committee to investigate the cases of Mrs Gandhi. The centre politics had its repercussion in the Mizo District Council as well, as some of the Congressmen and other members left their party to formed the Janata Party of Mizoram in 1977. Subsequently, the Janata Party contested the 1978 general election and won 2 seats out of 30 seats. It was a round this time that some of the Mara politician visited Delhi to discuss their future plan for having a separate District Council. It was natural for the Maras to join any party that run the central administration as they were also fighting for their survival in demanding a separate District Council³⁸⁵.

In the later part of 1977, when the Mara leaders came back from Delhi, they called for Congress Assembly at Saiha. And in this Assembly they resolved to join the Janata Party unconditionally. The newly formed party elected Mr. Mylai Hlychho and Mr. Zakhu Hlychho as the President and the General Secretary respectively. Soon, it was followed by the second term general election to the Mara Autonomous District Council and the Janata Party contested the election from every constituency. In the election, the Janata party captured 12 seats out of 14³⁸⁶. However, the Janata Party did not last long in the Council as the Congress

³⁸⁵ Zakhu Hlychho, 23rd May, 2015.

³⁸⁶ Laicho Notlia, p.33

regain its authority at the Centre. As a result, the Janata Party became totally defunct and disappear from Maraland since 1980.

6.4. Mizoram People's Conference:

On June 1st, 1974. The Human Rights Commission was formed in Aizawl, which function as a non-political organisation. The main aims and objectives of the Committee was to protect and sustain the freedom guaranteed in the constitution of India; to seek judicial protection in the case of transfer of the people from place to place and also to focus the attention of the authorities to the physical and mental sufferings of the people who were compelled to evacuate their ancestral homes and occupy the newly formed village³⁸⁷.

It was a period of insurgency in Mizoram and there were certain incidents wherein the Indian Army committed atrocities against the masses to extract information about the movement of the MNF militants and civil liberty was curtailed. As the organization became popular, it was transformed into a political party on 17th April, 1975 with a hope to bring about peaceful settlements for the Mizos. The first Leaders of the Mizoram Peoples Conference were Brig. Thenphunga Sailo as President, Sakhawliana as Vice President and Zairema as its General Secretary. The People's Conference Party became one of the most dynamic regional political parties both in the union territory and post statehood era.

In Maraland, political problems cropped up in the District Council where defection became rampant among the political leaders. This was a time when the newly formed political party, People's Conference, became very attractive to the people of Mizoram and some of the Janata Party leaders agreed to leave the party and joined the People's Conference Party. Within the Mara Autonomous District Council, the formation of executive was almost possible where most of the politician ready to defects. Soon after the formation of the executive to the second term election in the District Council, the main leader of Janata Party, Mr. Mylai Hlychho,

³⁸⁷ Thansanga, p.150.

Mr. Lalringa and Mr. Ryusa Hlychho left the party and joined the People's Conference Party. Thus a new party was born in Maraland.

People's Conference party tried their level best to extend their influence in Maraland. Their first step was to dismantle the functioning of the Mara Autonomous District Council as it was under the Congress. For this purpose, many PC's man try to hijack some of the Politician and if not they will go for the officers who were holding high post in the District Council. In the election of the Mizoram legislative Assembly, they have one representatives from Maraland, R.T. Zachono was elected from Saiha constituency³⁸⁸. At times, the Mara people felt that he would be given cabinet post in the state government headed by Thenphunga Sailo but it was the other way around as the Mara People were never in their policy. This incident really hurts the sentiments of the people and the Party began to decline in Maraland³⁸⁹. In fact, the People's Conference Party do not really insist of having a concrete aims and objectives for the Mara people. The leaders of People's Conference in Maraland became a mere puppet in the face of their leaders at the state level. Some of their leaders even thought that this party might destroy the cultural unity of the Mara people and their custom. Thus, PC members unanimously agreed to re-join the Congress party and People's Party became defunct in Maraland.

6.5.Mara Democratic Front

After Mara Freedom Party, Mara Democratic Front was the Second Political Party that originally was rooted in Maraland. It was a time of stress and distress when there was a demand for greater autonomy for the Maras. At the same time, the politics of gaining supremacy by playing with their policies and objectives became rampant among the Mara politician. During this period, every party wanted to have special policy to attract the people and at this Juncture the Mara Democratic Party came into existence in maraland with new objectives to transform the lives of the Mara people.

³⁸⁸ R.T. Zachono, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, Siaha, on 24 January 2014.

³⁸⁹ Laicho Notlia, p.39.

The Maraland Democratic Front was formed on January, 1997 at Saiha with its founder was Mr. P.P. Thawla. Officer bearers of the Maraland Democratic Front were;

1. President : P.P. Thawla
2. Vice President : Lt. H.C Vahnua
3. General Secretary : M. Laikaw
4. Treasurer : H.C Chhiesa
5. Finance : L. Patha³⁹⁰

Soon after its formation, the Maraland Democratic Front attracted many people as it was a newly formed party with unique objectives for the betterment of the Mara people. The constitution of the Maraland Democratic Front contains the following objectives:

1. The Maraland democratic Front party shall bear the faith and allegiance to the constitution of India as by law established and to the principles of socialism, secularism and Democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
2. To attain a Union territory for Maraland as per the provisions of the Indian constitution by non-violence.
3. To constitute a true and clean government without discrimination in regard of creed, caste or religion.
4. To bring under one government of Maraland comprising Mara inhabited areas.
5. To utilize fully natural resources of Maraland and the skills of its people for self-sufficiency.
6. To find ways and means for reformation of social evils.
7. To give priority to the well-being for Maraland political, Social and economic without discrimination.

In the general election to the Mara Autonomous District Council in 2000, Maraland Democratic Front contested the election and won eight seats out of

³⁹⁰ K. Sachho, *Zoram thlirvelna*, Zochhawnkimi, Aizawl, p.30.

nineteen and formed the executive Committee first with the Congress and later with the MNF. The Party won seven seats in the Mara Autonomous District Council election held in 2005 and formed a coalition Executive Committee again with the help of one independent and four Congress Members. In the mid-term election of 2007, the Party once again won seven seats. Interestingly, during a period from 2007 to 2012, the Maraland Democratic Front formed a coalition Executive Committee three times with the Indian National Congress, the Mizo National Front and again formed a coalition with the Indian National Congress³⁹¹.

The MDF president P.P. Thawla contested the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election in 2003 and 2008. He was made a Minister of state (excise, Soil and Water Conservation) in the MNF ministry under Zoramthanga. However, he was made to resign on account of compulsory reduction in the size of the Council of Ministers.

1.7. Mizo National Front.

The Mizo National Front had its origin in the formation of Mizo Cultural Society which was formed in 1958 at Aizawl with R.B Chawnga and R. Zuala and Laldenga as its President and Secretaries respectively. The Society was established to help the people during a bamboo flowering induced famine Mautam that struck the District in 1959³⁹². Under tremendous pressure from the District Council authorities, the Society was disbanded and a new forum Mizo National Famine Front was floated at Aizawl in 1960 with R. Dengthuama and Laldenga as its President and Secretary respectively. The front undertook famine relief measures such as transporting rice and other essential commodities to interior villages and became very popular among the people.

The famine was over and by taking advantages of its popularity, the Famine Front was converted itself into a political party known as ‘Mizo National

³⁹¹ P.P. Thawla, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, on 10 February 2014 at Aizawl.

³⁹² R.N Prasad, p.168.

Front' at Aizawl on 22nd October, 1961 with Laldenga as its First President and R. Vanlawma as its Secretary³⁹³.

The aims and aspirations of the MNF was the integration of all the areas inhabited by the Mizos, to improve the economic condition of the people and finally to safeguard their religion. The Party chose self-determination as its main goal. Soon, the party gained immense popularity within a short span of time and were confident enough to contest the elections of the District Council and the Assam Legislative Assembly³⁹⁴. The MNF Party submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister on October 30, 1965 demanding self-determination. In the next year, the MNF declared Independence from the Indian Union on March 1, 1966. As a result, the government of Assam declared the Mizo District to be a disturb area under Assam Disturb Area Act, 1955 and Counter-Insurgency measure were soon enforced in the District.

Though the MNF movement for Independence halted the Maras movement for autonomy to some extent, they left a footprint in Maraland only to revive again after the Maras got a separate District Council. In Maraland the politics of the District Council was still dominated by the Congress and often wrestle with the PC. In 1987, the Government of India and the MNF signed a peace treaty. This created a new chapter in the history of Mizoram politics as the new party MNF to take active role in party politics. The ruling party Congress vacate their seats for the MNF. After 6 months, election was held for the Member of Legislative Assembly. As Mizoram was elevated to the status of Statehood, Mara Autonomous District Council was also given two seats in the MLA election. From Saiha Constituency, S. Hiato, party president of the Congress was fielded by the Congress (I) whereas, the MNF and the UPP could not field any candidates, they invited Mr. Zakhu Hlychho for candidature. However, S. Hiato eventually won the election. This incidence marked the beginning of MNF party in Maraland as in 1987, People's Conference Leaders and United People's Party leaders call for a join Conference at Saiha and

³⁹³ Chhuanawma, Government and Politics of Mizoram, p.150.

³⁹⁴ Malsawmliana, p.307.

unanimously agreed to join the MNF. Since then, MNF became one of the most influential political Party in Maraland³⁹⁵.

7. Elections in the Mara Autonomous District Council

With the dissolution of the Pawi-lakher Regional Council, the three Autonomous District Council, the Pawi Autonomous District Council, The Lakher Autonomous District Council and The Chakma Autonomous District Council were created. The Lakher Autonomous District Council was constituted vide notification No. CCMP 3/72/89 dated 2 April 1972 with six members, of them, four members Zakhu Hlychho, S. Pailei, S. Hiato and Khosa being elected members of the erstwhile Pawi-Lakher Regional Council constituted as the Member of the Lakher Regional Council. Zavai and Leipo were nominated members. The Administrator appointed Zakhu Hlychho as care-taker Chief Executive Member of the Executive Committee to discharge its functions³⁹⁶.

The adoption of Laws order 1972 and the Government of Union territory (Amendment Act 1971) elevated the status of Mara District Council to having more autonomy in managing their own affairs³⁹⁷. Further, the administrator of Mizoram, as per Sub-Para (2) of the Paragraph (4) of the Mizo District Councils (Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1972 appointed Zakhu Hlychho as care taker C.E.M to discharge the functions of District Council until the first general election of the District Council³⁹⁸.

7.1. First General elections (1972)

The strength of the Mara Autonomous District Council was 10 of whom 9 members were to be elected and 1 member to be nominated by the administrator vide Government Order No. LJD. 20/72/51 dated 30th August, 1972³⁹⁹. The first General

³⁹⁵ Laicho Notlia, p.112.

³⁹⁶ R.N Prasad, p.131.

³⁹⁷ Mizoram Gazetted, Aizawl, 5th may 1972.

³⁹⁸ See also chapter 5, p35.

³⁹⁹ H.C Thanhranga, p.114.

election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on December 17th, 1972. There were ten constituencies in the District Council and twenty-two candidates were contesting the election.

Since there was no other political party in Maraland, the Mara Freedom Party resolve that anyone who is willing to contest would do so as independent Candidate. At the same time, anyone can help or assist the person who they think is best for the Mara people. In this election Mylai Hlychho, prominent Politicians in Maraland could not contest the election as he spent much of his time in Aizawl and his name was not enrolled in the electoral Roll. Apart from nine Candidates from the Mara Freedom Party, fourteen other candidates contested the election as independent candidates. The following were elected members of the first term general election to the Mara Autonomous District Council⁴⁰⁰:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1	S. Hiato	Chhaolo	MFP
2	S. Vadyu	Amotla	MFP
3	K. Paichho	Tipa	MFP
4	S. Pailei	Zyhno	MFP
5	K. Khosa	Saiha	MFP
6	Hmaoko Hlychho	Tokalo	MFP
7	Zakhu Hlychho	Amobyuh	MFP
8	Ngony Hlychho	Saikao	INDEPENDNENT
9	Roma	Chapi	MFP
10	Leipo	Nominated ⁴⁰¹	

The Mara Freedom Party won the election comfortably in eight constituency and Independent Candidates from Saikao also joined Mara Freedom Party later. In the election, Mr. Leipo Notlia was given a nominated seat. However, he died before the end of his term and was replaced by Mr. Laizai. The Mara

⁴⁰⁰ Laicho Notlia, p.28.

⁴⁰¹ Mr. Laizei resumed after premature dead of Mr. Leipo.

Freedom Party formed the Executive Committee with S. Hiato becoming the first Chief Executive Member of the Mara Autonomous District Council. The Executive elected Mr. S. Pailei as the Chairman and K. Khosa as Deputy Chairman. In the meantime, Mr. S. Vadyu and K. Paichho hold the post of Executive Member⁴⁰².

During this period, Indian National Congress became very popular and the Mara Freedom Party Merged with the Congress. However, the Janata Party came to power at the Centre and the Janata Party was formed in MADC. Before the end of the first term, the elected Candidates to the Mara Autonomous District Council joined the Janata Party⁴⁰³.

7.2.The Second Term Election:

The Second General Election the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on December 12th, 1977. From this election, the Number of members of the Council was increased to fifteen from ten where fourteen members should be elected and still one nominated seat was available. A total of thirty-six candidates contested in this election. The following were elected members of the Second General Election⁴⁰⁴:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party 1
1	H.C Ryusa	Amotla	Janata
2	S. Vadyu	Tisopi	Janata
3	N. T Makho	Saiha	Independent
4	K. Tharo	New Colony	Janata
5	Zakhu Hlychho	Amobyuh	Janata
6	Mylai Hlychho	Saikao	Janata
7	M. Thatua	Tokalo	Independent
8	S. Khipo	Tipa	Janata
9	S. Pailei	Vahia	Janata
10	B. Tevo	Zyhno	Janata
11	Roma	Chapi	Janata
12	K. Paichho	Tipa (L)	Janata

⁴⁰² MADC Souvenir, p.3.

⁴⁰³ H.C Thanhranga, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁴ Laicho Notlia, p.33.

13	S. Hiato	Chhaolo	Janata
14	Lalringa	Siata	Janata
15	K. Khosa	Nominated	

In the election, the Janata Party won 12 seats and the other two seats were taken by the Independent Candidates. However, the problem began to emerge in the formation of Executive Committee and the post of the Chief Executive Committee was fought between Mylai Hlychho, S. Hiato and S. Vadyu. Ultimately, the Members elected S. Hiato as the Chairman and Mylai Hlychho was elected as the Chief Executive Member. The other factions of the party launched a complaint and the Governor of Mizoram ordered reformation of the Executive Committee. The factions group under S. Vadyu came together with S. Hiato Group and elected Mr. Roma and Mr. K. Tharo as the Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. On 16th March 1978, S. Hiato was elected as the Chief Executive Member⁴⁰⁵.

After running the administration for three years, the Janata Party called for a General Assembly in 1980 to discuss the future of the Janata Party. In the Assembly, the Party unanimously resolved to merge with the Congress (I). The Congress party was different from the previous one as it received recognition from the All India Congress Committee (AICC)⁴⁰⁶. However, in the early years of 1982, in pursuance of the complaint submitted by the PC's Party, the Governor of Mizoram sent One Man Commission, Mr. Gorrak Ram, to investigate the matter seriously. The report found no fault in the functioning of the Council and the District Council was safe until the next general election⁴⁰⁷.

7.3.Third General Election:

The Third General election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held from 10th to 18th December, 1982. The election was contested by 14 candidates from the Congress (I), 12 candidates from the PC's Party and 9 independent candidates. Both Party, Congress (I) and the PC's Party 7 seat each.

⁴⁰⁵ S. Hiato on 13 May 2014.

⁴⁰⁶ Mylai Hlychho, on 15th August 2015.

⁴⁰⁷ Laicho Notlia, p.55.

This created tension between the party in forming the Executive. The following were elected Candidates⁴⁰⁸:

Sl.no.	Name	Constituency	Party
1	S. Zakho	Amotlah	Congress (I)
2	Rt. Zachono	New Siaha	P.C
3	N. Chosa	New Colony	P.C
4	Vahnua	Saiha	P.C
5	Zakhu Hlychho	Amobyuh	P.C
6	Timawthy Lakher	Saikao	P.C
7	C. Vahlo	Tipa L	P.C
8	S. Khipo	Tipa V	Congress (I)
9	K. Chialo	Tokalo	P.C
10	H. Pakhu	Vahia	Congress (I)
11	B. Tevo	Zyhno	Congress (I)
12	Az. Laicho	Chapi	Congress (I)
13	S, Hiato	Siata	Congress (I)
14	Lengduna	Chhaolo	Congress (I)
15	V. Lalchhawna	Independent	Nominated

As the two dominant Party won 7 each in the election, both side could not form the Executive Committee. On account of this, the Council was left vacant till May 1983. Both the parties tried their level best to hijack its own members to form the Executive Committee. At last, the People's Conference party got the upper hand in the tussle. and manage to hijack two elected Congress member, Mr. S. Zakho and Mr. H, Pakhu⁴⁰⁹.

On May 19, 1983, the members elected Mr. Rt. Zachono as Chairman and K. Chialo was elected as the Deputy Chairman. The Executive Committee

⁴⁰⁸ The Mara Autonomous District Council (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010.

⁴⁰⁹ Zakhu Hlychho on 23rd may 2016.

unanimously elected Mr. Zakhu Hlychho as the Chief Executive Member⁴¹⁰. However, the Congress (I) party soon call for the General Assembly at Saiha and resolve to demand an Enquiry Commission to be sent to the Mara Autonomous District Council. The Government sent Mr. MM. Lal, Deputy Commissioner of Lunglei to enquire into the matter. On 23rd January, 1985, the Enquiry Committee submitted its report and the Mara Autonomous District Council was dissolved⁴¹¹.

7.4.Fourth Term General Election:

It has to be noted that the Executive Committee of the third General election was short-lived as the enquiry Commission reported the Matter in favour of the Congress, the Executive Committee was dissolved. The Government of Mizoram notified the Date for the Fourth General Election to the Mara Autonomous District Council and declared to file nomination before 1st February, 1985. The General election was held on 14th February, 1985 and over 25 candidates contested for 14 constituencies⁴¹². The following were the elected candidates:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1	Rt. Zachono	Amotlah	P.C
2	S. Vadyu	New Siaha	Congress (I)
3	Chhiesa	New Colony	Congress (I)
4	Nt. Mako	Saiha	Congress (I)
5	RSK. Chhamo	Amobyuh	Congress (I)
6	Laicho Notlia	Saikao	Congress (I)
7	K. Paichho	Tuipang L	Congress (I)
8	S. Khipo	Tuipang V	Congress (I)
9	K. Chialo	Tokalo	P.C

⁴¹⁰ RT. Zachono on 24th January 2014.

⁴¹¹ Laicho Notlia, p.79.

⁴¹² H.C Thanhranga, p.116.

10	S. Pailei	Vahia	Congress (I)
11	B. Tevo	Zyhno	Congress (I)
12	Az. Laicho	Chapi	Congress (I)
13	S. Hiato	Siata	Congress (I)
14	Lengduna	Chhaolo	Congress (I)
15	Roma	Nominated	
16	K. Tharo	Nominated	

In the election 4 candidates, S. Khipo, B. Tevo, Az. Laicho and Lengduna won uncontested and the Congress (I) party won 12 in total. Whereas, PC's Party two seats. The Congress secured majority in the Election and formed the Executive with S. Vadyu as the Chief Executive Member. The Members elected Laicho Notlia as the Chairman and A.z Laicho as the Deputy Chairman. S. Khipo and B. Tevo were given Executive Member respectively.

During this period, the Government of India and the MNF signed peace treaty and the Central Government, as already promised by the state in previous year, agreed to give some provisions of safeguarding the minorities in the state. As already promise by the state government led by Mr. Lalthanhawla, the Mizoram government gives more power to the three Autonomous District Council. For this reason, the Mara Autonomous District Council was given one more nominated seats in the District Council⁴¹³.

7.5.Fifth Term Election:

The Fifth Term General Election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on February 6th, 1990. During this period, the Government increased the composition of the Executive member by 5 seats and the total

⁴¹³ Laicho Notlia, p.111.

constituencies reached to a total of 19. The following were the elected members of the District Council⁴¹⁴:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1.	Rt. Zachono	Amotlah	Congress (I)
2	Lengduna	No-aohtla	Congress (I)
3	Ng. Sila	Chhaolo	Congress (I)
4	S. Khipo	Tisi	Congress (I)
5	Az. Laicho	Chakhei	Congress (I)
6	TT. Vakhu	Zyhno	Congress (I)
7	F.C Zase	Chapi	Congress (I)
8	S. Pailei	Laki	Congress (I)
9	H. Valai	Tokalo	Congress (I)
10	K. Paichho	Phura	Congress (I)
11	Laicho Notlia	Saikao	Congress (I)
12	Zakhu Hlychho	Tipa V	MNF
13	N. Zakhai	Amobyuh	MNF
14	H. Sahlo	Meisavaih	Independent
15	K. Chياما	Siaha Vaihpi	Independent
16	N. Hmoko	New Colony	MNF
17	Lalringa	Council Vaih	MNF
18	J. Hrangliana	New Siaha	MNF
19	S. Vadyu	Siaha Tlangkawn	Congress (I)

In the election, the Congress (I) won 12 seats while the MNF won in 5 constituencies. Interestingly, two independent candidates won their respective

⁴¹⁴ The Mara Autonomous District vCouncil (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

Constituency. The executive was formed by the Congress (I) with S. Vadyu as the Chief Executive Member. K. Paichho was elected as the Chairman and H. Valai was elected as Deputy Chairman. Four Members S. Khipo, Laicho Notlia, S. Pailei, Rt. Zachono and Az. Laicho were holding Executive Member⁴¹⁵. As the Government has increased the Nomination seats, the administrator appointed Mr. Venthang, Mr. Chhisa and Mr. A. Timothy. It must be noted here that Mrs Violet Lorrain was once nominated but was later declared unqualified as she is still a citizen of the British⁴¹⁶.

7.6.Sixth Term Election:

The Sixth General Election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on 9th February, 1995 in 19 constituencies. The Indian National Congress won in 17 constituencies whereas 2 seats were won by Independent candidates. This time, the nominated seats was increased to 4. The Congress overwhelmingly won the election and formed the Executive with S. Khipo as the Chairman and V. Vanhupa was elected as the Deputy Chairman. The Chief Executive Member belong to Mr. K. Paichho and 7 others were given Executive Member post namely, Rt. Zachono, FC Zase, NG. Sila, H. Sahlo, TT. Vakhu, N. Zakhai and H. Valai. Four members, N.T. Makho, Kiahlei, J. Maki and Lrngduna were nominated to the Mara Autonomous District Council. The following were list of the elected members⁴¹⁷:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1	RT Zachono	Amotlah	Congress(I)
2	V. Vanhupa	Noh aotla	Congress(I)
3	NG. Sila	Chhaolo	Congress(I)
4	S. Khipo	Tisi	Congress(I)
5	K. Hrahmo	Chakhei	Congress(I)
6	TT. Vakhu	Zyhno	Congress(I)
7	FC. Zase	Chapi	Congress(I)
8	K. Rahi	Laki	Congress(I)

⁴¹⁵ F.C Chhuasa, P,72.

⁴¹⁶ H.C Thanhranga, p.116

⁴¹⁷ The Mara Autonomous District vCouncil (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010.

9	H. Valai	Tokalo	Congress(I)
10	K. Paichho	Phura	Congress(I)
11	Laicho Notlia	Saikao	Congress(I)
12	Lawmkima	Tipa	Congress(I)
13	N. Zakhai	Amobyuh	Congress(I)
14	H. Sahlo	Meisavaih	Congress(I)
15	K. Chياما	Siaha Vaihpi	Independent
16	Nohro Hmoko	New Colony	Congress(I)
17	N. Chosa	New Colony E	Congress(I)
18	R.C Fanchun	New Siaha	Independent
19	S. Vadyu	Siahatlakawn	Congress(I)
20	NT. Makho	Nominated	
21	Lengduna	Nominated	
22	F.C Kiahlei	Nominated	
23	J. Maki	Nominated	

7.7. Seventh Term Election:

The Seventh General Election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on 9 February, 2000 in 19 constituencies. In this election 57 candidates contested from 4 political parties. The Following were the elected members⁴¹⁸:

Sl.no	Names	Constituency	Party
1	RT. Zachono	Amotlah	Congress(I)
2	Lengduna	N. Siaha	MNF
3	V. Vanhupa	Noh aotla	Congress(I)
4	K. Chياما	Siaha Vaihpi	MDF
5	Nohro Hmoko	New Colony	Congress(I)

⁴¹⁸ GAD files MADC.

6	N. Viakhu	Council Vaih	Independent
7	H.C Chhiesa	Meisavaih	MDF
8	IP. Junior	Saikao	MNF
9	C. Vahlo	Tipa II	MDF
10	M. Laikaw	Tokalo	MDF
11	S. Pailei	Laki	MDF
12	C. Vadu	Zyhno	MDF
13	PP. Thawla		MDF
14	F.C Zase	Chapi	Congress(I)
15	K. Hrahmo	Chakhei	Congress(I)
16	L. Khaichyu	Siata	MNF
17	S. Khipo	Tisi	Congress(I)
18	N. Zakhai	Amobyuh	Congress(I)
19	S. Vadyu	Siahatlah	MDF

In the election, Indian National Congress (INC) won 7 seats whereas Mara Democratic Front won 8 seats and the MNF won 3 seats. The Independent Candidate N. Viakhu also won the election from Council Vaih Constituency. There was no single party to formed the Executive. Soon, the MDF under their president PP. Thawla(MDF) approached the MNF elected members and formed the Executive with PP. Thawla as the Chief Executive Member. S. Vadyu(MDF) was elected as the Chairman and H.C Chhiesa(MDF) was elected as the Deputy Chairman. The other members S. Pailei(MDF), Lengduna(MNF), N. Viakhu(Ind.), K. Chiama(MDF), IP. Junior(MNF), C. Vahlo(MDF) and M. Laikaw(MDF) were the Executive Members

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However, on 11th November, 2000, the opposition move against the Executive Body and the executive was toppled down by the house. Following this incident, a new Executive Body was formed between the MNF and the Congress. The Committee elected Nohro Hmoko(INC) as the Chairman and also elected S.

⁴¹⁹ The Mara Autonomous District Council (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

Lalremthanga(Nominated) as the Deputy Chairman. The Executive body elected IP. Junior(MNF) as the Chief Executive Member. After a gap of two years, on 4th December, 2003, No Confident Motion was moved against the Executive Committee and voted out the Existing Committee.

Therefore, the new Executive Body was formed again between the MDF and the MNF parties on 6th December 2003. The government of Mizoram approved on 19th December, 2003⁴²⁰. They elected IP. Junior(MNF) as the Chairman and also elected Mr. H.C Chhiesa(MDF) as the Deputy Chairman. The Committee elected S. Pailei(MDF) as the Chief Executive Member. During the 7th term of MADC 8 persons were given nominated seats namely, Mylai Hlychho, C. Lawbei, S. Lalremthanga, Biakthangi, KT. Chialo, Eric Nolua, H. Valai, Lalbiakluangi.

7.8.Eighth Term Election:

The Eighth general election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on 19th April, 2005. In this election, the number of constituencies was increased to 22 and 68 candidates contested the election. The following were the elected candidates of the 8th general election of MADC⁴²¹:

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1	M. Laikaw	Tokalo	MDF
2	K. Rahi	Laki	MNF
3	FC. Rehmo	Chapi	MNF
4	K. Hrahmo	Chakhei	INC
5	Beisa Kathie	Phura	MDF
6	S. Lalremthanga	Tipa I	MDF
7	C. Vahlo	Tipa II	MDF
8	C. Vadu	Zyhno	MDF

⁴²⁰ The Mara Autonomous District vCouncil (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

⁴²¹ The Mara Autonomous District vCouncil (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

9	S. Khipo	Tisi	INC
10	L. Khaichyu	Siata	MNF
11	M.H Tiabi	Chhaolo	MDF
12	N.L Hmunsanga	No-aotlah	MNF
13	IP. Junior	Saikao	MNF
14	L.C Hlychho	Amobyu	MNF
15	N. Viakhu	Council Vaih	Independent
16	Lengduna	New Siaha	MNF
17	V. Sangvuana	Siahatla	MNF
18	K. Beisa	Siaha Vaihpi	INC
19	Nahlo Solo	College Vaih	MNF
20	V.B Byhna	New Colony	MDF
21	H. Sahlo	Meisavaih	INC
22	H.C. Lalmalsawma Zasai	Amotlah	MNF

In the election, MNF party won 10 seats whereas the INC won only 4 seats. The MDF party also won 7 seats and one independent candidate won in this election. Interestingly, the Siahatlah Constituency surprisingly attracted many voters as the three candidates secured votes more or less the same or the difference was very small in number. It was the closest fight in the MADC election history. V. Sangvuana(MNF) secured 571 votes, S. Vadyu(MDF) secured 568 votes and L.C Chakhai(INC) secured 567 votes as S. Vadyu lost by a margin three votes⁴²².

⁴²² H.C Thanhrranga, p.117.

It was speculated that the MNF formed the Executive body as they won most seats in the election. However, the United Legislature Party(ULP) was born out of nowhere and formed the executive. It was composed of the MDF, the INC and one independent Candidate. Mr. S. Khipo was elected as the Chairman and Mr. V.B Byhna was elected as the Deputy Chairman. the executive elected Mr. N. Viakhu as the Chief Executive Member and others K. Beisa, K. Hrahmo, MH. Tiabi, S.Lalremthanga, M. Laikaw, H. Sahlo and C. Vadu were given the Executive Member post.

However, the newly formed Executive body lasted for one year and voted down in the house. Therefore, the new Executive was formed on 31st March, 2006 between the MNF and the MDF⁴²³. H.C. Lalmalsawma Zasai was elected as the Chairman and also elected Mr. N.L. Hmunsanga as the Deputy Chairman. the Executive body was headed by Mr. N. Viakhu being the Chief Executive Member. During the short tenure of the MADC Mr. M Manesia, NT. Thatlua, Hrangduna and Ngotlua were nominated to the District Council member⁴²⁴. However, because of the chronic instability in the Council, the Governor dissolve the Council on 5th March, 2007⁴²⁵.

7.9.Ninth Termed election:

After the dissolution of the Mara Autonomous District Council, the government issued notification for the Ninth termed election to the Mara Autonomous District Council. As per notification, the Ninth Term election to the Mara Autonomous District Council was held on 8th May, 2007. The following were the elected candidates⁴²⁶:

⁴²³ N. Viakhu, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, at Siaha on 23rd feb.2020.

⁴²⁴ Lalmalsawma Zasai, interviewed by V.B. Nopha Azyu, at saiha on 23rd feb 2020.

⁴²⁵ The Mara Autonomous District Council (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

⁴²⁶ The Mara Autonomous District vCouncil (GAD) Miscellenous files, 2010

Sl.no	Name	Constituency	Party
1	S. Khipo	Tisi	
2	S. Vadyu	Siahatla	
3	M. laikaw	Tokalo	
4	K. Chhuabei	Laki	
5	FC. Zase	Chapi	
6	K. Hrahmo	Chakhei	
7	Beisa Kathie	Phura	
8	S. Lalremthanga	Tipa I	
9	B. Tusa	Zyhno	
10	MH. Tiabi	Chhaolo	
11	Beihlo	Council Vaih	
12	K. Beisa	Siaha Vaihpi	
13	V. VB. Byhna	New Colony	
14	V. Vanhupa	College vaih	
15	H. Sahlo	Meisavaih	
16	N. Naphie	Tipa II	
17	L. Khaichyu	Siata	
18	NL. Hmunsang	No-aohtla	
19	IP. Junior	Saikao	
20	Lengduna	New Siaha	
21	LC. Hlychho	Amobyu	
22	H.C Lalmalsawma Zasai	Amotlah	

In the electoral history of the Mara Autonomous District Council there was not much problem until the emergence of new political party in Maraland. From the third General election of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and the formation of the Mara Freedom Party, the politics of Maraland had been under the influence of the MFP. Even after the formation of the Mara Autonomous District Council, Mara Freedom Party dominated the elections until internal feuds emerged to the surface. Factionalism ultimately emerges within Mara Freedom Party.

As compared to other Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram, the Mara Autonomous District Council has more stable Executive Committee than the rest. However, in the beginning of the District Council functioning clannism began to appear for some time as the Hlychho's were dominating the politics of the Maras right from 1940s. As the Maras were divided into five clans, sometimes clan base politics often practice in MADC especially when favouritism accompanied Clannism.

Demand for Union Territory and Direct Funding:

The Mara people were not satisfied with the power and resources they received from the Mara Autonomous District Council. One may wonder why the Maras are still thirsty for more power while having a separate Autonomous District Council with financial support from the State of Mizoram and Government of India?

As early as 1945, the Mara Chiefs called for a special conference at Saikao and ultimately submitted memorandum and requested the British government to give them a separate administration. They wanted to protect and preserve their customs and cultures and this led them to demand a separate administration from the government. communal feeling and ethnic consciousness aroused by the condition of relationship between the two major tribes in Mizoram. Even after getting a separate District Council, the Maras always felt that their rights and powers were deprived by the state government. At the same time, they felt that the state government infringe upon the powers and provisions given to them by the Sixth Schedule⁴²⁷. The

⁴²⁷ M. Laikaw, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, at Siaha, 10th January, 2019.

communal feeling erupted once again when great tragedy strikes Mizoram in 1995. Maraland was worse affected area and they were not receiving supply adequately as compare to other district in Mizoram. The study shows that out of Rs. 2000 Crores Aids received for tragedy in Maraland from foreign countries and government of India, even Rs. 50 crores were not distributed for the affected families in Maraland. Sadly, the other Rs. 1950 crore lost its way to maraland, stuck and distributed in Mizoram. After two years, Mara people with the help of voluntary organization collected the amount of Rs. 4720000 for helping more affected people⁴²⁸. Hence, the tragedy along with other issues forced the maras to demand a separate Union territory for Maraland⁴²⁹.

Unemployment problem in Maraland was another important issue which forced them to demand a separate Union Territory for Maraland. According to the survey conducted by the Mara Student organization in 1988, there were more than 5000 unemployed graduates and post graduates among the Maras⁴³⁰. This often affected the lives, progress and development of the Maras in many ways. On the hand, the church did not raise their voice openly to the public but it was clear from the fact that they also had a strong feeling and moral support in the demand of Union Territory for Maraland⁴³¹.

Among the Political party, the Congress was also demanding Nehru plan which was more popularly known as Full Autonomy since the 1980s. since the Mizo District Council was elevated to the status of Union Territory in 1972, the Three District Councils in Mizoram could function properly for the development of their respective region. Subsequently, the Congress demanded NEHRU PLAN since October 1980. The Congress leaders frequently went to Delhi to pursue their demands and many letters were written to the Home Secretary for recommendation⁴³². Other political party in Maraland do not bother about Nehru plan as they thought that demanding such a privilege will never succeed. Around this

⁴²⁸ Chhim Aw, Daily Newspaper, May 18, 1997, Editor, K. Laltlanzauva.

⁴²⁹ Buannel, Daily Newspaper, September 10, 2002.

⁴³⁰ Laiseihna Souvenir, Published by MSO, 1998, p.12.

⁴³¹ John Hamlet Hlychho, p.364.

⁴³² S. Hiato on 13th May 2014.

time, the Lai District PC's party also demanding territorial Council to the government of India⁴³³. The central government also taking measures to fulfil the demands of the Mara leaders and some of the high officials including Makwana, N.R. Laskar, Ramdhularai Sinha, P.A. Sangma visited Maraland. Subsequently, on 29 November, 1988, the Sixth Schedule Amendment bill was passed in the parliament. To their surprise, this amendment was merely an upgradation of powers in financial matters but not Union Territory. However, since this amendment was made in the parliament, the District Council which earlier received only Rs. 20 Lakhs could now receive more than Rs. 200 lakhs⁴³⁴. Though it was not a full autonomy that they were expecting but it rather encourages the Maras to persistently demand full autonomy in the years to come.

Decades past and as everyone thought, the demand for UT was fading among the Mara politician, a new political party was formed in 1998 called the Maraland Democratic Front. This party endeavour to achieve a Union Territory for the Mara people and attracted many followers right from the beginning. They have submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in April 30th, 1998 at his official residence, New Delhi⁴³⁵. Since then the Maras have optimism towards attaining Union Territories and memorandum has been submitted many times to the government officials.

On the other hand, another important propaganda which infused with many politicians and often reappeared in times of the elections in the Mara Autonomous District Council was Direct Funding. It happens not only to the MADC, but also very often among the Lai and the Chakma Autonomous District Council. Prof. DOUNGEL, who conducted an extensive analysis on ADC's of Mizoram, is of the opinion and branded Direct Funding as a Utopian Misnomer which has multi-dimensional interpretations and concepts⁴³⁶.

⁴³³ Laicho Notlia, p. 118.

⁴³⁴ Laicho Notlia, p.121.

⁴³⁵ M. Laikaw, 10th January, 2019.

⁴³⁶ Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, p.140.

It would seem that this propaganda began to appear among the political leaders of the Maras out of desperation in a quest to appropriate the proper flow of money from the centre to the District Council. It may have been in a proper agenda in the beginning as to demanding a direct flow of money from the centre to the District Council as the State Government repeatedly delay and divert some of the money. It is very difficult to ascertain when this propaganda appears in the political history of the Maras but it is quite conclusive that the Sixth Schedule amendment of 2006 might have been misinterpreted in such a way that people began to perceived it as the ultimate goal of the political parties in the region. This is because many parties use this propaganda as campaigning tools and element in the election since then. It appears that this amendment was proposed to make some changes in the Paragraph 2, 3, 7, 8, 12AA, 12B, 13, 14, 16, 19, 19A, 19C, 20B and 20C and changes the name of the three District Council in Mizoram as the Lai Autonomous territorial Council, the Mara Autonomous Territorial Council and the Chakma Autonomous Territorial Council⁴³⁷. Many politicians in Maraland believe that Direct Funding has been assured by the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi when he visited Saiha in 1989. Such believe turned into a political agenda and implanted in everybody's mind in recent times. However, one has to note that the demand for Union Territory and Direct Funding go and in hand.

In 2009, when the Leaders of the three ADC's went to New Delhi to meet the prime minister of India, the Chief Minister of Mizoram, Shri. Lalthan Hawla sent a forwarding letter to the then Prime Minister of India addressing Mrs. Sonia Gandhi which reads as; *"the three ADC's of Mara, Lai and Chakma have always been aggravated when the Congress is not in power in Mizoram. We have, therefore, decided that the central government be approached for direct funding and granting them more powers. You may kindly recall that you have even written to the Mara people before the District Council election a few years ago that if we voted to power in the Council we shall take action for Direct Funding. The leaders of the three ADC's are now camping in New Delhi to meet you and the Hon'ble Prime Minister in this regards. I am addressing this letter to you to reiterate our support to*

⁴³⁷ Jangkhongam Doungel, *Ram Darthlalang*, Spectrum publication, Guwahati, 2013, p.181.

*their demand.*⁴³⁸ This letter clearly pointed to the fact that even the centre government gives a hint to the three ADC's of the possibility of giving Direct Funding.

According to Dounge⁴³⁹, the Direct Funding as claimed and expected by the leaders of the three Autonomous District Council in Mizoram is not within the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and it may only be concretised by amending Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India. Contrary to the claim by the politicians, Dounge believed that Panchayat Raj, village empowerment, centrally sponsored Scheme(CSS) and Border Area Development Programme(BADP), seemed to be the version of Direct Funding which has been emphasised by the Government of India⁴⁴⁰. However, many leaders still believed in the government and persistently demanding direct funding to the Government of India as the District Councils in Mizoram were struggling with the funds they received through the State government. Their demands became more reality as they thought that the state government infringe upon the power and functions of the District Councils. They might have won the war if they persistently fought for as India is the one biggest democratic Country in the world, anything is almost possible.

⁴³⁸ Old Files from the BJP office Siaha.

⁴³⁹ Jangkhongam Dounge, p. 160.

⁴⁴⁰ Jangkhongam Dounge, pp.186.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The movement for Autonomy is a common phenomenon in the post-independence era. As the dawn of the 20th century has brought significant political awareness amongst the hill tribes of the Northeast India. Clamour for political autonomy has assumed an important slogan amongst the different ethnic groups of the Indian sub-continent. Ethnic upsurges had taken different forms in different states and areas and even transformed from one form to another with the passage of time. It is in this background that post independent India had constantly negotiated with the problem of perceived isolation and marginalization amongst different ethnic groups of Northeast India.

Ethnic assertion has become a dominant trend in the whole world in recent times. India's Northeast which is home of a large number of ethnic groups and sub-groups is also not free from this trend. This upsurge disturbed the government machinery and administration of the system often become impractical. Sometimes the movement were violent in their approached and often accompanied by secessionist feelings among the tribes. It is for this reason, most of the movement for autonomy were branded as having a secessionist element. It seems, a country like India, that houses a large number of ethnic groups would have to face many more challenge coming from various ethnic groups in the future.

The Maras, a tribal group of distinction, demanded a separate administration within the state of Mizoram. The movement has been carried out since 1940s. However, there is no traces of their movement for autonomy being studied within the institutional framework of India nor mentions were made even in the academic field. The research intended to explore and analyses the movement carried out by the Maras since the colonial period. The research traces the emergence and development of political consciousness among the Maras which led them to demand a separate administration and also analyses various factors that prompted the Maras

to demand such an administration. Further, it also studies the working of the MADC and its power and functions.

The movement for autonomy and the feeling of political consciousness in the North east India can be attributed to the early educated Khasi. It began in Jaintia hills, the most developed part of all the hill areas of the North east with the establishment of Jaintia Durbar in 1900⁴⁴¹. It was set up as a socio-cultural organization and the first of its kind in the North east. This gave a new light to the North east especially in terms of political worldview of the tribals. Politics or political consciousness came in the wake of the Montford reforms inseparably with social movements of different kind.

The only other politically conscious movement, seen in the form of social movement, was recorded in the second decade of the 20th century in the Naga Hills⁴⁴². In the early part of 1918 with some officials of the Naga Hills and a few village headmen set up a Naga Club. This was clearly noticeable when Simon Commission mentioned that beyond Dimapur they had met representatives of the Northeast frontier people including the Naga. Naga Club raises their voice demanding representatives to the Assam Legislative Assembly. At this time a round there was no mention of any other political activities in the hills.

In the Lushai Hills political awakening came in the form of Associations or Organizations in the early part of 1935 with the establishment of Mizo Zirlai Pawl, Young Lushai Association which later renamed as Young Mizo Association. But if we look at the works of BB Goswami, in his book, *Mizo Unrest*, he said, “the first activity about which people often remember was initiated sometime in 1925, when a group of persons under the leadership of Telala of Ralte tribes, contacted the superintendent of the district, to initiate changes in the administration, so that they may participate in the Assam politics.”⁴⁴³ In 1926, some of the politically conscious Mizo individuals, who were residents of Kulikawn, namely: Darchhingpuia, Thuama, Saikunga, Thanzuala, Chawngnuaia, V.Z. Biaka and

⁴⁴¹S.K. Chaube, p.66.

⁴⁴²S.K. Chaube, p,70.

⁴⁴³ B.B. Goswami, *Mizo Unrest*, Aelexh Publishers, Jaipur,1979, p.128.

Chhawngdailova submitted a memorandum to N.E Parry complaining about the imposed labour on the commoners. It was clear from the fact that the Lushai hills was not far from being attracted by the kind of political activities prevalent in the neighbouring areas of Assam and Bengal. Ultimately, in 1946, the first Mizo political party was established by the name Mizo Union. Since then, the whole concept of political consciousness implanted among the masses continued till today.

The study revealed that the political activities in the Northern part of the then Lushai hills had a great impact among the Maras. As the political activities was mounting in staggering pace which left no stone unturned for the Maras to sense the wave of the progress. Unlike their neighbouring tribes, the Mara tends to develop a unique system of political activities in the first half of the 20th century. However, it can be said that this area had been less developed and had not been attractive to the political development in the Northeast. It seems that the Maras were less exposed to the contemporary social and political awakening in the hills because of its isolation from the rest of the Hills District by Kolodyne River.

The study further reveals that the process of political consciousness took a drastic change after the coming of Christian missionaries in 1907⁴⁴⁴. Although they had experienced autonomy or self-rule since time immemorial, they have never experienced a modern concept of autonomy or the concept of political autonomy. They believe in their tradition and culture thus leading a simple way of life and they had never been exposed to modern political system until they came in contact with the western world. Thus, any political consciousness hardly existed in the hills of southern Mizoram before the coming of the British. According to Mylai Hlychho, local politician, “the process of the Maras political consciousness began only after the coming of Mr. R.A Lorrain and his wife on 26th September, 1907.”⁴⁴⁵ He attributed the work and contribution of the Christian missionaries as the root cause for the development and emergence of political consciousness among the Maras. According to Rev. T. Laikai, “the Maras had already developed a sense of having a separate administration or autonomy as early as 1907 when the Lakher Pioneer

⁴⁴⁴ R.A Lorrain, p.70

⁴⁴⁵ Mylai Hlychho, 15th August 2015.

Missionaries came to South Lushai hills". He believes that the rhythm which has been started got boosted by the Christian Missionaries of whom he believes, moulded and cemented the already developed ideas i.e. Autonomy⁴⁴⁶.

The study finds that the Contribution of the Christian Missionaries was the root cause for the emergence of political Consciousness among the Maras. The coming of the European Christian missionaries to a far-flung area had a far-reaching effects and impacts in the mostly populated areas of the Maras. Even S.K. Chaube remarked that, 'in the Lushai hills Christianity has achieved the highest record of success in India.'⁴⁴⁷ Parry remarked that Christian mission was a more active instrument of change than the government. This statement clearly clarified the fact that the Christian missionaries' activity in this areas drawn attention of the hills people in transforming their way of live. The Christian missionaries reduce Mara Language into writing and introduced education among the Maras. It was a period of transition in the hills of the southern Lushai hills where Christianity only began to take shape in the early part of 20th century. By looking at their neighbouring tribes of the north, the Lushais, the younger Mara generations recognize the fact that they were lagging far behind in terms of education and there began to emerge a large gap in the social position of the Maras and the Lushais. The fact that many Lushais holding high official post in the government offices in Aizawl and Lunglei, made the Maras a feeling of insecurity in their land. They realize the fact that the backwardness of the Maras was due to absence of any formal education in their areas. The only school available was a mission school funded by the missionaries. On account of this, some students even went to mission school at Saikao for want of higher education. Until 1947⁴⁴⁸, not even a single government primary school was established in the southernmost part of the Lushai Hills.

However, in spite of the absence of schools and higher institution, many Maras venture out to the nearest available schools for further studies and when they came back, they, brought along with them, new ideas and concept which ultimately

⁴⁴⁶ Rev.T. Laikai at siaha on 20th march 2015.

⁴⁴⁷ S.K. Chaube, p.70

⁴⁴⁸ R. Hmingthanzuala, Op.cit., p.32.

influenced their educated elites of the villages. Sudhakar Bhat in his book, *Challenge of the North East*⁴⁴⁹, writes, “The hill people of the North-east region today feel justifiably indebted to Christianity and Christian missionaries for making them aware of their rightful place and status in independent India. ”After 37 years, since the arrival of the Missionaries, the Maras became aware of their status and demanded better status to the Superintendent of the Lushai hills, and it was, indeed, the result of encouragement given by the Christian missionaries” said T.A Chhohu⁴⁵⁰, former Senior Executive Secretary, MADC.

The study further reveals that the Mara Chiefs played a very important role in the process of disseminating the feeling of political consciousness among the Maras. As they were the leaders even before the coming of the British and continued until decolonization of Indian sub-continent was over and furthermore, their sons and grandsons gives everything for the cause of the Mara people. There was strong relationship between the Chiefs and the commoners. Among the Maras, the Chiefs were the first to come forward in demanding better status for the Mara people with the Christian missionaries behind their back. Among them, Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao happened to be the first Mara chief, to conceive the idea of having separate administration for the Maras. Regarding this, Mr. Valua Hlychho, asserted that it was the chiefs of the Maras in the south, among all the Lakhers and the Pawis, the political consciousness originated and not from the commoners. Saikao chief Mr. Chhohmo often reiterates his ambitions and visions for the Maras in having separate autonomy for themselves in their own land. Initially, the commoners were not even aware of the situation where the Maras were in and were completely ignorant about the ideas of political affairs. Among the commoners and one of the educated elites, who acknowledge the idea of Mr. Chhohmo was Mr. Chhalie, retired Circle interpreter (C.I.).⁴⁵¹ The politically conscious Chhohmo call for Mara chief conference at Saikao on 4th January, 1945 and 23 chiefs participated in the conference. They unanimously adopted a resolution demanding a separate Mara Hills

⁴⁴⁹ Sudhakar Bhat, *Challenge of the North east*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, p.45.

⁴⁵⁰ T.A. Chhohu, interviewed by V.B Nopha Azyu, at Siaha, 13.02.2019.

⁴⁵¹ Nohro Hmoko, pp.104-105.

district administration and submitted a memorandum to the administrator of the Lushai hills.

Another important factors that contributed to the emergence of political consciousness was the impact of the two world wars. The two world wars were indeed a global war as it involved great powers and its impact was felt even in the remotest part of the erstwhile British Empire in the Luhsai Hills. Its impact opens an avenue for a tribal group like the Maras to participate in the world affairs thereby enhancing their worldview and left an imprint on the lives of the individuals and Maras as a whole. However, the first Maras to enroll themselves in the British Indian Army were Mr. Hniaka of *Iana* village and Mr. Hiado of Tisi village. The Second World War shows a larger participation by the Maras. The superintendent order to send volunteer from each of the community from the Lushai hills and demanded 200 volunteers from the Lushai and another 200 from the Maras. But since the Maras could count only 100 volunteers the rest was filled up by the Lais and the Lushai.⁴⁵²

The impact of the war was so much so that the life of the Maras was going through a lot of changes. The war widened the outlook of the participant and their world view was changed. It also developed admiration for the Europeans and zeal to copy their lifestyle. After coming back from the war, the volunteers now realized the need for political autonomy for the Maras after seeing their Lushai counterparts holding high post even in the Army. Though majority of the Armies were illiterate, the ideas and the experience they have brought means a lot for the Mara people as they were never exposed to outside world. Person like, Sakia Khuhly⁴⁵³ played a very important role in demanding separate Autonomy for the Maras. Though the dreams for having a separate administration for the Maras in those days was vague and hazy. But then after the wars the Maras became very much conscious of their identity. Since then this issue became the main agenda for the Maras until 1972. Rev. T. Laikai asserted that it was after the war that the Maras became very active in moulding and cementing the idea of having a separate administration. He concluded

⁴⁵² Mylai hlychho Article. p.2.

⁴⁵³ M. Zakawnia, p.62.

that it was in the early 1940s that the Maras even began to demand a separate administration⁴⁵⁴.

In the midst of their busy schedule in administering the Lushai hills, it is found that, some of the Administrator played a very important role in reshaping the Maras idea of having a separate administration. It proved to be instrumental in the emergence of political consciousness among the Maras. The village of Saikao, the centre of Christian mission work, was occasionally visited by the British administrators from Lunglei and Aizawl. During the Second World War, many European military Officers frequently paid visits to Lorrain Villa, Saikao and these officers began to be familiar with the Maras.⁴⁵⁵ The most intimate Officers among them were L.L. Peterss, Sub-Divisional Officers, Lunglei, who later became Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Captain A.I. Bowman, Officer commanding, Tuipang Out-post. Who later became Sub-Divisional Officer Lunglei.

The political consciousness that was a mere spark in the minds of the Maras was reignited by Capt. Bowmen when he visited Saikao in 1945 to inspect the records of the village court. He was surprised to see that judgments in the village court were recorded and written in Lushai(duhlian) language. He then asked the Chiefs of Saikao, Chhohmo⁴⁵⁶, why the court judgments were not recoded and written in the Mara language. The chief explained to him that Lushai was the official language. Taking the advantage of the incident, Chhohmo expressed to the Officer that the Maras people desired so much to be under a separate administration just as the Lushais had. Capt. Bowmen, being an Army officer, was posted in Tuipang during the Second World War and was very much familiar with the Maras. He felt that the Maras were completely different from the Lushais and their language was far more difficult to comprehend as compare to the Lushais which makes them unique. He was deeply moved to learn that Lushai language was prevalent in majority Mara

⁴⁵⁴ Rev. T. Laikai, *Mara chi nata Pho*, in Nozuah Souvenir, MCHP, 2007, p.21.

⁴⁵⁵ Nohro Hmoko, p.105.

⁴⁵⁶ In many books, he is often referred to as Chhuhmunga which is a Lushai version of his name.

speaking population and he encouraged Chhohmo to demand better status for the Maras⁴⁵⁷.

In the early part of 1946 R.A Lorrain received a letter from Capt. Bowmen who was in Shillong at that time, informed him that he met the Governor of Assam and told him all about the Mara tribes seeing that they were distinct tribe inhabiting a compact area of territory in the southern tip of the Lushai hills and also about their loyalty to the British government during the world wars and that they had an inspiration for a separate administration. Capt. Bowmen also requested R.A Lorrain to inform the matter to Chhohmo and to appraise him of writing a letter to him if he so desired. The matter was discussed with Chhalie, retired Circle interpreter, and a letter was brought to R.A Lorrain for translation in English. Capt. Bowmen was requested to contact once again with the governor of Assam in the matter and represented the Maras on their behalf.⁴⁵⁸

Rustumjee, advisor to the governor of Assam, Shillong, visited Aizawl in 1948. All the members of the advisory Council were informed to meet the advisor in Aizawl. To discuss the matter, Mr Chhohmo met L.L. Peterss, Superintendent of the Lushai hills, in his bungalow before participating in the advisory meeting. L.L. Peterss advised Chhohmo to express before the advisory committee that the Maras were distinct tribes and they desire for separate administration. In the meeting Rustumjee explain to Chhohmo that the Maras were too small in number and the case could not be considered. However, at this juncture, L.L. Peterss explain before the Advisor that the Maras were a distinct tribe inhabiting the extreme south of the Lushai hills and were quite different from the Lushais. He further stated that the Maras deserved a separate administration taking into account their ethnic differences. At this point, advisor was impressed by the statement given by the superintendent and assured Mr. Chhohmo that the problem of the Maras would be taken into account and make sure that he noted down in his notebook.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ K. Robin and VB Nopha Azyu, p.93.

⁴⁵⁸ Nohro hmoko, p.103.

⁴⁵⁹ Nohro hmoko, p.110.

Adam, an ICS officer, recognized the fact that there were several tribes distinct from one another in the Lushai hills. Therefore, he recommended the establishment of a council for each tribe. He also suggested that all hills affecting the welfare of the tribals should be referred to the tribal council for its opinion. N.E Parry, the superintendent of the Lushai Hills also thought of introducing some amount of autonomy in the tribal areas of the south Lushai hills.⁴⁶⁰ These officers were more sympathetic to the Maras and wanted to help the tribe in getting their grievances answered from the government. By this time, the feeling of political consciousness spread in the length and breadth of the south Lushai hills. With the help of British administrators, the feeling of political consciousness gains momentum among the Maras.

Mr. T.S. Gill, the deputy Commissioner, Mizoram was a good and sympathetic towards the Mara people during the Interim Mara District Council period. When the Mara Freedom Party boycotted the Pawi-lakher Regional Council and run a separate District Council, he helped them escaped infliction of penalty for their illegal running of the administration. The likes of Mr. K. Saigal, Mr. S.J. Dass and Mr. B. Bhuyan who came one after another as Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram respectively encouraged and helped them in solving the political aspirations of the Maras.

The Maras demanded a separate administration for themselves within the Indian Union and come up with four important factor that prompted them to demand such kind of administration.

Ethnic politics: Since time immemorial, the Maras considered themselves as different from the rest of the tribals in the Northeast. They belonged to the mongoloid stock of the Tibeto-Burman family. They were distinct, independent, ethnic people grouped by themselves. The affirmative statement had been given by many administrators and officers working in the Lushai hills. The first documented account of the Maras as a separate tribe seems to have been written in 1852 by Capt. Tickell. He wrote an article titled “notes on the Heuma or Shendoos, a tribe

⁴⁶⁰ K. Robin and VB Nopha Azyu, *Ibid.*, p.93.

inhabiting the hills north of Arakan” which was published in the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol-XXI*⁴⁶¹. The people referred to here are none other than the Maras, Heuma being one of the Mara groups.

Hutton in his interesting introductory notes to Parry’s *the Lakhers*⁴⁶² where he mentions that the Mara people “include in their composition more perhaps than their immediate neighbours of the races that preceded them, of which the Indonesian race, everywhere submerged by the Mongolian flood, appears to have been one, while Bodo, Mon-Khmer and Melanesian elements seem to be definitely traceable.” Lewin classified the Maras as Shendoos or Lakhers, a tribe entirely independent and representing more of a nation than a tribe⁴⁶³. The Maras scholars seem to have reached consensus that six groups of the Mara people together belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. Taking into account ethnic differences, the Maras were not ready to assimilate and work under the Lushais.

Ethnic differences dominated the early politics of the Maras and every effort was made to achieve political autonomy for the Maras. At the same time, the British officers such as Capt. Bowmen and L.L Peterss reignited the feelings of differences when they referred to them as a separate and distinct tribe as compared to the Lushais. They felt that they were being treated as foreigners by the Lushais due to the difference of language, social customs and practices⁴⁶⁴. The fear of assimilation by more advanced and educated Lushai is so real that they even think if the process of economic development is harmful to their ethnic culture and identity, because they are aware that the native economic components are often disturbed and dislocated. Ethnic differences of the Maras from the rest of the tribes in the Lushai hills constituted a strong base for autonomy movement.

Language: Even in the context of Indian mainland, language is not only a factor of separatism but also politically recognised base for state reorganization since 1917. Language was then recognized as standing for and representing culture, race, history,

⁴⁶¹ N.E parry, p.6.

⁴⁶² N.E parry, p.2

⁴⁶³ T.H Lewin, p.281

⁴⁶⁴ R. Hmingthanzuala, p.34.

individuality and finally sub-nation. In Mara politics, language, though not a prominent factor of autonomy movement, has its role in fostering it as a negative consequence of the Assamese linguistic chauvinism. In recent years it has become a subject of scholarly debate whether the Mara language belongs to the Chin-Kuki-Lushai language groups of the Tibeto-Burman family owing to the fact that Mara language is quite different from other Chin-Kuki-Lushai language.⁴⁶⁵

J.H Lorrain, a missionary working in Serkawn, noted "...Mr. Parry's book 'the Lakhers' is a fascinating work containing much interesting information concerning the Lushais as well as their neighbours, the Lakhers. Amongst these latter tribe folk-who speak a distinct language of their own."⁴⁶⁶ Barkataki in his extensive research of the tribes of Assam, rightly writes, "There is another major tribe called the Lakhers inhabiting the southernmost part of the Lushai hills district. Their dialect is altogether different from those of other sub-tribes."⁴⁶⁷ There were several distinct clans among the Maras who speak their own dialects but conversably and understand easily each other even among themselves *Tlosaih* being the dominant language. There is no closed syllable or word, i.e. no Mara syllable or word ends with a consonant. It was for this reason that Mara language is uniquely different from the rest of other Chin-Kuki-Lushai language. However, the difference in language and dialects created a great gulf between the Maras and other communities in the Lushai hills. For the same reason, the Maras being minority in the district could not feel secure among the larger Duhlian(Lushai) speaking people. The feeling of differences which already started prior to the coming of missionaries was reignited by the likes of Capt. Bowmen when he visited Saikao and saw the record being done in Lushai language. On account of this incident he encouraged the Maras to demand for separate administration for their survival in the lushai hills District.

Language had become an important issue for the Maras since the advent of the British. The Maras do not understand the Lushai language and for this reason they often needed interpreter in dealings with the administrations and other official

⁴⁶⁵ Bobby beingachhi, p.42.

⁴⁶⁶ J.H lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai*, 1940, p.1

⁴⁶⁷ S. Barkataki, *Tribes of Assam*, New Delhi, National Book Trust (NBT), 196, pp.82-83.

works. At the same time, Mara Language was made medium of instruction by the Christian missionary in the south and the Maras wanted to develop their language. However, in the district level knowledge of Lushai language was made mandatory by the district which created barrier for the Maras in dealing with the officials. This, ultimately, resulted into an important issue to support their movement in the demand for autonomy in the Lushai hills.

Economic: The backwardness of the region was another factor that prompted the Maras to demand a separate administration for themselves. The absence of proper academic institutions in the south contributed to its backwardness. The traditional Jhum practice was not profitable and famine occurred very often. In addition, there was no road for transportation and southern Lushai hills were cut off from the rest of the country. When the British occupied Lushai hills a few markets were established in few places in the borders which were almost unreachable for the Maras. After the first Lushai expedition of 1871-72, the government of India set up and renovated four Markets or Bazaars which were operated by traders from Cachar and Manipur. They were: Tipaimuk Bazaar on the river bank of Tuiruang, Sonai Bazaar on River Tuirial, Chnagsil Bazaar on river Tlawng and Tlabung Bazaar on river Khawthlangtupui⁴⁶⁸.

Tlabung Bazaar was the nearest Bazaar where the Maras use to go for trade and it usually takes more than a week to reach Tlabung. The introduction of Market was not favourable for the Maras as they lived in the remotest part of the south. Most of them would go for wage labourers at Lunglei and Aizawl and some of them would trade at Tlabung but the goods they bought were again transported through head loads from Tlabung to Maraland and this was the only way of transportation until 1972 when jeepable roads were constructed.⁴⁶⁹

The Second World War saw drastic changes in the lives of the Lushai people. Many educated people began to work in the office and holds important post. This development, no doubt, put pressure on the Maras who were fighting for

⁴⁶⁸ K. Laldinpui, p.136.

⁴⁶⁹ Zakonia, p.146.

survival in the south. During this period only few Maras were acquainted with Lushai language and going to Aizawl, Lunglei to get suitable job was very difficult for them because of language barriers. They also felt that the Lushai being majority and more advanced socially and economically looked down upon them as backward people. The people of the south, including the Pawis, began to feel that they were neglected by the government economically and no initiatives were taken to improve the condition of the people. The Maras were aware the fact that their primitive and village based economy of subsistence was inadequate and too fragile for the changed situation. One cannot avoid the fact that the British administration had done a little for the economic development of the people. It is true that McCall, Superintendent of the Lushai hills entertained certain ideas of improving the economic condition of the people of Lushai hills. But his ideas bear no fruits mainly because of lack of financial support in the absence of political commitment⁴⁷⁰.

Economic issue became an important instrument which can stir up the people sentiment and ultimately became a political issue where Mara people were mobilized. In this regard R.N Prasad remarks that “the economic backwardness of the region wounded the sentiments of the people very badly which compelled the extremist elements to venture even the life of the community for the cause of free self-determination⁴⁷¹”.

Political cause: The political aspiration of the Maras was manifested in a series of meetings and memorandum submitted to the superintendent and governor of Assam by the Mara chiefs. This was first evident in the form of chief conference called upon by Saikao chief, Chhohmo in 1945 where discussion was made on the future of the Maras. They made it clear from the very beginning that the Maras do not want to be under the administration of the Lushai. In this regard, the Mara chief submitted memorandum to the superintendent stating that the Maras occupied a vast stretch of land and expressed their desire of having separate District taking into account their ethnic difference.

⁴⁷⁰ A. Ray, *Mizoram: Dynamic of change*, Calcutta, Pearl publisher, 1982, p.187.

⁴⁷¹ R.N. Prasad, p.135.

The Second World War was over and Indian government was in the process of achieving independence. The Maras were very much aware of their future status and there was a dilemma among the political leaders whether to join the Indian union or to join Burma. This dilemma was prevalent not only among the Maras but also among the Lushai. On the eve of India's Independence, the Maras were less educated and politically unfit as compare to the Lushai. A few Political leaders of the Maras were convinced and felt of their miserable conditions amidst the growing Lushai society. They also felt that the Lushai were more educated and more advanced and this may result in the domination of the Maras by the Lushai. In the meantime, Mizo Union, the first political party in the Lushai hills was formed on 9th April, 1946⁴⁷² with the permission of the then Superintendent of the Lushai hills, McDonald. Right from its inception the party endeavours to protect the 'Mizo' identity and uniting all the sub-tribes of the territory and integrating the areas of Assam, Tripura, and Manipur predominantly inhabited by the mizo. The formation of Mizo Union was against the political interest of the Maras and badly disheartened Mara Political leaders. But this further developed a feeling of secession from the Lushai district and encouraged separatist feeling among other tribes.

The wave of the newly formed political party in the Lushai hills also had its effects on the Mara habited areas. They also heard about the movement and political activities in the Lushai hills and also knew the fact that Lushai hills would be under one district council. At the same time, Mizo Union leader, Ch. Saprawnga made his political tour in the Mara areas and inviting them to join the Mizo Union.⁴⁷³ It created an atmosphere of uneasiness in the Mara areas because they were already prepared for having a separate district council. For this reason, the Mizo Union could not establish its Unit among the Maras. In the case of the Pawis the situation seems different as many Pawis willingly participated in the Mizo Union activities and paid membership fees.⁴⁷⁴ Around this time, the Mara chiefs submitted another memorandum to his Excellency, Governor of Assam on 7th July 1947. The educated

⁴⁷² R.N. Prasad, p.244.

⁴⁷³ Nohro Hmoko, p.107.

⁴⁷⁴ S. Hiato, 13th May, 2014.

elites among the Maras often campaigned against unification and at the same time encouraged a movement for separate district council for their survival.

The study found that the civil society played an important role in the movement for autonomy among the Maras. The people rely more on their leaders for the cause of the Maras. Since the Mara area was poor and majority were illiterate, a few educated elites represented the majority. However, everything was done in consultation with the people. People participated in mass movement carried out by the politicians and take parts in every activity carried out by the educated elites. When the Mara Freedom Party boycotted the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Mara people supported the Party in the movement thereby by boycotting the payment of taxes to the Council. Sometimes, the movement turned violent as the people burned the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council at Saiha which clearly indicated their serious participation in the movement for a separate administration. The movement otherwise turned into a community base movement as the Maras and the Pawi community clash many times within the Council Area. To support their leaders in the movement, people often contributed money to help them going to Aizawl or elsewhere in India. It would have been impossible for the leader of the Maras to achieve a separate administration without the help rendered by the civil society.

On the eve of India's independence there was a movement among the tribals in different part of the country especially in the North east. The sixth schedule to the constitution of India provides for special status to certain areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura in the North eastern part of the Indian sub-continent, in terms of administrative and functional autonomy. Although the District councils of the North east India were constituted under the Sixth schedule to the constitution of India, the problems of administration in the tribal areas were recognized much earlier than it may seem. Though the Maras demanded a separate Administration since 1940s, they were given a Regional Council which they have to share with the Pawis, the Chakmas and few other ethnic tribes in the South.

The study reveals that Right from its inception, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was confronted with several problems. Even before the first

general election which was scheduled in the early part of 1953, conflict and misunderstanding arose among the Pawis and the Maras over the allotment of seats to be contested. The Maras and the Pawis were completely divided on the formation of the Executive Committee of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Subsequently, some of the Lakhers leaders met the Chief Minister of Assam to set up the separate District Council for the Maras.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time they also informed the Chief Minister that they would stop paying taxes and they would also run interim Mara District Council. This was the beginning of the idea of having a separate administration for the Maras got revitalized though the Chief Minister was indifferent of this warning.

Since the second general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Pawi Leaders failed to implement the agreement which was made solemnly between the two communities even before the formation of the Regional Council. In the agreement, before the formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the two communities agreed that the number of employees in the office of the Regional Council would be made equal as far as practicable. In reality, only one Lakher was employed as LDC, one Circle Assistant and few grades IV staff. No Lakher was employed at the higher post. This aggravated the tense situation between the two communities. Thus, the Maras were not given a chance to hold the post of Chief Executive Member and the Lion share of filling up the vacant posts in the Office of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council goes to the Pawis community.

The Lakhers claimed that they were the first to demand for setting up of the Regional Council in the Lushai Hills and that the process goes back as early as 1945 when the Lakher chiefs submitted memorandum to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills⁴⁷⁶. Considering all their efforts in demanding Regional Council, the Lakhers felt betrayed and were not satisfied with situation they were in the Regional Council. They felt that their rights were taken away by the Pawis where the Regional Council was under their control. The feeling of betrayal and insecurity on the one hand and the fear of assimilation by the more advanced neighbours prompted the

⁴⁷⁵ S. Hiato on 13th May 2014.

⁴⁷⁶ Mylai Hlychho, 15th August 2015.

Lakher to turn away for the Regional Council. There also developed a major rift and disunity between the two communities which appeared to be un-reconcilable under the same council.

In the later part of 1960s, the Maras began to realize the fact that the Council with its limited legislative and financial powers would never help them grow. At the same time, they felt that Mizo District Council which had powers over Regional council could still dominate their customs and dialects. They also realized that the Pawis being more educationally and politically advanced were holding responsible positions in the Council and they often breached the agreement which was signed at the beginning of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Therefore, the Maras no longer wish to be under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and decided to seek other alternatives whereby they can safeguard their interest. It was during the period of hostility and suspicion that the Mara Leaders called for a convention in September 1963 at Zyhno village and decided to form a separate political Party, **Mara Freedom Party**.⁴⁷⁷ The main aim of the Mara Freedom Party was to secure an autonomous district Council for the Mara people. The party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the Mara customary Laws, culture and language. The party strongly dedicated towards the integration of the Lakher into a single administrative unit, so as, to develop themselves according to local genius. At the same time, the Party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the lakher customs, culture and dialect. Since Mizo language was the medium of instruction in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, the Party objective was to replace the Mizo language by introducing Lakher language as medium of instruction within the Lakher inhabited areas⁴⁷⁸.

On 3rd February 1963, Mara Freedom Party initiated a conference at Saikao. This conference has been a landmark in the history of the Maras as the conference passed a historic proclamation for the formation of the Lakher District Council. The conference also initiated the process of remapping the District Council Area and proclaimed that the Lakher District Council should cover the villages of

⁴⁷⁷ Nohro Hmoko, p.118.

⁴⁷⁸ Mylai hlychho on 15th August 2015.

Bualpui, Lungzartum, Tuipuikai, Paithar, Rulkual, R.Vanhne, Saizawh, Tuithumhnar, Bungtlang, Mualbukawnpui, Ngengpuitlang, Tlaotlah, Hmawngbu.⁴⁷⁹

In the early part of 1963 Mr. B. Bhyuan, A.D.C was posted at Saiha on account of the movement launched by the Lakhers. He was sent to embark upon the political problems in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Pawi leaders on the other hand wanted to get the Lakhers exposed of their ill practices of boycotting and tempering the Regional Council. However, Bhuyan was practical in his approach and saw personally differences between the two tribes. He also witnessed the Lakhers speaking their own language where the Pawis could fluently converse in the Lushai language. He believed that the standpoint of the Lakhers in their struggle for a separate District Council was imminent. During this period, in the later part of 1964, the then Sub-Divisional officer, Mr. R.V. Pillai also visited Saiha and toured the entire areas inhabited by the Lakhers to see the political mobilization and tempo of the Mara Freedom Party. He encouraged the Lakhers that if they persist in their movement, victory would be theirs someday. This gives a new inspiration for the Lakhers in their movement for a separate state.

The third general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was boycotted by the Maras on 5th February 1965 and decided to make the Council non-functional especially in all the areas inhabited by the Maras. To mobilize the Lakher people and to press the Assam government, the Mara Freedom Party passed a resolution demanding a separate Autonomy in its 5th General Assembly held on 5th February 1965 as *“as the Maras desire to preserve their Mara tribe and grow like other tribes of India according to their own genius and customs and not domination by any other tribes, as the existing Regional Council that had once given to the Maras, has been found unable to safeguard the Mara tribe from being dominated by their neighbouring tribes as the Mara as a whole, accept the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council no more and have stepped out of the regional Council, village councils, by boycotting the election of the Councils and setting up at the same time interim village Council within the Mara inhabiting areas and as the Assam government seems to*

⁴⁷⁹ Laicho Notlia, p.21.

have not moved by the appeals and demands of the Maras for a separate Mara District Council, we the Mara people, give and declared to ourselves Mara District Council on the 5th day of February 1965 at 10.40 A.M. under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.”⁴⁸⁰ Henceforth, a major rift between the Maras and the Pawis became inevitable and soon found its expression in the form of hostilities between the two communities. This pointed to the fact that the Pawis at this time had no intention of getting a separate District Council nor demand was submitted by them to the authorities.

The Assam government kept silent on the issue of the Lakhers and the Lakher leaders felt that more effective steps should be taken to press the Assam government. Subsequently, in 1966 an Interim Mara District Council was initiated which was consider parallel to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. The Interim Council represents the Lakher people and run the administration with its headquarters at Saiha. As a result of this, all the land settlement certificates were issued by the interim council and taxes were collected by the interim council. Cases were also tried by the interim council. At the same time, all the Maras employees were also resigned from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and were recruited into the newly formed interim council. It was during this period of political turmoil that the offices of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were burnt⁴⁸¹. This resulted in severe strains upon the legal and moral order. However, despite resistance and problem caused by the Lakhers, the Assam government was unmoved and remained silent⁴⁸².

The leaders of the Mara Freedom Party submitted for the first time a memorandum addressed to the governor of Assam. In this memorandum the Maras demanded as Autonomous District Council for the Mara tribe and it was submitted to honorable Mr. B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister Of Assam. The memorandum was submitted by Mr. V. Hlychho, President and Mr. Leipo, Vice President in

⁴⁸⁰ R.N Prasad, p.270

⁴⁸¹ PT. Hlychho, p.35.

⁴⁸² R.N Prasad, p123.

Shillong in 1964⁴⁸³. They pleaded earnestly to the Chief Minister to provide with written statement which could guaranteed a separate District Council for the Lakhers. The Chief Minister then penned down a written statement which states that the Assam government would investigate the demands of the Lakhers and learns more about its people. Subsequently, the Assam government sent copies of the memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram, Aizawl and to the Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council for their comments⁴⁸⁴. In June 1965, the Patasker Commission was sent to Aizawl to have discussion with the Mara leaders regarding their political grievances. The Mara Freedom Party leaders, Mr. Leipo, Mr. Mylai Hlychho and L. Mark interacted with the Commission on that day but on account of the unhealthy political activities carried out by the Mizo National Front, the decision of the Commission was neither reciprocate nor known ever after⁴⁸⁵. Subsequently, the central government often sent a series of Commission to study the situation of tribes in the South Lushai Hills.

The Mara Freedom Party again sent another delegate, Mr. Mylai Hlychho and Mr. Leipo, to meet the Chief Minister of Assam to submit a fresh memorandum. The memorandum stated in details about the boycott of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and how interim Council was initiated by the Maras⁴⁸⁶. The Chief Minister was pressed hard by the delegates and wanted an assurance of an Autonomous District Council from him. The delegates then solicited the Chief Minister to give reply to their demand in a written statement. The Chief Minister then replied with honest statement that the Government had been studying the memorandum and action on the points of the memorandum had been taken at the same time. While the process of acquiring autonomous district Council was engaged in full swing, L. Chinzah, Chief Executive Member of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was making strenuous effort to oust and baffle the movement of the Maras by reporting to the Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram stating that the Maras rejected to pay taxes and showing non-cooperation in his administration by forming the

⁴⁸³ Mylai Hlychho, 15th August 2015.

⁴⁸⁴ Nohro Hmoko., p.119

⁴⁸⁵ L.Mark, 8th January, 2017.

⁴⁸⁶ Nohro Hmoko, p.122.

parallel Mara District Council. He even requested him to annihilate the Mara interim Council as it was against the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India.

The political activities of the lakhers turned more aggressive in the later part of 1965. It was because of this, the then Chief Executive Member, L. Chinza launched complain to the Deputy Commissioner, T.S Gill. At this point of time some of the Pawi leaders, including L. Chinza, were very confident that the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party would not be able to escape from their unconstitutional behavior in the Regional Council and their illegal practices. However, Mr. Gill was very liberal in his approach to the problem solving. Instead he advised the Lakher leaders not to impose taxes and collect fees from the people without their consent. He further extended his encouragement by suggesting them that it would be all right if the people paid taxes voluntarily to the Interim District Council.⁴⁸⁷ This was a severe blow to the Pawis as they never anticipated this kind of assurance given by a government representative to the lakher leaders. The Assam government sent another officer, Mr. K. Saigal, the then Deputy Commissioner of Mizoram, to Saiha to verify the political problems of the Lakhers. Before he came to Saiha, the Commissioner visited Saikao where he has intimate discussion with the Missionaries about the Lakhers. At the same time, he also studied about the Pawis. He was so sympathetic towards the Lakhers and in an interview with the leaders of the Mara Freedom Party, he took a piece of paper and draw the Map of Mizo district Council. Within the Map, he drew another map at the bottom and showed the picture to the leaders of Mara Freedom Party (MFP) and said to them “Is this good enough for your lakher tribe?”⁴⁸⁸. This is a clear indication that the government of Assam tried every possible way to solve the lakher problem at the earliest possible time. The MFP leaders were very much impressed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Mizo District Council.

After prolong boycott of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and movement of the Mizo National Front, the Mara Freedom Party leaders fear that

⁴⁸⁷ Nohro Hmoko, pp.123-126.

⁴⁸⁸ Mylai Hlychho, 15th August 2015.

these events might dwindled the integrity of the Maras in the movement for District Council. In 1969, the Mara Freedom Party call for a general Assembly at Saiha. The assembly agreed to invite S. Hiato and Zakhu Hlychho, who were working in the Tipa high school and Siaha Government School respectively, to take in charge of the Mara Freedom Party. Both of them agreed to leave their Job and joined the Mara Freedom Party. In 1970, Mara Interim District Council was re-opened and S. Hiato takes charges as District Council Secretary while Zakhu Hlychho was given Judicial Officer post⁴⁸⁹.

Despite demanding separate District Council, the Mara Freedom Party decided to take part in the 4th general election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. In the election Mara Freedom Party captured 4 seats including nominated seat. In the election not a single candidate came forward in challenging the candidate set by the MFP. It was in this election that the Chief Executive Member post was given to Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mara leader. Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mr. S. Pailei, Mr. S. Hiato, Mr. Khosa, Mr. Zavai were elected from the Mara community.⁴⁹⁰ However, the Maras were not satisfied with the Post of Chief Executive Member but wanted to have a separate District Council and for this reason many delegates mission was sent in between to the Indian Government.

Since the Mara Freedom Party could not find a solution from the Mizo District and the Assam government, to further extent their demands. For this purpose, their policy of entertaining the authorities was shifted towards the central government. Delegates were then dispatch in October 1971 to once again represent the Mara Community and to address the political aspirations of the Maras. Mr. Mylai Hlychho, Mr. Zakhu Hlychho and Mr. S, Hiato were sent to Delhi. The Pawis and the Chakmas, on knowing this immediately sent Mr. Manghnuna, Mr. Saplana and Mr. Sangchhuma from the Pawi community and Mr. Atul chandro Chakma went from the Chakma community. It appears that the Pawis and the Chakmas were quite content with the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and they were never in favour of demanding a separate district council for themselves. During this time, Mizoram was

⁴⁸⁹ Zakhu Hlychho, p.175.

⁴⁹⁰ Nohro Hmoko.p.125.

in the process of elevation to the status of Union Territory and this was indeed an opportunity for the Maras and other tribes to strike the government in demanding separate district council. It was out of desperation in their attempt to divert the lakher attitude of demanding separate district council that they were also finding way to seek new fortune in the midst of Mara movement. The Pawis, who for a long time developed rift with the Maras, came to the conclusion that it was the right time for them to side with the Maras to have a separate District Council for themselves because they also began to fear that they might be placed along with the Lushais within the Mizo District Council.

When the Mizo District Council was about to be elevated into the Union Territory, the Pawi Leaders seemed to have been frightened by the feeling that they might be placed under the Mizos within Mizo District Council. For this reason, the Pawis also directed their attention towards the Home Secretary and express their views on district council by stating that the Maras and the Pawis were of the same tribe and that they should not be given nor create a separate district council for the Maras. However, their statement was disapproved very soon when Home secretary asked the Pawi leaders to converse with the Mara leaders in their language. They failed and changed their strategy by demanding a separate District Council for themselves.⁴⁹¹

Between 1964 and 1971, there was chronic political instability in the Pawi-lakher Regional Council. It appears that the Pawis emerged victorious in Executive Committee on the ground that they were supported by Tlang-au, Bawm, who were ethnically closer to the Pawis than the Lakhers and also by the Chakmas. The Chakmas, on the other hand, were far more backward than the two tribes and were less competitive politically during the Regional Council period. However, they were often sided with the Pawis in the election. There is also no denying the fact that both the tribes developed a sense of antagonism, misunderstanding, distrust, and fear among each other.

⁴⁹¹ Nohro Hmoko, p.127.

The best alternative to avoid such perpetual conflicts was by giving them separate district council. In the beginning there was no issue on the demand for separate District Council by the Pawis because they managed to uphold larger share in the administration and they were quite content with their status. But on the other hand, the Lakher realizing the fact that they were under the shadow of the Pawis could not imagine to continue to be under the Regional Council. They accepted that they were less educated than their counterparts but because of their ethnic differences they were not content with being minority in their own land. This created a sense of belonging among the Lakhers and strives to get District Council for the Lakhers. For this purpose, they submitted memorandum after memorandum to the officials who visited the Lakher areas.

Since there was no news from the government of India, in December 1971, the Mara Freedom Party called for an assembly at Saikao and resolved to send other delegates to the government of India. Mr. A.B. Roma and Mr. Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao, were sent to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister of India for the second time.⁴⁹² On their way to Delhi they interview with Mr. S.J Dass, the then Commissioner of Mizoram, in Shillong and express to him that they were on a mission to central government to demand district council for the Maras. The delegates also asked him for his favour in their quest for district council. The Commissioner was very open to them as he already established friendly relation with Chhohmo when he visited Saikao and also expressed his concern for the Pawis.

When the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council leaders were in Delhi, Mizo District Council leaders were also present to initiate the gradual elevation of the Mizo District to Union Territory. After reaching the National Capital, without any problem, the delegates managed to meet Home Secretary because Mr. Dass had already made an arrangement for them prior to their coming⁴⁹³. The delegate expressed their demand to the Home secretary that the Maras were different from the rest of other tribes in Lushai hills and that they should be given separate district council otherwise they would be assimilated by the Lushais. At that time, express

⁴⁹² A.B Roma, 17th February, 2017.

⁴⁹³ Zakhu Hlychho, p.171.

Mr. A.B Roma⁴⁹⁴, Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District was also present on the other room where he interviewed with Home Minister and the delegates came to know that the Home Minister once asked the Chief Executive Member whether the Maras were different from the Pawis and also from the Mizo. They were told that even Chief Executive Member of Mizo Hill District did not deny the fact that the Maras were different from the two communities. However, the Home secretary replied them by saying “though you are not successful now in your demand, do not get disappointed. You will have to persist in your demand; repeated representation is required in democracy.” This statement is clearly an indication that there is a chance for the Maras to get separate District Council in the future. After that, the delegates met Mr. Pimputkar, Special Secretary to U.T and demanded U.T.

The main reason why the Mara delegates demanded U.T. at this time was the fact that the Maras and the Mizo got a separate administration within the Mizo district Council and also the fact that the Maras never protested against the government which is why, the Maras, should also get U.T. On the other hand, the Pawis were quite content with the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council and had no objection of running the same regional Council. But this was rejected by the Mara leaders and there was a tussle between the two community in Delhi. Taking advantage of this incident, Atul Chadra Chakma spoke to the Special Secretary in Bengali and later referred them to Joint Secretary, Mr. Prabuh. Later, when Atul was asked about what he had spoken in the meetings, he said, ‘*if the Pawis and the Lakher would be given Autonomous District Council, the Chakmas should also be given.*⁴⁹⁵ ‘*as we the Chakmas, constitute ten thousand population in Mizo District, we need a separate District Council. We are different in all respects of conducts and social behavior. So, a separate District Council is required for us.*⁴⁹⁶’ This happened to be the first instance when mentioned of a separate Chakma District Council was made. The Pawis and the Maras never took Atul Chakma very seriously as the Chakma were never a part of the demanding machinery right from the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council days.

⁴⁹⁴ A.B Roma, 17th February, 2017

⁴⁹⁵ F.C Chhuasa, p.56.

⁴⁹⁶ Jyouti Moy Chakma, P. 59.

Just before the separation of the Mizo Hills District from Assam, Ch. Chhunga, the then Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District and Congress Leader Dengthuama visited New Delhi in September 1970. Coinciding with the visit by the Leaders of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, represented by F. Manghnuna, Sapliana, Mylai Hlychho, S. Hiato and Atul Chandra Chakma, Ch. Chhunga persuaded them not to proceed with their demand for separate District Councils and told them *“after separation from Assam we would have our own government, as having different sets of administration may only make us weak, we decide to dissolve the existing District Council. Therefore, we would further, like to urge you, too, not to proceed with your demand for it.”* However, leaders of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council gave a common statement which reads as *“As we are different ethnic groups, we cannot think of not having a separate Legislature, you may also regret if you do not have a District Council.”*

In February 1972, Mr. Mylai Hlychho, the then Secretary of Mara Freedom Party, set out for Delhi in his own expense to meet Home Minister. He made a strappingly pleaded for the cause of the Maras and earnestly urged him to expedite the creation of the Autonomous District Council for the Maras. The Home Minister was shocked to see desperation in the face of the Mara leader and shown him a two-page printed Papers and told him to go through the pages. The papers read as *“there shall be three Regional Councils in Mizoram for the Lakhers(maras), the Pawis and the Chakmas, and the three Regional Council shall be again upgraded to three District Councils.”* The central government, while considering the new administrative set up of the then Lushai hills proposed the creation of the three Autonomous District Councils in the Hills, North Eastern Areas Re-Organization to be placed in the parliament which later became an Act.⁴⁹⁷

In order to remove the gulf of power between the District Council and Regional Council, paragraph 20B of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India was amended in 1971. It was then incorporated in the North Eastern Areas (re-organization) Act 1971 and the Government of the Union Territories (amendment)

⁴⁹⁷ R. N. Prasad, government and politics in Mizoram, p.129.

Act 1971⁴⁹⁸. As per provisions, the administrator of Mizoram issued an order 1972 vide Notification No. CCMP/3/72-77-1 under which the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated into three Regional Councils for the tribes such as the Pawi, the Lakher and the Chakmas. The Pawi Autonomous Region, the Lakher Autonomous Region and the Chakmas Autonomous Region were created and constituted under section 4(1) of Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (re-Organization) Order 1972 in order to enable these tribes to develop their customs, culture and dialects according to their own genius and ability⁴⁹⁹.

The administrator of Mizoram framed rules under Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (reorganization) Order 1972 regarding the constitution of the three Regional Councils. Accordingly, the Lakher Regional Council was constituted on 2nd April vide notification No. CCMP 3/72/89 with a strength of six members, four members, Zakhu Hlychho, S. Pailei, S. Hiato and Khosa being elected members of the erstwhile Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Zavai and Leipo were nominated members. The administrator of Mizoram appointed Zakhu Hlychho as care-taker C.E.M of the executive Committee to discharge its functions⁵⁰⁰.

Enlisted in the North Eastern Areas (reorganization) Mizoram, adoption of Laws order 1972 and the government of Union Territory (Amendment Act 1971), the three Regional Councils were elevated to the status of the District Councils as The Pawi District Council, the Lakher District Council and the Chakma District Council respectively with a view to have more autonomy in managing their respective affairs. The government of Mizoram soon enforced this Acts vide notification No. LDD. 8/72/53,29 on April 1972⁵⁰¹. With regard to the constitution of the District Council, all elected members and nominated members of the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Councils continued as members in the newly created District Councils.

⁴⁹⁸ The Mizoram Gazette, vol 1, part 1, Aizawl, 21st april 1972, pp-1-2.

⁴⁹⁹ The Mizoram Gazette, pp.1-2.

⁵⁰⁰ Laicho Notlia, p. 25.

⁵⁰¹ The Mizoram Gazette, Aizawl, 5th May 1972.

Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, the Mara Autonomous District Council had been given wide extensive powers. as provided in paragraph 2(6) of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, the government of Mizoram had enacted the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974, which then became the ultimate guiding principle of governance for the existing three Autonomous District Council within Mizoram. Not only this but the government of Mizoram also created a separate department in Secretariat known as “District Council Affairs Department.”⁵⁰² The main duty of this department was to look after the affairs of the three Autonomous District Councils and to channelize the flow of funds for District Councils through State Finance Department. The structural organization of the Mara Autonomous District Council like many other District Council can be group into three main organs such as Executive, Legislative and Judiciary⁵⁰³.

The Mara Autonomous District Council occupied a total area of 1445 sq.km. with its headquarters at Saiha⁵⁰⁴. In terms area, it is larger than Chakma Autonomous District Council and a bit smaller than the Lai Autonomous District Council. It has been given exclusive functions like the legislative, the executive and the Judiciary under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Between the year 1972 to 2010, the Council witness a government of full five years’ term four times which is better than the two ADC’s in Mizoram. For the first three term, the MADC witness stable government though there were disturbance within the Council.

The main causes of the instability of the term elections in the MADC may be attributed to practice of defections. Right from the first term election to the District Council, the problem of the formation of the Executive Committee had to deal with defections. This may be cause by personal thirst for power in the Council. The leaders of the Mara Freedom Party, who has been fighting side by side in the political war with their neighbouring tribes, the Lais, now became enemy in their

⁵⁰² R.N Prasad, government and politics in Mizoram, p.234.

⁵⁰³ Souvinier MADC.p11. for more details, refer to Chapter 5

⁵⁰⁴ Souvenir MADC. P.1.

own turf. At times clannism began to appear in the politics when the Hlychho's dominated the electoral politics for quite sometimes. Mylai Hlychho and Zakhu Hlychho run the administration under their leadership. However, it soon died down as favouritism and personal thirst for power taken over it. The contemporary politics may be dominated by clan centric propaganda as the Maras were divided themselves into five different clans, there is no cooperation when it comes to politics. This can be seen in the MLA election in the Tipa Constituency where Hiphei always win over Mylai hlychho and others. The reason being, the Tipa Constituency is dominated by Zyhno, Hawthai and Chapi clan and it will be herculean task to win the election for the Tlosai clan, persons like Mylai Hlychho.

Clan base politics has become very common especially the constituency belongs to outside Siaha town. In recent times, the problem frequently arises regarding recruitment problems and financial mismanagement. For this reason, District Council often tussled with state government many times and sometimes, district Council were subjected to suspension in terms of violation of rules and regulations laid down in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The District Council was benefitted by the elitist groups at the cost of the general public. However, through ups and down, the District Council runs the administration for the benefit of the native people and depending upon their needs, it also demands certain empowerment from the government. till now, the demand for UT and Direct Funding became the ongoing demand which are yet to achieved.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX – A

List of the Mara hief mention in the first memorandum submitted to the Superentendent of the Lushai Hills

SL.No	Name	Village
1	Chhohmo	Chief of Saikao(Saikao)
2	Kolo	Chief of Zyhno(Zawngling)
3	Rachi	Chief of Chapi(Chapui)
4	Laiko	Chief of Tuisih(Tisi)
5	Hnicho	Chief of Laki
6	Siatu	Chief of Amobyu
7	Lakhai	Chief of Lawngban
8	Laiki	Chief of Tawngkawlawng(tokalo)
9	Viala	Chief of Iana(Ainak)
10	Ngochho	Chief of Kaisie(kiasie)
11	Rany	Chief of Theiva
12	Ryutha	Chief of Vahia
13	Ngolua	Chief of Siaha(Saiha)
14	Lailo	Chief of Tuisumpui(Tisopi)
15	Thidaw	Chief of Rawmibawk(Amotla)
16	Tlaikao	Chief of Phalhrang
17	Zahia	Chief of Paithar(Paithar)

18	Iahmo	Chief of Chhualung(chhaolo)
19	Hrachho	Chief of Tuipang(Tipa)
20	Nolo	Chief of Chakhang(Chakhei)
21	Sakhei	Chief of Mualbu
22	Laihmo	Chief of Tuithumhnar(Tihnawtho)
23	Zaha	Chief of Bungtlang

APPENDIX – B

The names of the Maras who participated in the Second World War of whom we can recalled:

Sl.no	Names	Village	Sl.no	Names	Village
1	Liabi	Chapi	13	Malia	Siaha
2	Sakha	Amobyuh	14	Ratlei	Siaha
3	Haothy	Amobyuh	15	Chiakia	Siaha
4	Zachho	Siata	16	Nyuhra	Siaha
5	Hiako	Amobyuh	17	Kauha	Siaha
6	Hrato	Amobyuh	18	Chhohla	Siaha
7	Sakia	Siaha	19	Zalei	Siaha
8	Chhokha	Siaha	20	Bihmo	Amobyuh
9	Heiko	Siaha	21	Saikha zothyu	Amobyuh
10	Chhadyu	Siaha	22	Chhoza	Amobyuh
11	Laipo	Siaha	23	Sacho	Amobyuh
12	Rolo	Siaha	24	Kakha	Amobyuh
26	Saikha	Amobyuh	40	Hmochi	Zyhno
27	Lairua	Amobyuh	41	Thahei	Zyhno
28	Chhohno	Amobyuh	42	Zalua	Thiahra
29	Khailai	Amobyuh	43	Hnilua	Thiahra
30	Vathla	Theiva	44	Ngoli	Tisopi
31	Nahrai	Chakhei	45	Chachho	Tisopi
32	Photia	Chapi	46	Pity	Saikao
33	Thaohly	Chapi	47	Chhitlo	Saikao
34	Meilo	Chapi	48	Zachhuma	Tipa
35	Haosa	Chapi	49	Hratlai	Tisi
36	Khatlo	Zyhno	50	Chiakia	Thosai
37	Zakhai	Zyhno	51	Toka	Chhaolo
38	Chhatha	Zyhno	52	Zako	Chhaolo
39	Khohei	Zyhno	53	Ralai	Chhaolo

APPENDIX – C

List of the elected members of the Second Term of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council

1	Mr. H. Kiautuma	Elected	Pawi
2	Mr. Z. Hengmanga	Elected	Pawi
3	Mr. L. Chinza	Elected	Pawi
4	Mr. Tlunghleia	Elected	Pawi
5	Mr. Zavaia	Elected	Lakher
6	Mr. Chhohmo	Elected	Lakher
7	Mr. Mylai Hlychho	Elected	Lakher
8	Mr. Vako	Elected	Lakher
9	Mr. Sangluaia	Elected	Tuikuk
10	Mr. Atul Chakma	Elected	Chakma
11	Mr. C. Tanmanga	Nominated	Pawi
12	Mr. Sakia Khuhly	Nominated	Lakher

APPENDIX -D

List of the elected members of the 4th Term PLRC⁵⁰⁵

Sl.no	Name	Nominated/elected	Tribe	Political party
1	Zakhu Hlychho	Elected	Lakher	Mara Freedom Party
2	S. Pailei	Elected	Lakher	Mara Freedom Party
3	S. Hiato	Elected	Lakher	Mara Freedom Party
4	K. Khosa	Elected	Lakher	Mara Freedom Party
5	L. Chinzah	Elected	Pawi	Congress (L)
6	U. Zathang	Elected	Pawi	Congress (L)
7	Lalchema	Elected	Pawi	Congress (L)
8	Saplina Vandır	Elected	Pawi	Congress (M)
9	Atul Chadra Chakma	Elected	Chakma	Congress (L)
10	Arun Kumar Dewan	Elected	Chakma	Congress (M)
11	Zavai	Nominated	Lakher	Mara Freedom Party
12	K. Sangchhuma	Nominated	Pawi	Congress (M)

⁵⁰⁵ B. Zaliana, 'Mizoram political parties and Leaders', Zaliana Aizawl, 1996, p. 72.

APPENDIX -E

The legislation passed during the functioning of the PLRC⁵⁰⁶

Social customs and property inheritance:

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Social Custom Practices) Act, 1953.
2. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Social Customs Practices) Acts, 1954.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Social Customs and Practices) Repealing Act, 1959.
4. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1959
5. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Social Customs and Practices) Act, 1960.
6. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Marriage and Divorce), Act, 1960.

Finance (Revenue):

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Reduction of Fathang Practices) Act, 1953.
2. The Paw-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue assessment) regulation, 1954.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) regulation, 1956.
4. The Paw-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) (Amendment) Regulation, 1958(regulation No.1 of 1959).
5. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) (Second Amendment) Regulation, 1959.
6. The Paw-Lakher Autonomous Region (Land and Revenue) Act, 1960.

⁵⁰⁶ R. T. Hnialum, p.6.

7. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council Fund Rules, 1962.
8. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1963.

Agriculture and Forest:

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Forest) Act, 1954.
2. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Jhum) Regulation, 1956.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Forest) (Amendment) Act, 1957.
4. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Forest) (Amendment) Act, 1960.
5. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Agricultural Land) Act, 1960.

Administration of Justice:

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1954.
2. Substitution of Rule 7 and 9 of the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1954.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Administration of Justice) Rules (Amendment) Act, 1958.

Election and conduct of business:

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Procedure and Conduct of Business (Amendment) Act, 1954.
2. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution of Regional Council) (Amendment) Act, 1957.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Second Amendment) Act, 1959.
4. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Procedure and Conduct of Business) (Second Amendment) Act, 1961.

5. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the Regional Council) Rules, 1963.
6. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the Regional Council) (Amendment) Rules, 1971.

Village administration:

1. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Council) Act, 1954.
2. Cancellation of Section 18 of the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Council) Act, 1954.
3. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Election to the Village Councils) Rules, 1955.
4. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 1963.
5. The Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Hnatlang) Act, 1962.

APPENDIX – F

Memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam by the Mara Freedom Party

“as the Maras desire to preserve their Mara tribe and grow like other tribes of India according to their own genius and customs and not domination by any other tribes, as the existing Regional Council that had once given to the Maras, has been found unable to safeguard the Mara tribe from being dominated by their neighbouring tribes as the Mara as a whole, accept the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council no more and have stepped out of the regional Council, village councils, by boycotting the election of the Councils and setting up at the same time interim village Council within the Mara inhabiting areas and as the Assam government seems to have not moved by the appeals and demands of the Maras for a separate Mara District Council, we the Mara people, give and declared to ourselves Mara District Council on the 5th day of February 1965 at 10.40 A.M. under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁷ R.N Prasad, p.270

APPENDIX – G

The following are the Acts, Rules and Regulations passed by the MADDC since 1972.

Acts:

1. The Lakher District Council (Land and Revenue) Act, 1973
2. The Lakher District Council (House site) Act, 1973
3. The Lakher Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) Act, 1974
4. The Lakher District Council (Transfer of Land) Act, 1974
5. The Lakher District Council (Agricultural land) Act, 1979⁵⁰⁸
6. The Lakher Autonomous District Council (Forest) Act, 1981
7. The Lakher Autonomous District Council (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1982
8. The Lakher Autonomous District Council (Animals Control and Taxation) Act, 1983
9. The Mara Autonomous District Council (salaries and allowance of CEM and other Executive Members) Act, 1994
10. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Salaries, Allowances and Pension of Members) Act, 1994.
11. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Salaries and Allowance of Chairman and Deputy Chairman) Act, 1994⁵⁰⁹.

Rules:

1. The Lakher District Council (Advisory Committee) Rules, 1979
2. The Lakher District Council (Trading by non-tribals) Rules, 1980
3. The Lakher District Council (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1981
4. The Lakher District Council (Salaries and allowance of CEM, EM, etc.) Rules, 1981
5. The Lakher District Council (Subsidiary conduct of Business) Rules, 1982

⁵⁰⁸ H.C Thanhanga, p.238.

⁵⁰⁹ Sovounir MADDC, p.8.

6. The Lakher District Council (Salaries and Allowance of Members) Rules, 1982
7. The Mara Autonomous District Council (election of village Council) Rules, 1991
8. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Group A, B, C and D, Post) Recruitment Rules, 1992
9. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Constitution, Conduct of Business etc.) Rules, 2002
10. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Salaries and Allowance of CEM and Ems) Rules, 2003
11. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Salaries and Allowance of Chairman and Deputy Chairman) Rules, 2003
12. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Salaries Allowance and Pension of Members) Rules, 2003
13. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Board of School Education) Rules, 2010
14. The Mara Autonomous District Council Funds Rules, 2010

Regulations:

1. The Lakher District Council (Revenue Assessment) Regulation, 1973
2. The Lakher District Council (Profession, Trades, Calling and Employments Taxation) Regulation, 1973
3. The Lakher District Council (Trading by Non-Tribal) Regulation, 1974
4. The Lakher District Council (Taxes) Regulation, 1974
5. The Lakher District Council (Markets) Regulation, 1974
6. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Trading) Regulation, 1990
7. The Mara Autonomous District Council (Tax on Entry of vehicles into the Autonomous District) Regulation, 2005⁵¹⁰

⁵¹⁰ A compilation of Acts, Regulations and Rules under MADDC, p.1.

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(MSA)

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ABSTRACT

**MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY AMONG THE MARAS: A
HISTORICAL STUDY (1924-2010)**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
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MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY AMONG THE MARAS; A HISTORICAL STUDY (1924-2010)

1.1. Introduction:

The movement for Autonomy is a common phenomenon in the post-independence era. As the dawn of the 20th century has brought significant political awareness amongst the hill tribes of the Northeast India. Clamour for political autonomy has assumed an important slogan amongst the different ethnic groups of the Indian sub-continent. Ethnic upsurges had taken different forms in different states and areas and even transformed from one form to another with the passage of time. It is in this background that post independent India had constantly negotiated with the problem of perceived isolation and marginalization amongst different ethnic groups of Northeast India.

Ethnic assertion has become a dominant trend in the whole world in recent times. India's Northeast which is home of a large number of ethnic groups and sub-groups is also not free from this trend. This upsurge disturbed the government machinery and administration of the system often become impractical. Sometimes the movement were violent in their approached and often accompanied by secessionist feelings among the tribes. It is for this reason, most of the movement for autonomy were branded as having a secessionist element. It seems, a country like India, that houses a large number of ethnic groups would have to face many more challenge coming from various ethnic groups in the future.

1.2. CONCEPTS:

1.2.1. Autonomy

The concept of 'autonomy' has come to assume a place of great importance in recent discussions of practical and applied ethics¹ as well as in contemporary political and philosophical debates and arguably central concepts in bioethics. Almost in all contexts the concept of autonomy is the focus of much controversy and debate,

¹ Thomas May, 'The Concept of Autonomy' American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1994), University of Illinois Press on behalf of the North American Philosophical Publications, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20014493>, Accessed: 23/04/2013 03:19, p.133.

disputes which focus attention on the fundamentals of moral and political philosophy and the enlightenment conception of the person more generally. If one would examine various theoretical attempts to conceptualise autonomy, one would find there is no single meaning to the term, though concern for self-governance underlines the use of the concept.

The earliest history of autonomy goes back to the times of ancient Greeks. The term autonomy itself has its origin in the Greek word *autos* (self) and *nomos* (rule, governance, or law). Its earliest use involves reference to self-rule or self-governance in Greek city-states. A city had '*autonomia*' when its citizens made their own laws, as opposed to being under the control of some conquering power.

The term autonomy admits a wide range of meaning which includes qualities such as self-rule, self-determination, freedom of will, dignity, integrity, individuality, independence, and self-knowledge. In *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Gerald Dworkin² remarks that the term 'autonomy' is "used sometimes as an equivalent of liberty, sometimes as equivalent to self-rule or sovereignty, sometimes as identical to freedom of the will. It is identified with self-assertion, with critical reflection, with freedom from obligation, with absence of external causation, with knowledge of one's own interests."³ This conceptual confusion about the meaning of the term reinforces the suspicion that there is no unified account of autonomy.

The early writers employed the term 'Autonomy' as distinctly political signifying civil or national independence.⁴ Moral and political philosophy of the early modern period also allowed autonomy to be a basic feature of persons, even where the term was not used explicitly. 'Autonomy' may also be defined as the freedom from any kind of internal or external forces whichever stand as an impediment towards progress. Autonomy in its political sense denotes the policy of self-government or self-

² Gerald Dworkin, *The theory and practice of autonomy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p.3.

³ Pradip Kumara Bose, *The Birth of the Autonomous Subject?* in Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *The Politics of Autonomy: Indian experience*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p-37.

⁴ Venkata V. Rao, *Autonomy movements in Mizoram* in Prasad *Autonomy movements in Mizoram*, Vikas publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, P.1.

governing community. Thus, Autonomy in political context means self-rule or self-government.

1.2.2. The Maras

The Maras, a tribal group of distinction, inhabit the south eastern corner of Mizoram, south of the Chin Hills and the extreme north of the Arakan hill tracts⁵. The Maras were by various names viz; the Lakhers, Shendus, Tsentus, Shendoos. But they called themselves ‘Mara.’ The British administrator and officers often referred to this area as ‘the Lakhers Land.’ Most of the villages are enclosed in the large bend made by the Kolodyne river, which after rising in the hills near Haka and flows to a southerly direction. There are a few Mara villages situated west of the Kolodyne in the Haka sub-division of the Chin Hills⁶.

The Maras are racially said to be of Mongoloid origin and they belong to the chin sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family.⁷ The first account of the Lakhers as a separate tribe seems to have been written in 1852 by Capt. Tickell who stated that “and among these, the Shendoos, though well known by name and repute in Arracan, have never yet been visited by the people of the plains, nor has a single specimen of this race been seen. I believe, by either Mugh or European in Arracan until 1850, when two emissaries or spies from them met me at a hill village some distance up the Kolodyne River.”⁸ Mackenzie, in his book ‘the North east Frontier of Bengal’, writes about the Maras as a formidable nation living to the North-East and East of the Blue Mountain.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The Maras of South Mizoram had demanded political autonomy since the pre-independence era. The present Mara Autonomous District Council therefore evolved as a result of the trifurcation of the Pawi-Lakhers Regional Council. Thus, through patient and dedicated waiting and persistent struggle, the Mara political

⁵ R.T. Zachono, *The Maras towards Autonomy* in Prasad (ed.) *Autonomy movement in Mizoram*, p.133.

⁶ N.E. Parry, *the Lakherss*, Firma KLM private Ltd, Calcutta, 1932, p.1.

⁷ Thasia T. Azyu, *The Maras and Their Language*, (mimeograph), 1988, P.2.

⁸ N.E Parry, *The Lakhers*, p.1.

leaders succeeded in persuading the Government of India to create a long cherished separate District Council in 1972 under the Act of Union Territory of Mizoram⁹.

Since the government of India elevated Mizoram from the status of District Council to that of Union Territory and full-fledged state, there emerged a feeling of disparity and imbalance on the political equation amongst the major tribes of Mizoram i.e., the Lais and the Maras. moreover, a feeling of doubts over the political future of the district council developed which in turn leads to sporadic rumbles for better political status.

It is rather interesting to learn that among the present generation in Mizoram, there often arose misunderstanding and misconception with regard to the whole idea of the creation of District Council which often has been branded as having secessionist element. To address the persisting problem of misconception and misunderstanding of the people, an extensive historical study on the genesis of autonomy movement and evolution of political autonomy in the form of District Councils amongst the Hill tribes of Mizoram becomes imperative.

In regards to the quest for political autonomy amongst the Maras, there seem to be no adequate research at the moment. Very few works are available on the issues pertaining to the movement for political autonomy amongst the Maras. therefore, this proposed research intends to reinterpret the existing Materials and Data and add new findings for a better understanding on the history of development of political consciousness among the Maras.

Therefore, this proposed work assumes much significance as it would attempt to address the various issues on the history of Autonomy movement and contribute new insights to the existing knowledge on the emergence of political Autonomy amongst the tribes of Mizoram with particular reference to the Maras.

⁹ R.T. Zachono, p.155.

1.4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are limited existing works on the history of autonomy movement amongst the Maras. very few of the existing literature highlights the emergence of political consciousness among the Maras. even works pertaining to the study of the MADC are scanty. There are only few books where Autonomous District Council are highlighted and discussed.

*The Lakherss*¹⁰ authored by N.E Parry may be considered as one of the earliest book which gives description of the Maras. In this book the author clearly Discussed the early political life of the Maras and also their administration. In his introductory chapter, parry also discussed the role of Christian Missionaries in shaping the political life of the Maras. Then Author always presented the information in a comparative method. Though this book provides information about the early Mara history, it was written from the colonial perspective. It fails to discussed the political condition of the Maras under the village chiefs. Parry collected information only from a particular village and chiefs. Therefore, it is very difficult to consider this book as adequate.

R.N Prasad is one of the very few authors who work on the Autonomy movement in North east India. His edited Book Autonomy Movement in Mizoram, published in 1994, is an authentic documents dealing with a theoretical concept of autonomy movement, the genesis and the evolution of the varying patterns of autonomy movements of the major tribes- the Mizo, the Lakhers, the Pawis, the Chakmas, the Hmars, during the pre- and post-independence period to obtain an autonomous status and structures of different variation within the constitutional frameworks. 17 scholarly articles were included in this book. The second chapter of the book deals with the theoretical concept of autonomy movement, the constitutional and administrative position of Mizoram and also highlighted the political grievances of the Lakhers, the Pawis and the Chakmas. The creation of the Mara Autonomous District Council and the Maras struggle for autonomy was discussed in the thirteen chapter. Though this book highlighted the nature of the Autonomous District Council,

¹⁰ N.E. Parry, p.4.

it was still insufficient to deal with because the real sentiment of the tribal was never discussed and also the book did not really provide necessary information for better understanding of the formation of District Council. His other book entitled, the “Government and Politics in Mizoram¹¹” also deals with the emergence of District Council and the structure of their administration. He also discussed the growth of politics in Mizoram and the formation of the Union Territory of Mizoram. In his book, R.N. Prasad discussed the political condition of Mizoram, the political parties and also the Regional Councils; powers and functions. The author paid more attention to the political development of Mizoram rather neglecting the importance of autonomy movement which was operating in Mizoram. It fails to highlight the Autonomy movements within Mizoram.

Another important work, which was written in Mizo(Duhlian) language, was done by Zakhu Hlychho, a prominent politician and leaders of the Maras, entitled *Mara te Tobul*¹² published in 2009. In his book, the author deals exclusively with the history and development of District Council particularly from Chapter 15. He also discussed the origin of the Maras to large extent. He highlighted the society and political life of the Maras. the authors tend to deal with the early history of the Maras but at the same time, ha also discussed the political condition of the Maras since the coming of the Christian Missionaries. However, this book lacks necessary information for better understanding the reason behind the formation of the District Council. While giving a good account of the early history of the Maras the author neglected to discuss development of District Council in details.

“*A Century of government and politics in North East India vol-III Mizoram*¹³” by Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga and Niru Hazarika is a book which discussed the profile of Mizoram and constitutional developments since 1947. In this book District Council was discussed in a separate chapter highlighting the evolution and development. He also discussed, in very short, the origin of the PLRC to the

¹¹ R.N Prasad, Government and Politics in Mizoram, 1994.

¹² Zakhu Hlychho, Marate Tobul, Zakhu Hlychho, Chaltlang, Aizawl, 2009.

¹³ Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika, *A Century of government and politics in North East India Vol-III Mizoram*, S. Chand, New Delhi, 1987

formation of the Mara Autonomous District Council. This book provides very limited information with regard to emergence of District Council.

Venkata Rao wrote another book entitled “*A century of tribal politics in the North East India 1874-1974*¹⁴”. In his book, Rao, though focusing on the profile and the formation of the States in neighbouring state of Meghalaya, emphasize on the formation of District Council in North east India. He also discussed functions and working of the District Council. He deals with tribal politics of North East India. This work could not add much to the existing knowledge as the study concentrated mainly in the state of Meghalaya.

Jangkhongam DOUNGEL is another author who worked exclusively on the evolution of autonomy in Mizoram. His book *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*¹⁵ traces the evolution of District Council in Mizoram particularly Lai Autonomous District Council. It covers the period of the working of the Lai Autonomous District Council up to 2002. The author deals with a brief analysis of the Mizo District Council and also discusses the demographic profiles of the Lai people, their origin, their migration and their present settlement. He also emphasised the working of PLRC and the formation of Lai Autonomous District Council. As DOUNGEL concentrated mainly the emergence of Lai Autonomous District Council, this work, however, could not provide sufficient information in understanding the political sentiment of the Maras and their early politics.

*Mizoram: Dimensions and perspectives Society, economy and polity*¹⁶, which is an edited volume, by Jagadish K. Patnaik, provides some basis for better understanding of the hill state of North East India. The Chapters are mostly written by the Mizo Scholars who have been interested in understanding and analysing the Mizo society and polity. In this book, Mr. DOUNGEL contributes one article entitled *Autonomous District Council: a case study of the implication of the Sixth Schedule in*

¹⁴ Venkata Rao, *A century of tribal politics in the North East India 1874-1974*, S. Chand, New Delhi, 1976.

¹⁵ Jangkhongam Daoungel, *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*, Spectrum publications, Guwahati, 2010

¹⁶ Jagadish K. Patnaik, *Mizoram: Dimensions and perspectives Society, economy and polity*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007.

Mizoram where he discussed the implication of the Sixth Schedule in Mizoram especially within the District Council Region. He highlighted the conditions which necessitated the introduction of Autonomous District Council in Mizoram. Though the book provides information in understanding the implication of the Sixth Schedule in Mizoram, the authors of different chapters concentrated more on structure of the government.

K.M. Zakhuma, *Political development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989*¹⁷, deals with the District Council in separate chapter where he discussed Bordoloi Committee and also the implication of the Sixth Schedule in Mizoram. He also emphasise on the political and the administrative development before independence. The author laid stress on party and politics in the state where he discussed the working and history of many political parties in Mizoram. Though the author discussed District Council, the book did not provide adequate information as it emphasise more on party politics and the working of political party.

In his book, *Mizoram: Historical, Geographical, socio economic, political and administrative*¹⁸, S.N. Singh study and identify the geopolitics viability in Mizoram. He also discussed the political situation and political participation of the Mizos and other tribes in Mizoram. He lay more emphasis on Insurgency-causes, development and its impact on the politics of Mizoram. Singh did not provide much information in understanding the District Councils as he focuses on insurgency issue. However, this book provides few information on the District Council.

R.N Prasad and A.K. Agarwal produce an impressive work entitled *political and economic development of Mizoram*¹⁹. This work provides a comprehensive study of different dimensions of the government and politics in Mizoram. It also deals with the administrative background with particular emphasis on the political authority of the superintendent in Mizoram. They also throw light in understanding party politics

¹⁷ K.M. Zakhuma, *Political development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989*, Sangkungi, Aizawl, 2001.

¹⁸ S.N. Singh, *Mizoram: Historical, Geographical, socio economic, political and administrative*, Mittal, New Delhi, 1994.

¹⁹ R.N Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, *political and economic development of Mizoram*, Mittal, New Delhi, 1991.

and they discussed the political administration of the Mara Chiefs before prior to the coming of the British. However, the book did not mention any information relating to the political consciousness as well as the matter relating to the emergence of Autonomous District Council in Mizoram.

*Historical and constitutional Documents of North East India*²⁰ by Manilal Bose is very well documented book which included the various historical and constitutional developments in North east India. This book provides the Archival sources for scholars in understanding the emergence and working of the District Council. It provides adequate information in details as to understanding various Acts, Rules and Regulations of the District Council.

1.5. Area of the Study:

The main focus of the research would be on the Mara Autonomous District Council area(Mizoram).

1.6. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the process of political consciousness among the Maras.
2. To study the various factors that prompted the Maras to demand Autonomy.
3. To examine the role of Civil Society in the movement for Autonomy.
4. To trace the origin of the Mara Autonomous District Council.
5. To study and analyse the working and development of MADC and also its power and functions.
6. To examine the contemporary politics.

1.7. Research Methodology:

The methodology adopted for the current study utilized qualitative research and to some extent, comparative method was also employed. The data

²⁰ Manilal Bose, *Historical and constitutional Documents of North East India*, Concept publishing House, Delhi, 1979, p. 46.

includes both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of both published and unpublished official documents, Acts, loose documents from concerned persons, newspaper, etc. Data collected from the MADC, and other Offices of the political party were also included. Oral tradition based on open and closed-ended interviews were carried out and such interviews have been subjected to meticulous analyses. Personal interviews with knowledgeable individuals and eminent politicians also made in this regard. Oral sources were the main basis for this research. The secondary source comprises of published and unpublished literature of books, journals and articles.

1.8. Structure of the study:

The research is purely historical in nature and divided into seven chapters:

1. Chapter 1- Introduction

This chapter discusses and addresses the conceptual question on Autonomy.

2. Chapter 2- Situating the People

This Chapter gives an outline introduction of the physical features of the southern Lushai Hills and deals with its historical background. It also discusses the establishment of British rule in the Lushai hills and their eventual subjugation over the Maras. It traces the origin and the early settlements of the Maras and at the same time, deals with the nomenclature of the Maras.

3. Chapter 3- Cultural politics

This Chapter investigate the process of the Political consciousness among the Maras as compare to their neighbours in the Lushai Hills. It also studies the circumstances that prompted the Maras to demand political autonomy taking into account their ethnic identity, language and culture.

4. Sixth Schedule and the PLRC

The fourth Chapter traces the origin and implementation of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. It also traces the creation of the PLRC for the Maras and the Lais in the Southern part of the then Lushai hills. At the same time, it studied the working and functioning of the PLRC and its subsequent trifurcation.

5. Mara Autonomous District Council

The fifth Chapter probe and traces the circumstances leading to the emergence of the Mara Autonomous District Council. It also investigates the working, power and functions of the Mara Autonomous District Council.

6. Contemporary politics

This Chapter examine the electoral politics of the Maras right from the first term election to the Mara Autonomous District Council. It also discussed various political parties which involved in running the administration of the MADC and discussed the contemporary political conditions of the Maras.

7. Conclusion

The last chapter is the concluding chapter that summarise and analyse the major findings of the research. This Chapter is rather a summary of Chapter VI of the Structure of the Study.

1.9. Findings:

The study revealed that the political activities in the Northern part of the then Lushai hills had a great impact among the Maras. As the political activities was mounting in staggering pace which left no stone unturned for the Maras to sense the wave of the progress. Unlike their neighbouring tribes, the Mara tends to develop a unique system of political activities in the first half of the 20th century. However, the study reveals that the process of political consciousness began with the coming of the Christian missionaries in 1907²¹. They believe in their tradition and culture thus leading a simple way of life and they had never been exposed to modern political system until they came in contact with the western world. Thus, any political consciousness hardly existed in the hills of southern Mizoram before the coming of the British.

²¹ R.A Lorrain, *Five years in Unknown Jungle*, First Indian Facsimile Reprint edition, TRI, Aizawl & Spectrum publication, Guwahati, 1988, p.70

According to Mylai Hlychho, local politician, “the process of the Maras political consciousness began only after the coming of Mr. R.A Lorrain and his wife on 26th September, 1907.”²² He attributed the work and contribution of the Christian missionaries as the root cause for the development and emergence of political consciousness in among the Maras. According to Rev. T. Laikai, “the Maras had already developed a sense of having a separate administration or autonomy as early as 1907 when the Lakhers Pioneer Missionaries came to South Lushai hills”. He believes that the rhythm which has been started got boosted by the Christian Missionaries of whom he believes, moulded and cemented the already developed ideas i.e. Autonomy²³.

The study come up with various factors that attributed to the growth of political consciousness among the Maras. The first factor being the Christian Missionaries as the root cause for the emergence of political Consciousness among the Maras. As they reduced Mara language into writing which in turn became an important instrument in their social and cultural development. In this regard, S.K. Chaube rightly remarked that, ‘in the Lushai hills Christianity has achieved the highest record of success in India.’²⁴ The Christian missionaries’ activity in this areas had drawn attention of the hills people in transforming their way of live. They Consciously or unconsciously moulded, shaped and educated the Maras towards the path of organized political consciousness. Sudhakar Bhat²⁵writes, “The hill people of the North-east region today feel justifiably indebted to Christianity and Christian missionaries for making them aware of their rightful place and status in independent India.” After 37 years, since the arrival of the Missionaries, the Maras became aware of their status and demanded better status to the Superintendent of the Lushai hills, and it was, indeed, the result of encouragement given by the Christian missionaries” said T.A Chhohu²⁶.

The second factor was the role played by the Mara Chiefs. The chiefs were the leaders of the Maras even before the coming of the British and continue until

²² Mylai Hlychho, interviewed by VB Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 15th August 2015.

²³ Rev.T. Laikai, interviewed by VB Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 20th March 2015.

²⁴ S.K. Chaube, *Hill politics in North East India, Orient Longman*, Hyderabad, 1999, p.70

²⁵ Sudhakar Bhat, *Challenge of the North east*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, p.45.

²⁶ Chhohu, T.A., interviewed by VB Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 13th February 2019.

decolonization of Indian sub-continent was over and furthermore; their predecessor gives everything for the cause of the Mara people. Unlike the Lushais who often revolt against the tyranny of their chiefs, there was strong relationship between the Chiefs and the commoners. Among the Maras, the Chiefs were the first to come forward in demanding better status for the Mara people with the Christian missionaries behind their back. Among them, Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao happened to be the first, not only among the Mara chief, but the whole region of the Southern Lushai Hills, to conceive the idea of having separate administration for the Maras. As compare to the lushais where political consciousness was conceived first by the commoners, it was the Chiefs from whom the political consciousness originated among the Maras. Initially, the commoners were not even aware of the situation where the Maras were in and were completely ignorant about the ideas of political affairs. The politically conscious Chhohmo call for Mara Chief conference at Saikao on 4th January, 1945 and 23 chiefs participated in the conference. They unanimously adopted a resolution demanding a separate Mara Hills district administration and submitted a memorandum to the administrator of Lushai hills.

Another important factors that contributed to the emergence of political consciousness was the impact of the two world wars. The two world wars were indeed a global war as it involved great powers and its impact was felt even in the remotest part of the erstwhile British Empire in the Luhsai Hills. More than 150 Maras participated in the two world wars. The impact of the war was so much so that the life of the Maras was going through a lot of changes. After coming back from the war, the volunteers now realized the need for political autonomy after seeing their Lushai counterparts holding high post even in the Army. Though majority of the Armies were illiterate, the ideas and the experience they brought means a lot for the Mara people as they were never exposed to outside world. Persons like, Sakia Khuhly²⁷ played a very important role in demanding separate Autonomy for the Maras. Though the dreams for having a separate administration for the Maras in those days vague and hazy. But then after the wars the Maras became very much conscious of their identity. Since then this issue became the main agenda for the Maras until 1972. Rev. T. Laikai asserted that it

²⁷ War veteran and politician, M. Zakawnia, *Mararam chanchin*, M. Zakawnia, Saiha, 2011, p.62.

was after the war that the Maras became very active in moulding and cementing the idea of having a separate administration. He concluded that it was in the early 1940s that the Maras even began to demand a separate administration²⁸.

The Administrative Officers of the Lushai Hills played a very important role in reshaping the Maras idea of having a separate administration. It proved to be instrumental in the emergence and spread of political consciousness among the Maras. The village of Saikao, epicenter of Christian mission work, was occasionally visited by the British administrators from Lunglei and Aizawl. During the Second World War, many European Military Officers frequently visits Lorrain Villa, Saikao and these officers began to familiar with the Maras.²⁹ The most intimate Officers among them were L.L. Peters, Sub-Divisional Officers, Lunglei, who later became Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Captain A.I. Bowman, Officer commanding, Tuipang Out-post, who later became Sub-Divisional Officer Lunglei.

The political consciousness that was a mere spark in the minds of the Maras was reignited by Capt. Bowmen when he visited Saikao in 1945 to inspect the records of the village court. He was surprised to see that judgments in the village court were recorded and written in Lushai(duhlian) language. He then asked the Chiefs of Saikao, Chhohmo³⁰, why the court judgments were not recoded and written in the Mara language. The chief explained to him that Lushai was the official language. Taking the advantage of the incident, Chhohmo expressed to the Officer that the Maras people desired so much to be under a separate administration just as the Lushais had. There are many administrators who are sympathetic towards the Maras in their quest for Autonomy. Personalities such as Rustumjee, advisor to the governor of Assam, L.L. Peters, Superintendent of the Lushai hills, Adam, an ICS officer, N.E Parry, the superintendent of the Lushai Hills, T.S. Gill, the deputy Commissioner, were sympathetic toward the Maras as they know very well of the poverty and backwardness of the people and often encouraged them to demand a separate administration for themselves.

²⁸ T. Laikai, *Mara chi nata Pho*, in Nozuah Souvenir, MCHP, 2007, p.21.

²⁹ Nohro Hmoko, p.105.

³⁰ In many books, he is often referred to as Chhumhmunnga which is a Lushai translation of his name.

The already developed consciousness led the Maras to demand a separate administration for themselves. This consciousness makes them understand their situation and their status in the Lushai hills. Ethnic differences dominated the early politics of the Maras and every effort was made to achieve political autonomy within the Lushai Hills. At the same time, the British officers such as Capt. Bowmen and L.L. Peters reignites the feelings of differences when they referred to them as a separate and distinct tribe as compare to the Lushais. The Maras felt that they were being treated as foreigners by the Lushais due to the difference of language, social customs and practices. The fear of assimilation by more advanced and educated Lushai is so real that they even think of the process of economic development as harmful to their ethnic culture and identity, because they are aware that the native economic components are often disturbed and dislocated. Ethnic differences of the Maras from the rest of the tribes in the Lushai hills constituted a strong base for autonomy movement.

Even in the context of Indian mainland, language is not only a factor of separatism but also politically recognised base for state reorganization since 1917. Language was then recognized as standing for and representing culture, race, history, individuality and finally sub-nation. In Mara politics, language, though not a prominent factor of autonomy movement, has its role in fostering it as a negative consequence of the Assamese linguistic chauvinism. Language had become an important issue for the Maras since the advent of the British. The Maras do not understand the Lushai language and for this reason they often needed interpreter in dealings with the administrations and other official works. At the same time, Mara Language was made medium of instruction by the Christian missionary in the south and the Maras wanted to develop their language. However, in the District level, knowledge of Lushai language was made mandatory which created barrier for the Maras in dealing with the officials. This, ultimately, resulted into an important issue to support their movement in the demand for autonomy in the Lushai hills.

The backwardness of the region was another factor that prompted the Maras to demand a separate administration for themselves. The absence of proper academic institutions in the south contributed to its backwardness. The traditional Jhum practice was not profitable and famine occurred very often. In addition, there was no road for

transportation and southern Lushai hills were cut off from the rest of the country. When the British occupied Lushai hills a few markets were established in few places in the border areas which were almost unreachable for the Maras. Tlabung Bazaar was the nearest Bazaar where the Maras use to go for trade and it usually takes more than a week to reach Tlabung. The introduction of Market was not favourable for the Maras as they lived in the remotest part of the south. Most of them would go for wage labourers at Lunglei and Aizawl and some of them would trade at Tlabung but the goods they bought were again transported through head loads from Tlabung to Maraland and this was the only way of transportation until 1972 when jeepable roads were constructed.³¹

Many Lushai educated people began to work in the office and holds important post. This development, no doubt, put pressure on the Maras who were fighting for survival in the south. During this period only few Maras were acquainted with Lushai language and going to the Aizawl, Lungleh to get suitable job was very difficult for them because of language barriers. They also felt that the Lushai being majority and more advanced socially and economically looked down upon them as backward people. The Maras were aware the fact that their primitive and village based economy of subsistence would inadequate and too fragile for the changed situation. Economic issue became an important instrument which can whip up the people sentiment and ultimately became a political issue where Mara people were mobilized. In this regard R.N Prasad remarks that “the economic backwardness of the region wounded the sentiments of the people very badly which led some of the extremist elements to venture even the life of the community for the cause of free self-determination³².”

The political aspiration of the Maras was manifested in a series of meetings and memorandum submitted to the superintendent and governor of Assam by the Mara chief. This was first evident in the form of chief conference called upon by Chief of Saikao, Chhohmo, in 1945 where discussion was made on the future of the Maras.

³¹ M. Zakonia, p.146.

³² R.N. Prasad, ‘*Government and politics of Mizoram*’, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1994, p.135.

They made it clear from the very beginning that the Maras do not want to be under the administration of the Lushai. In this regard, the Mara chief submitted memorandum to the superintendent stating that the Maras occupied a vast stretch of land and express their desire of having separate District taking into account their ethnic difference.

The Maras were very much aware of their future status and there was a dilemma among the political leaders whether to join the Indian union or to join Burma. This dilemma was prevalent not only among the Maras but also among the Lushai. On the eve of India's Independence, the Maras were less educated and politically unfit as compare to the Lushai. A few Political leaders of the Maras were convinced and felt of their miserable conditions amidst the growing Lushai society. They also felt that the Lushai were more educated and more advance and this may result in the domination of the Maras by the Lushai. The formation of Mizo Union was against the political interest of the Maras and badly disheartened Mara Political leaders. But this further developed a feeling of secession from the Lushai district and encouraged separatist feeling among other tribes.

The wave of the newly formed political party in the Lushai hills also had its effects on the Maras habited areas. They also heard about the movement and political activities in the Lushai hills and also knew the fact that Lushai hills would be under one district council. At the same time, Mizo Union leader, Ch. Saprawnga made his political tour in the Mara areas and inviting them to join the Mizo Union.³³ It created an atmosphere of uneasiness in the Mara areas because they were already prepared for having a separate district council. For this reason, the Mizo Union could not establish its Unit among the Maras. In the case of the Pawis the situation seems different as many Pawis willingly participated in the Mizo Union activities and paid membership fees.³⁴ Around this time, the Mara chiefs submitted another memorandum to his Excellency, Governor of Assam on 7th July 1947. The educated elites among the Maras often campaigned against unification and at the same time encourage a movement for separate district council for their survival.

³³ Nohro Hmoko, p.107.

³⁴ Pakhai, interview

The study found that the civil society played an important role in the movement for autonomy among the Maras. The people rely more on their leaders for the cause of the Maras. Since the Mara area was poor and majority were illiterate, a few educated elites represented the majority. However, everything was done in consultation with the people. People participated in mass movement carried out by the politicians and take parts in every activity carried out by the educated elites. When the MFP boycotted the PLRC, the Mara people supported the Party in the movement thereby by boycotting the payment of taxes to the Council. Sometimes, the movement turn violence as the people burned the PLRC at Saiha which clearly indicates their serious participation in the movement for a separate administration. The movement otherwise turned into a community base movement as the Maras and the Pawi community clash many times within the Council Area. To support their leaders in the movement, people often contributed money to help them going to Aizawl or elsewhere in India. It would have been impossible for the leader of the Maras to achieve a separate administration without the help rendered by the civil society.

On the eve of India's independence there was a movement among the tribals in different part of the country especially in the North east. The sixth schedule to the constitution of India provides for special status to certain areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura in the North eastern part of the Indian sub-continent, in terms of administrative and functional autonomy. Although the District councils of the North east India were constituted under the Sixth schedule to the constitution of India, the problems of administration in the tribal areas were recognize much earlier than it may seem. Though the Maras demanded a separate Administration since 1940s, they were given a Regional Council which they have to share with the Pawis, the Chakmas and few other ethnic tribes in the South.

The study reveals that the movement for autonomy underwent tremendous changes after 1950s as the movement became more serious than it may seem. This is clearly visible in PLRC. Right from its inception, the PLRC was confronted with several problems. Even before the first general election which was scheduled in the early part of 1953, conflict and misunderstanding arose among the Pawis and the Maras over the allotment of seats to be contested. The Maras and the Pawis were

completely divided on the formation of the Executive Committee of the PLRC. Subsequently, some of the Lakhers leaders met the Chief Minister of Assam to set up the separate District Council for the Maras.³⁵ At the same time they also informed the Chief Minister that they would stop paying taxes and they would also run interim Mara District Council. This was the beginning of the idea of having a separate administration for the Maras got revitalized though the Chief Minister was indifferent of this warning.

The third general election to the PLRC was boycotted by the Maras on 5th February 1965 and decided to make the Council no-functional especially in all the areas inhabited by the Maras. It was during the period of hostility and suspicion that the Mara Leaders called for a convention in September 1963 at Zyhno village and decided to form a separate political Party, **MFP**.³⁶ In the conference of 1963, many Maras came to attend from various parts of the South. The main aim of the MFP was to possess an autonomous district Council for the Mara people. The party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the Mara customary Laws, culture and language. The party strongly dedicated towards the integration of the Lakhers into a single administrative unit, so as, to develop themselves according to local genius. At the same time, the Party also aimed at maintaining, safeguarding and promoting the Lakhers customs, culture and dialect. Since Mizo language was the medium of instruction in the PLRC, the Party objective was to replace the Mizo language by introducing Lakhers language as medium of instruction within the Lakhers inhabited areas³⁷.

Since the 1960s, Mara politics was dominated by the MFP. To mobilize the Lakhers people and to press the Assam government, the MFP passed a resolution demanding a separate Autonomy in its 5th General Assembly held on 5th February 1965 as *“as the Maras desire to preserve their Mara tribe and grow like other tribes of India according to their own genius and customs and not domination by any other tribes, as the existing Regional Council that had once given to the Maras, has been found unable to safeguard the Mara tribe from being dominated by their neighbouring tribes*

³⁵ S. Hiato, interviewed by VB Nopha Azyu, Siaha on 13th may 2014.

³⁶ Nohro Hmoko, *‘Mara Losohpa: Valua Hlychho’*, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, 2015, p.118.

³⁷ Mylai hlychho interview

as the Maras as a whole, accept the PLRC no more and have stepped out of the regional Council, village councils, by boycotting the election of the Councils and setting up at the same time interim village Council within the Mara inhabiting areas and as the Assam government seems to have not moved by the appeals and demands of the Maras for a separate Mara District Council, we the Mara people, give and declared to ourselves Mara District Council on the 5th day of February 1965 at 10.40 A.M. under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India."³⁸ Henceforth, a major rift between the Maras and the Pawis became inevitable and soon found its expression in the form of hostilities between the two communities. This pointed to the fact that the Pawis at this time had no intention of getting a separate District Council nor demand was submitted by them to the authorities.

The Lakhers claimed that they were the first to demand for setting up of the Regional Council in the Lushai Hills and that the process goes back as early as 1945 when the Lakhers chiefs submitted memorandum to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills³⁹. Considering all their efforts in demanding Regional Council, the Lakhers feels betrayed and were not satisfied with situation they were in the Regional Council. They felt that their rights were taken away by the Pawis where the Regional Council was under their control. The feeling of betrayal and insecurity on the one hand and the fear of assimilation by the more advance neighbours prompted the Lakhers to turn away from the Regional Council. There also developed a major rift and disunity between the two communities which appeared to be un-reconcilable under the same council.

Subsequently, in 1966 an Interim Mara District Council was initiated which was consider parallel to the PLRC. The Interim Council represents the Lakhers people and run the administration with its headquarters at Saiha. As a result of this, all the land settlement certificates were issued by the interim council and taxes were collected by the interim council. Cases were also tried by the interim council. At the same time, all the Maras employees were also resigned from the PLRC and were recruited into the newly formed interim council. It was during this period of political

³⁸ R.N Prasad, p.270

³⁹ S. Hiato interview.

turmoil that the offices of the PLRC were burnt⁴⁰. This resulted in severe strains upon the legal and moral order. However, despite resistance and problem caused by the Lakhers, the Assam government was unmoved and remained silent.

The leaders of the MFP submitted for the first time a memorandum addressed to the governor of Assam. In this memorandum the Maras demanded an Autonomous District Council for the Mara tribe and it was submitted to honourable Mr. B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam. The memorandum was submitted by Mr. V. Hlychho, President and Mr. Leipo, Vice President in Shillong in 1964⁴¹.

The MFP again sent another delegate, Mr. Mylai Hlychho and Mr. Leipo, to meet the Chief Minister of Assam to submit a fresh memorandum. The memorandum states in details about the boycott of the PLRC and how an interim Council was initiated by the Maras. The Chief Minister was pressed hard by the delegates and wanted to snatch the Autonomous District Council from him.

The political activities of the Lakhers turned more aggressive in the later part of 1965. It was because of this, the then Chief Executive Member, L. Chinza, launched a complaint to the Deputy Commissioner, T.S. Gill. At this point of time some of the Pawi leaders, including L. Chinza, were very confident that the leaders of the MFP would not be able to escape from their unconstitutional behaviour in the Regional Council and their illegal practices. The Assam government sent officers like Mr. Gill and K. Saigal, to look into the matters of the Regional Council but to no avail.

Between 1964 and 1971, there was chronic political instability in the PLRC. It appears that the Pawis emerged victorious in the Executive Committee on the ground that they were supported by Tlangau, Bawm, who were ethnically closer to the Pawis than the Lakhers and also by the Chakmas. This irritated the Lakhers' politics within the Council and often led to the dismantling of the Regional Council. The Chakmas, on the other hand, were far more backward than the two tribes and were less competitive politically during the Regional Council period. However, they were often sided with the Pawis in the election. The Lakhers fully realised that they would form

⁴⁰ PT. Hlychho, *Maraland; yesterday and today*, PT. Hlychho, Shillong, 2007, p.35.

⁴¹ Mylai Hlychho interview.

a perpetual minority in the Regional Council. It was because of this, the Lakhers demand a separate administration advocating the loss of their identity, exploitation, neglect and prevalent partiality in the Council. The Lakhers at the same time felt that they might not be able to preserve and maintained their dialect, customs unless they have a separate administration. There is also no denying the fact that both the tribes developed a sense of antagonism, misunderstanding, distrust, and fear being inferior to each other.

Despite demanding separate District Council, the MFP decided to take part in the 4th general election to the PLRC. In the election MFP captured 4 seats including nominated seat. It was in this election that the Chief Executive Member post was given to Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mara leader. Mr. Zakhu Hlychho, Mr. S. Pailei, Mr. S. Hiato, Mr. Khosa, Mr. Zavai were elected from the Mara community.⁴² It appears that the Pawis and the Chakmas were quite content with the PLRC and they were never in favour of demanding a separate district council for themselves. In the meantime, Delegates were dispatched in October 1971 to once again represent the Mara Community and to address the political aspirations of the Maras. Mr. Mylai Hlychho, Mr. Zakhu Hlychho and Mr. S. Hiato were sent to Delhi. The Pawis and the Chakmas, on knowing the dispatched delegates of the Maras, sent Mr. Manghnuna, Mr. Sapliana and Mr. Sangchhuma from the Pawi community and Mr. Atul chandro Chakma went from the Chakma community.

It was no doubt, of course, the first time and the last time that the Pawis and the Chakmas came to the limelight along with the Maras. The Pawis, who for a long time developed rift with the Maras, came to the conclusion that it was the right time for them to side with the Maras to have a separate District Council for themselves because they also began to fear that they might be placed along with the Lushais within the Mizo District Council. Coincidentally with the visit by the Leaders of the PLRC, represented by F. Manghnuna, Sapliana, Mylai Hlychho, S. Hiato and Atul Chandra Chakma, Ch. Chhunga persuaded them not to proceed with their demand for a separate District Councils and told them “*after separation from Assam we would have our own*

⁴² Nohro Hmoko, pp.122-125.

government, as having different sets of administration may only make us weak, we decided to dissolve the existing District Council. Therefore, we would further, like to urge you, too, not to proceed with your demand for it.” However, leaders of the PLRC give a common statement which reads as *“As we are different ethnic groups, we cannot think of not having a separate Legislature, you may also regret if you do not have a District Council.”*

Since there was no news from the government of India, in December 1971, the MFP call for an assembly at Saikao and resolve to send other delegates to the government of India. Mr. A.B. Roma and Mr. Chhohmo, Chief of Saikao, were sent to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister of India for the second time. When the PLRC leaders were in Delhi, Mizo District Council leaders were also present to initiate the gradual elevation of the Mizo District to Union Territory. The delegate expressed their demand to the Home secretary that the Maras were different from the rest of other tribes in Lushai hills and that they should be given separate district council otherwise they would be assimilated by the Lushais. At that time, express Mr. A.B Roma⁴³, Chief Executive Member of the Mizo Hills District was also present on the other room where he interviewed with Home Minister and the delegates came to know that the Home Minister once asked the Chief Executive Member whether the Maras were different from the Pawis and also from the Mizo. They were told that even Chief Executive Member of Mizo Hill District did not deny the fact that the Maras were different from the two communities. However, the Home secretary replied them by saying “though you are not successful now in your demand, do not get disappointed. You will have to persist in your demand; repeated representation is required in democracy.” This statement is clearly an indication that there is chance for the Maras to get separate District Council in the future. After that, the delegates met Mr. Pimputkar, Special Secretary to U.T and demanded U.T.

Taking advantage of this incidence, Atul Chadra Chakma spoke to the Special Secretary in Bengali and later referred them to Joint Secretary, Mr. Prabuh. Later, when Atul was asked about what he had spoken in the meetings, he said, *‘if the*

⁴³ A.B Roma. Interviewed by VB Nopha Azyu, Siaha, 17th February, 2015.

*Pawis and the Lakhers would be given Autonomous District Council, the Chakmas should also be given.*⁴⁴ *‘as we the Chakmas, constitute ten thousand populations in Mizo District, we need a separate District Council. We are different in all respects of conducts and social behavior. So, a separate District Council is required for us.*⁴⁵ This happened to be the first instance when mentioned of a separate Chakma District Council was made. The Pawis and the Maras never took Atul Chakma very seriously as the Chakma were never a part of the demanding Delegates right from the PLRC days.

In February 1972, Mr. Mylai Hlychho, the then Secretary of MFP, set out for Delhi in his own expense to meet Home minister. He made a strappingly pleaded for the cause of the Maras and earnestly urged him to expedite the creation of the Autonomous District Council for the Maras. The Home Minister was shocked to see desperation in the face of the Mara leader and shown him a two-page printed Papers and told him to go through the pages. The papers read as *“there shall be three Regional Councils in Mizoram for the Lakhers(Maras), the Pawis and the Chakmas, and the three Regional Council shall be again upgraded to three District Councils.”* The central government, while considering the new administrative set up of the then Lushai hills proposed the creation of the three Autonomous District Councils in the Hills, North Eastern Areas Re-Organization to be placed in the parliament which later became an Act.

In order to remove the gulf of power between the District Council and Regional Council, paragraph 20B of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India was amended in 1971. It was then incorporated in the North Eastern Areas (re-organization) Act 1971 and the Government of the Union Territories (amendment) Act 1971⁴⁶. As per provisions, the administrator of Mizoram issued an order 1972 vide Notification No. CCMP/3/72-77-1 under which the PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils for major tribes as the Pawi, the Lakhers and the Chakmas. The Pawi Autonomous Region, the Lakhers Autonomous Region and the Chakmas

⁴⁴ F.C Chhuasa, *A biography of S. Hiato*, Saiha, 2019, p.56.

⁴⁵ Jyouti Moy Chakma, *Formation and functioning of the Chakma autonomous district Council*, in Dounge, *autonomy movement and sixth schedule in north east*. P. 59.

⁴⁶ The Mizoram gazette, Vol 1, part 1, Aizawl, 21st April 1972, pp-1-2.

Autonomous Region were created and constituted under section 4(1) of Pawi-Lakher's Autonomous Region (re-Organization) Order 1972 in order to enable these tribes to develop their customs, culture and dialects according to their own genius and ability⁴⁷.

Enlisted in the North Eastern Areas (reorganization) Mizoram, adoption of Laws order 1972 and the government of Union Territory (Amendment Act 1971), the three Regional Councils were elevated to the status of the District Councils as The Pawi District Council, the Lakher's District Council and the Chakma District Council respectively with a view to have more autonomy in managing their respective affairs. The government of Mizoram soon enforced this Acts vide notification No. LDD. 8/72/53,29 on April 1972⁴⁸. With regard to the constitution of the District Council, all elected members and nominated members of the then PLRCs continued as members in the newly created District Councils.

Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian constitution, the Mara Autonomous District Council had been given wide extensive powers. as provided in paragraph 2(6) of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India, the government of Mizoram had enacted the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974, which then became the ultimate guiding principle of governance for the existing three Autonomous District Council within Mizoram. The structural organization of the Mara Autonomous District Council like many other District Council can be group into three main organs such as Executive, Legislative and Judiciary⁴⁹.

Legislature: The Sixth Schedule has given the Autonomous District Council extensive power to Uplift the village tribal communities, in the domain of primary education, culture, custom, agriculture, health, village communications, sanitation, economic and rural development. The MADC can make Laws on the allotment, occupation or use, or the setting apart of land, other than any land which is a reserved forest, for the purposes of agriculture³ or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose for promoting the interest of the

⁴⁷ The Mizoram Gazette, *Ibid.*, p.1-2.

⁴⁸The Mizoram gazette, Aizawl, 5th May 1972.

⁴⁹ Souvinier MADC, 1997, p11.

inhabitants of any town or village. The council also empowered to manage any forest which is not a reserved forest and can regulate the practice of jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation. It can make laws for the use of any canal or water course for the purpose of agriculture. It can also establish Village or town committees or Councils and regulate any other matter relating to village or town administration. The Council can control money-landing and trading by non-tribals within the District Council. Further, the Council has power to make regulations for administration ad control of primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads and roads transport and waterways⁵⁰.

Executive: In 1972, when the District Council was introduced in Mizoram, the Council consist of Chief Executive Member and two Executive Member. But as time passed, the number of Executive Member also increased to 20. The executive functions of the Mara Autonomous District Council are vested in the Executive Committee. Under rule 20 of the Autonomous District Rules, 1974, in each of the Pawi, Lakhers and Chakma District Council, the Councils were given powers to constitute an Executive Committee headed by the Chief Executive Member. Rule 21 provides that the Chief Executive Member shall be elected by the District Council and other members shall appointed by the administrator of Mizoram on the advice of the Chief Executive Member from amongst the Members of the District Council. Though the Executive Committee is headed by the Chief Executive Member, the administrative responsibility of the Committee lies with the Executive Secretary, who is appointed by the CEM. However, a person to be appointed as Executive Secretary shall not necessarily be a member of the District Council⁵¹. The executive Committee has power to establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle ponds, ferries, fisheries, roads and waterways. It also has the authority to determine the language and manner in which education should be imparted in the primary schools within its jurisdiction. For this purpose, Mara language was the official language of the Mara Autonomous District Council⁵².

⁵⁰ K.L. Hansaria, p.3.

⁵¹ Jangthamngan Doungel, p.109

⁵² H.c Thanhra, p.242.

Judiciary: In exercise of power conferred by sub-paragraph (4) of Paragraph 4 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, the Mara Autonomous District Council, with the approval of the administrator of the Union Territory of Mizoram enacted the Lakhers Autonomous District Council (administration of Justice) Rules, in 1981⁵³. In case of the Pawi Autonomous District Council the same had already been set up in the early year of 1974. This rule enables the MADC to introduce three classes of courts in the areas within the District, to be constituted by the District Council for trial of suits and between the parties all of whom belongs to Scheduled Tribes within such areas. Namely, the Village Courts, the Subordinate District Council Courts and the District Council Court.

The contemporary politics was dominated by two important propagandas which was infused among the politicians of the region. Demand for Union Territory and the Direct Funding became prevalent form of playing politics in Maraland. The demand for UT was first put forward by the Congress in the early 1980s but seems to be fading among the Mara politician until a new political party was formed in 1998 called the Mara Democratic Front. This party endeavour to achieve a Union Territory for the Mara people and attracted many followers right from the beginning. They have submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in April 30th, 1998 at his official residence, New Delhi⁵⁴. Since then the Maras have optimism towards attaining Union Territories and memorandum has been submitted many times to the government officials. This rhythm lingers to persist as different political party irrespective of their political agenda continue to demand a UT by submitting memorandum to the government of India.

On the other hand, another important propaganda which infused with many politicians and often reappeared in times of the elections in the Mara Autonomous District Council was Direct Funding. It happens not only to the MADC, but also very often among the Lai and the Chakma Autonomous District Council. Prof, DOUNGEL, who conducted an extensive analysis on ADC's of Mizoram, is of the opinion and branded Direct Funding as a Utopian Misnomer which has multi-

⁵³ A compilation of Acts, rules and regulations, MADC, p.276.

⁵⁴ M. Laikaw interview.

dimensional interpretations and concepts⁵⁵. It would seem that this propaganda began to appear among the political leaders of the Maras out of desperation in a quest to appropriate the proper flow of money from the centre to the District Council. It is very difficult to ascertain when this propaganda appears in the political history of the Maras but it is quite conclusive that the Sixth Schedule amendment of 2006 might have been misinterpreted in such a way that people began to perceived it as the ultimate goal of the political parties in the region. However, these two agenda seem to dominate the political trend in Maraland and it seems it will continue in the future until it has been achieved.

Regarding the working of the Council, the study found that the instability haunted the administration of the Council right from the first general election. Defection and factionalism became rampant among the politicians and often leads to the dissolution of the Council though in a few occasions the Council has successfully completed its full term. The Indian National Congress became the most successful party in running the Council. In recent times, it has been found that the staff of the District Council increased tremendously causing problems within the Council and the state government dispatch inspection Committee many times in this regard. In terms of recruitment, nepotism and favouritism dominated the Council and appointments are often made to cement the politician status within the Council. The officers were subjected to shifting their position whenever the new Executive Committee is formed in the District Council. Vacant post is filled up by the Executive Member of their favourite people and advertisement were merely issued for namesake. These were common practice and prevalent not only in MADC but also in the Lai and the Chakma ADC. It would seem that the situation of the District Council is never been better and would continue to persist in the future unless strict and transparent government has been introduce in the Region.

The Mara Autonomous District Council occupied a total area of 1445 sq.km. with its headquarters at Saiha⁵⁶. In terms area, it is larger than Chakma

⁵⁵ Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, *Evolution and Functioning of the Lai Autonomous District Council*, in Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, *Autonomy movement and the sixth Schedule in Northeast India*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, 2016.

⁵⁶ Souvenir MADC. P.1.

Autonomous District Council and a bit smaller than the Lai Autonomous District Council. It has been given exclusive functions like the legislative, the executive and the Judiciary under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Between the year 1972 to 2010, the Council witness a government of full five years' term four times which is better than the two ADC's in Mizoram. For the first three term, the MADC witness stable government though there were disturbance within the Council.

The main causes of the instability of the term elections in the MADC may be attributed to practice of defections. Right from the first term election to the District Council, the problem of the formation of the Executive Committee had to deal with defections. This may be cause by personal thirst for power in the Council. The leaders of the Mara Freedom Party, who has been fighting side by side in the political war with their neighbouring tribes, the Lais, now became enemy in their own turf. At times clannism began to appear in the politics when the Hlychho's dominated the electoral politics for quite sometimes. Mylai Hlychho and Zakhu Hlychho run the administration under their leadership. However, it soon died down as favouritism and personal thirst for power taken over it. The contemporary politics may be dominated by clan centric propaganda as the Maras were divided themselves into five different clans, there is no cooperation when it comes to politics. This can be seen in the MLA election in the Tipa Constituency where Hiphei always win over Mylai hlychho and others. The reason being, the Tipa Constituency is dominated by Zyhno, Hawthai and Chapi clan and it will be herculean task to win the election for the Tlosai clan, persons like Mylai Hlychho.

Clan base politics has become very common especially the constituency belongs to outside Siaha town. In recent times, the problem frequently arises regarding recruitment problems and financial mismanagement. For this reason, District Council often tussled with state government many times and sometimes, District Council were subjected to suspension in terms of violation of rules and regulations laid down in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The District Council was benefitted by the elitist groups at the cost of the general public. However, through ups and down, the District Council runs the administration for the benefit of the native people and depending upon their needs, it also demands certain empowerment from the

government. till now, the demand for UT and Direct Funding became the ongoing demand which are yet to achieved.