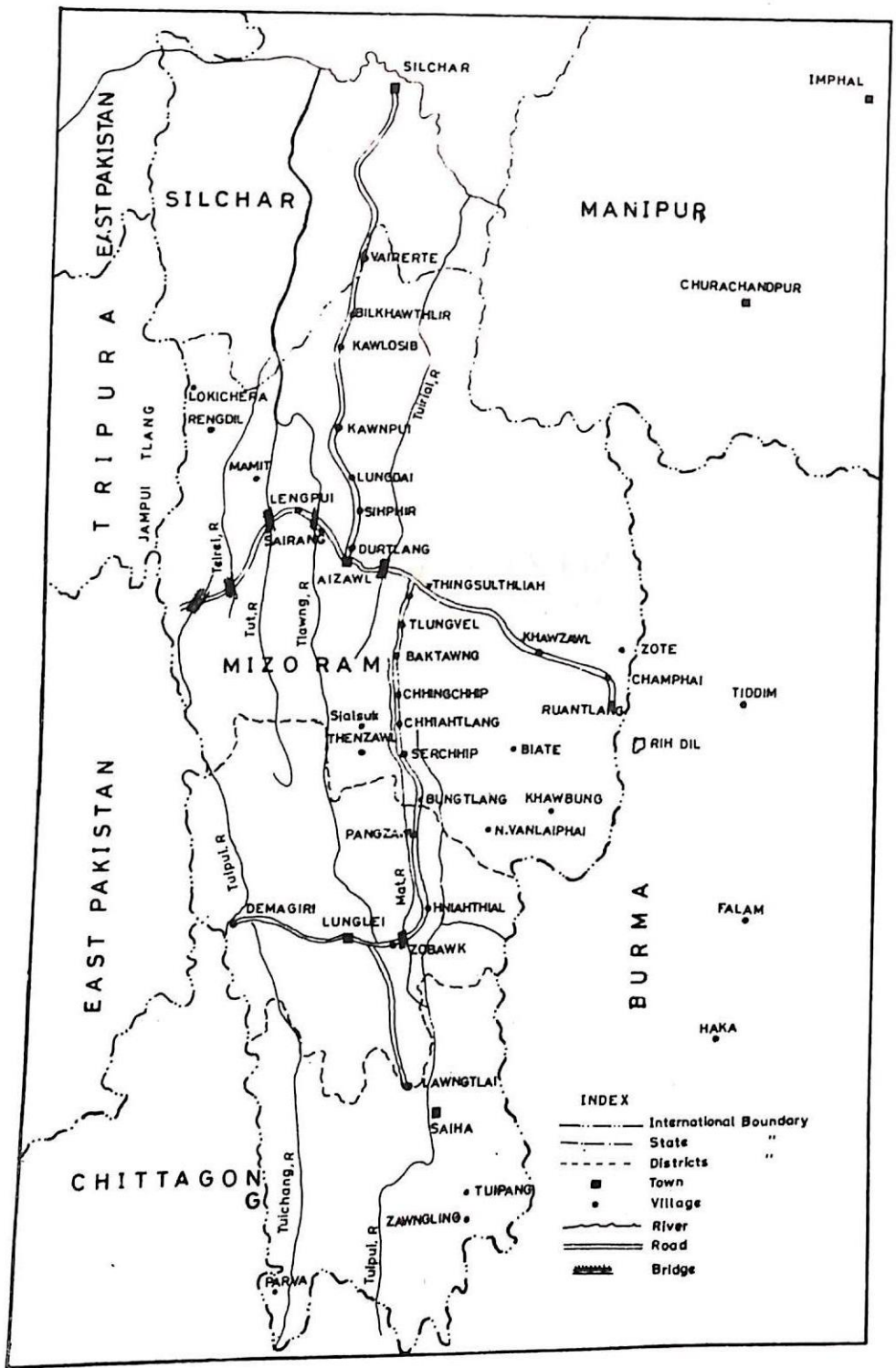


MIZORAM

SOCIETY
AND
POLITY

C. NUNTHARA



Map showing important villages, towns and rivers in Mizoram and adjacent areas.

MIZORAM SOCIETY AND POLITY

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Preface

The politics of north-east India could best be described as the politics of dissension. Numerous ethnic and social movements are conditioning any political action into ethnic question and any ethnic and cultural variation becomes politicized. This is true in the case of Naga underground movement, MNF underground movement, Meghalaya political autonomy movement, and numerous movements for tribal autonomy in the plains tribal areas of Assam. In the initial period of ethnic political movement, ethnic-based political organization may do well but as the ethnic movement becomes strident the reverse may hold true. In Nagaland, the Congress did well in the last two Assembly elections because the Congress is regarded as an escape from the atrocity of the military and the underground personnel. The same predicament was experienced in Mizoram during 1970s.

One pertinent question posed by Urmila Phadnis "Why is it that in India ethnic conflicts have been contained in some cases but have conflagrated in others" can also be asked in the case of north-east India. But no satisfactory answer could be claimed to be given on this. However, ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnic variation is dependent upon the latent and manifest nature of ethnic movement and ethnic appeal and the consequent politics of dissension, at least in north-east India. This perhaps could have national and universal relevance.

The bulk of the field work had been carried out during 1972-74. Subsequent project work on 'grouping of villages in Mizoram' funded by ICSSR, New Delhi added new insight into the grouping scheme carried out during 1967-70 in Mizoram. The report of the

project was published in book form titled 'Introduction of Grouping of Villages in Mizoram'.

This book is to be considered an exploratory work. But that the immediate question of nation-building and national integration, linked with ethnic and cultural variation commonly referred to under the blanket term 'ethnicity', has been explored. This may stimulate more systematic research in different parts of north-east India and elsewhere in India on this line.

I am indebted to many people in Mizoram and I thank all my informants. I would particularly like to mention the names of Mr. Bonthanga Poonte, the then State Social Welfare Officer, for his constant help in the collection of old records from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl district, and Mr. Dahrawh Zauva, Superintendent of Police of the Special Branch, for his valuable help in facilitating access to the MNF documents captured by the security forces. Grateful thanks are also due to Mr. Lalhuma, I.A.S. for helping me get hold of the latest position in Nagaland election results and also to Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte and Mr. Manzuala for helping me get election materials on Mizoram. The list would be too long for individual acknowledgement of all my informants. I am sincerely grateful to them all for enlightening me and providing me information on various aspects of societal institutional arrangements. I am also indebted to Prof. B.S. Baviskar, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, for his unending help.

C. NUNTHARA

Shillong
July 1996

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Introduction

I

The establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1774 attracted British administrators, scholars, missionaries and travellers to undertake tribal studies in different parts of India. However, despite the efforts of the British administrators and anthropologists along with some Indian scholars like S.C. Roy (1912), earlier anthropological studies of tribes in India had to remain of an exploratory nature providing some general information about the life and culture of the people. It was only with the establishment of Sociology and Anthropology as academic disciplines in some of the universities like Bombay (Sociology, 1919), Calcutta (Anthropology, 1921), that a significant progress was made by Indian scholars towards theoretical sophistication in anthropological researches. Even then, tribal studies in India till India's independence confined largely to ethnological and monographic studies which leaned heavily on researches on kinship and social organization. It has been only recently that efforts are being focused on the study of tribal community in terms of inter-group relations and in relation to the wider national society and to bring out the degree of changes among different tribes in the context of the mainstream of Hindu social organization. Thus, Majumdar's (1963) characteristic of tribe-Hindu continuum in his study of polyandrous Khasas; Sinha's (1957) Bhumij-Rajput continuum among Bhumij of Manbhum; and Vidyarthi's (1963) work on Manjhi tribe of Chotanagpur showing how tribal community has attained the status of a caste, enrich our knowledge of tribal situation in India. Besides individual scholars, a number of tribal research institutes have been established by the

Government to undertake problem-oriented researches in the tribal areas, and Anthropological Survey of India, through its numerous regional branches, is actively engaged in tribal studies.

However, a quick glance at the ethnography of tribal studies in India shows regional imbalances. There is hardly any research activities or research studies equipped with modern theoretical framework or models undertaken among the tribes of north-east India till only recently. Tribes of north-east India mainly consist of tribes of Darjeeling district of West Bengal, tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. Even monographic account of some of the major tribes of this area remain largely to be those written by the British administrators, missionaries, military officers and Census officers. Of them mention may be made of Dalton (1872), J.H. Hutton (1921), Gurdon (1914), and Mills (1922, 1926, 1937) providing full descriptive ethnography on different tribes of Nagaland and Meghalaya. The work of C. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1962) and Verrier Elwin (1959, 1960) also brought out systematic ethnographic account of different tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, there is more or less adequate ethnographic record of some of the hill tribes of north-east India. But there is virtually no systematic ethnographic study of the life and culture of the Mizos except through Census monographs and reports of military expeditions and earlier writings of the British not to speak of sophisticated research undertaken. With the establishment of North Eastern Hill University at Shillong in 1973, research activities of various nature have been undertaken covering the states of Meghalaya, Assam and Nagaland, but Mizoram is relatively neglected. This is understandable with the geographical inaccessibility of Mizoram but does not justify its neglect particularly in the face of the avowed policy of creating a morally unified political community and the problems that the hill areas of north-east India pose on this policy.

Some tribes of north-east India have recently experienced some drastic changes in their socio-cultural life as a result of increasing contact with non-tribal people. Thus, we find the process of what we may call 'detrribalization' operating among the Bodo-speaking tribes of Garo hills of Meghalaya (D.N. Majumdar, 1972: 263-70), and various tribal segments along the Brahmaputra and Surma

valleys, who live in close proximity with one non-tribal Hindu people. This process of detribalization probably is not of recent origin but that has been realized only recently. On the other hand, some tribes, notably the Mizos and the Nagas, assert collective self-identification amongst themselves and develop an attitude of negation mainly as a result of non-tribals' superior attitude towards the hill people, and consequently disrupting the growth of unity between the people of the hills and the plains. This dual tendency of development in the tribe-plain relationship needs to be examined in the context of the problem of state-formation in north-east India and the wider problem of social, moral and cultural integration.

II

The emergence of new 'states' and 'nations' in the post-World War II period has activated tremendous efforts at formulating and reformulating theories and models for providing guidelines for an understanding of the process of state-formation and nation-building in the Third World countries. The initial efforts were pioneered by the European and American scholars largely following structural-functional model of analysis. Gabriel Almond, an American scholar, took a lead in outlining theoretical framework for the study of political development in non-Western countries (Almond and Coleman, 1960). This was followed by numerous publications sponsored by the Comparative Politics Committee of the American Social Science Research Council on the same line of theoretical formulations. Having based his conceptual framework on system approach, Almond sees the polity as consisting of structures and processes and equates political development with structural differentiation (role differentiation) and cultural secularization. For this, he posits four functional prerequisites of development of a political system: an integrative capacity, an accommodative capacity, a participatory capacity and welfare and distributive capacity. He thus visualized development to take the form it took in the United States of America and Western Europe. As such, Almond's concepts are considered 'Eurocentric' and inapplicable to the social reality in Africa and Asia (Shamuyarira, 1976: 234). An attempt at realizing his three interrelated variables—role differentiation, sub-system

autonomy and secularization (Almond and Powell, 1966: 306) also proved the main source of instability and eventually resulted in a break down (Shamuyarira, 1976: 234) in ethnic pluralistic societies of African states like Nigeria and Ghana. Thus, any theoretical model stemming from systems approach try to seek uniformities and an 'attempt to offer global explanation of assumed differences in the development process of different units (societies, cultures, nations, or political systems). The individual cases of developed or undeveloped and underdeveloped units were described as either conforming to or deviating from an adhoc and evolutionary theory or model of development. Differences between these units were conceived as differences in the stages of development and were ascribed to the success or failure of a unit in attaining certain economic, cultural or institutional prerequisites prescribed by formal and definitional requirements of a given model (Sheth, 1976: 67). Thus this approach overlook the possibility of different historical processes which may not unravel themselves in the same pace and in the same manner as Western countries.

Recently, scholars from developing nations, inspired as they are by research findings from their own countries, have raised pertinent questions about the validity of earlier theoretical frameworks which Rajni Kothari (1976: 315) groups them in the following categories:

1. The relevance of prevailing conceptual frameworks to an explanation of variations in the behaviour of social and political phenomena.
2. The empirical validity of these frameworks in different historical settings.
3. The methodological assumptions implicit in the strenuous quest of a general theory.
4. The basic issues of teleology and directionality, determinacy and choice, in the comparative theory.

Thus, the realization of contemporary processes of state-formation and nation-building as a distinctive historical processes with an integral historical perspective became widespread among the non-Western scholars. It is in the light of this that the UNESCO Meeting of Experts on the Problems of State-Formation and Nation-Building held at Cerisy-le-Salle in 1970 provoked much attention on

Centre-Periphery model of political development originally propounded by Edward Shils (1961). The content of the Centre-Periphery model was neatly interpreted by Kothari (1976: 318-319) in the following conceptual framework:

1. Centre formation (either through leading territory or dynasty or a dominant social class).
2. The process of infringement of the periphery by the Centre (through the play of power and the process of policy-making).
3. The encroachment of the periphery on the Centre (through demands on the machinery of the states).

Kothari made use of centre-periphery model for studying Indian context of development and viewed political development as interplay between the penetration by the centre and the response of the periphery to it, supervised by intermediate structures and traditions (Kothari, 1970). However, preoccupation with stability, as the Western theorists do, emphasizing on the sanctity and legitimacy of the centre as against the periphery, may lead to undermining the economic, political and cultural aspirations of the periphery masses. This seems to be the major obstacle in understanding the root problem in the hill areas of north-east India. This naturally necessitates interpretation of the problem of centre-periphery relationships in a dynamic way taking into account the changing character of each constituent units. With this conceptual framework, both the processes of internal consolidation and external linkages can be explored (Kothari, 1976: 11).

Thus, with this conceptual framework, it is possible to gain better insight at the problem facing new states and formally independent nation but lacking physical means of translating this into political reality. African experiences show that big power patronage jeopardizes democratic growth and national integration. This is especially so since colonial powers regained their economic powers lost during World War II through the establishment of European Economic Community in many instances. Their economies are thus integrated and dominated by the colonial powers. In this situation, Shamuyarira (1976: 240) raises a relevant question 'Is it realistic to ignore this relationships if it becomes the source of

instability and disorder, generates conflicts, and ignites catastrophic institutional competition within the infant political system?' The infant nations are incapable of resolving conflicts and managing social change in spite of institutionalization and increased role differentiation. Reduced socio-economic gap between social groups also leads to insecurity of individuals which find expression in ethnic and tribal politicization. The clue to the core problem has to be sought in the structure of the emerging middle class and its external linkages since elite occupying the 'centre' are tied down in a dependent economic and political relationship with a 'centre' that lay outside the territory in many cases. This will enable us to conceptualize transcendental centre and intermediate centres and peripheries and see if there are structural linkages to effectively channelize traditional elements into the process of building a modern nation. Japan's success, though not directly comparable, with its ancient culture, literature and bureaucracy with many of the emerging new nations, may be attributed to the presence of effective linkages between the centre and the peripheries, besides cultural homogeneity, which has an impact on the nation's ability to channel its native resources into the nation-building process (Watanuki, 1976: 137). The example of nation-building in Indonesia also exemplified the importance of structural linkages and a common cultural ideology based on Pant Ja Sila or Five Principles deviating from which resulted in the downfall of president Sukarno in 1965 (Soemardjan, 1976: 276). However, cultural pluralism based on highly differentiated historical environment in south-east Asian nations affect pre-modern nation-building as well as having lasting impact on modern nation-building process.

The Indian model of nation-building process comes in close proximity with those of south-east Asian nations like Malaya and Thailand, in that the historically differentiated entities prevented the formation of pre-modern state providing a common centre for all regions and secular identity to diverse people and thus building a sense of pride and commitment in them. Thus, at the time of independence, national integration was something yet to be achieved, and in fact it still remains the major factor of nation-building process in the country. To evolve a nation out of a vast heterogeneity of social and regional entities requires involvement of all these entities

into a common undertaking. The role of Mahatma Gandhi was to turn nationalist movement from its narrow class (upper caste, middle class) base to nation cutting across traditional conflicts of castes, regions, languages, religions, thereby curbing the distance between the elite and the masses. To achieve Gandhi's model, democratic model was made use to link many levels of diversity as a model ordering diversity. What emerged was "basic contradiction between a caste society and democratic politics" (Kothari, 1976: 211). In the process, some of the lower castes came forward replacing the upper caste groups or incorporating with them, to break the traditional barriers to their mobility, but the very low castes (scheduled castes including the scheduled tribes) are still largely on the peripheries. This may be attributed to the neglect of distributive justice as Kothari observes (1976: 217) "very little attention was paid to ensure distributive performance (with the single exception of reservation of seats and jobs for scheduled castes and tribes)". This gives rise to a culture of middle class unrelated to the needs of the people and the society on the one hand, and entailing frustration and conflict on the part of the peripheries on the other. Neglect of distributive performance may be related to the inadequacy or lack of structural linkages between the centre and the peripheries. In the light of this conceptual framework, i.e. structural linkages between the centre and the peripheries, that the politics of Mizoram should be viewed in the context of state formation in north-east India and the wider problem of integration of differentiated entities under modern innovative change.

However, the economic centre, as differentiated from political centre, may lay outside the territory of the nation which may be powerful than formally independent political centre as Kothari rightly observes (Kothari, 1971: 343). In such a situation, the intellectual elites or dominant classes were tied down in a dependent economic relationship and sometimes even political relationship with a centre that lay outside the territory while at the same time the intellectual elites in some cases occupying the centre played a much more autonomous role. It is thus imperative that we interpret the problem of centre-periphery relationship in a dynamic way, with special attention to the changing character of both the centre and the periphery in contextual and historical perspective. In the present study, the dominant elite in India is assumed to play an autonomous

role under which different segments of the periphery develop different modes of relationship.

In India, while there is ample scope for individual and familial mobility, caste continues to be relevant (Srinivas, 1966:117) in such mobility. This situation does not seem to have been substantially changed. And while individual mobility is evident, interactions at the group level for the lower castes remain almost unchanged as most studies on Indian society have revealed. For example, the low castes (those who are not twice born) of Bisipara (Bailey, 1957), Sripuram (Beteille, 1966), and Rampura (Srinivas, 1962) have been unable to raise their position and status despite Sanskritization and their efforts at achieving a higher status in the social and caste hierarchy. Thus, low caste groups remain at the bottom of the ladder. Outside the mainstream of Hindu culture, India is also blessed with diverse cultural forms referred to as tribal societies. Transformation of tribal entities usually takes a very slow pace perhaps due to the relatively static character of the national society in unraveling the traditional substratum. The inability to bring a breakthrough in traditional social hierarchy stands in the way of affording structural linkages between the centre and the tribal groups (peripheries).

Thus, any process of integration is viewed with distrust and an attitude of negation. In other words, the inability of the national society to permit group mobility to the sub-group stands in the way of cultural integration. Low caste groups, especially those below the pollution line (untouchables or scheduled castes) are also denied mobility. For them, economic position and wealth do not necessarily correlate with group or individual mobility. However, the fact that the untouchables are encapsulated in a common culture and are being entirely dependent of the high caste in economic relations prevents them from developing strong negative orientations on an all-India scale, although we have experienced such movements as those led by Dr. Ambedkar. Thus, they occupy an important position in the dominant culture. In this respect, the Scheduled Castes are different from the tribal groups of north-east India which have been maintaining a minimum of economic and cultural contact with the dominant plains group (representing the national society to them). As such, lower caste groups including the Scheduled Castes have been always trying to better their position within the caste hierarchy

and conforms to the principles of the caste system while the tribal groups, especially in the hill areas of north-east India, have been trying to move away from it. It is precisely because of this that such movements as those led by Dr. Ambedkar should best be considered as expression of a desire to attain higher position within the same institutional pattern rather than shunning the system itself.

However, the mode of value orientations developed by each of the tribal groups towards the dominant groups may have a large degree of variation depending on the level and degree of cultural contact and social relations with the members of the dominant group. Historical processes and the manner of cultural contact will also have impact on value orientations. Thus, there is a great degree of variation in the level of cultural integration among different groups of Scheduled Tribes in India's north-east. The Census (Assam, 1961) recorded the Scheduled Tribes' population of Assam as 2,204,249 of which the plains tribals contributed 953,310 and the hill tribes 1,250,939.

The plains tribal groups are mainly dispersed along the Brahmaputra valley and the Surma valley where they have been said to have exposed themselves (Chaube, 1973: 14-15) to the Hindu influence for a considerable time with the consequences that they have not been attracted to Christianity, unlike the hill tribes, in a convincing way. But the persistence of these tribal groups could only be explained by the failure of Hinduism to totally absorb them in its cultural stream. However, cultural linkages with the segment of the dominant group render these tribal groups unable to develop strong negative orientations towards the dominant group. Thus, the kind of negative orientation, if any, among the plains tribals of Assam takes a milder form of separatist tendency; and the kind of demand by them followed closely to the kind of demands made by caste associations and caste conferences elsewhere in India (Rao, 1972: 88-94). Their demands usually lay stress on attaining better position within the dominant system rather than discarding the system itself. The only differences in the plains tribal council's aspiration from caste association elsewhere is that it also demanded the creation of an autonomous district for the plains tribals.

The hill tribes also develop various degree of integration and differential level of negative orientations can be observed. The

Mikirs, the Garos and the Khasis have been having a relatively long history of material and cultural relations with the plains as compared to the Mizos and the Nagas. Hence, they have been maintaining a relatively lower degree of negation towards the dominant group. In general however, the hill tribal groups of north-east India have been maintaining a minimum of cultural contact with the plains as compared to the Scheduled Castes and tribal groups elsewhere, and consequently maintain a certain amount of distinct cultural existence, though in different degrees, which stress on ethnic boundary maintenance. And indeed, it is the stress on cultural variation that makes tribal groups a distinct class of people, different from any other lower caste groups. Thus, they do pose a totally different problem in the process of nation-building.

It is immediately relevant to explore the processes through which tribal ethnic groups maintain their separate existence despite culture contact and change. This necessarily entails an investigation into an ethnic boundary and boundary maintenance, and the characteristics for boundary maintenance are, as proposed by Frederick Barth (1969: 10) "racial differences, spontaneous and organized enmity". It may be presumed that while ingroups may form distinct cultural traits, the weaknesses of the dominant group in encapsulating the benefits of national society to the ingroup members may have lasting result on the persistency of group solidarity. The homogenous tribals are characterized by group cohesiveness and tribal loyalty which structurally binds them together as a separate ethnic and cultural groups rather than a class or caste in a larger society. As such, the tribals prefer to limit their social relationships as much as possible within their own group, and this should be considered as rational choice rather than simple product of seclusion and primitive ignorance. This happens despite increasing contacts and change in the face of modernization process. The tribal-plains relationships in India and the hostility of the tribal groups towards cultural assimilation should be viewed in this fashion.

Once the process of outgroup hostility is set in motion it becomes so intensified as to engulf practically all spheres of the day-to-day adjustment of the tribal groups. Almost any activity can become politicized and used as a channel of tribal-non-tribal relations. The primitive system of production and the inability to bring about

innovation to cope with commercialization process resulted in the emergence of a small commercial class and educated class both of which form the new middle class in the hill regions. The new middle class are, to some extent, opportunistic in the sense that they are ready to exploit any situation to their personal advantage, like commercial class elsewhere, and are instrumental in the process of cultural change. However, the social rewards and advantages of group solidarity and as member of tribal cultural pattern prevent them from emulating the dominant culture to the extent of losing their basic identity.

Agriculture continues to be the main source of production and wealth in the countryside and consequently remain to be more or less the basic source of value orientation. However, the political drama of the hills is largely set in the towns where the middle classmen hold the leadership positions. The fact that these people largely depend on the opportunities offered by the commercialization process means that the new channels of economic wealth and status become the basic source of new value orientations which are politically relevant. Thus, the process of value orientation has been largely based on the accelerated process of commercialization. As such, the new leaders are almost wholly those whose skills in manipulating the new opportunities remove them from the traditional clutch of jhum cultivation.

It follows that an exploration of an internal constitution and historical process of any particular group or groups is essential for proper understanding of ethnic separatism. It is through this that group interactions between people is regulated and standardized, and the new value originated which again may change the form of group interaction. It is the common cultural traits which make members of ethnic groups a distinct class of people. Thus, the Mizo is a Mizo, whether he be in Burma, Bangladesh or Mizoram, through the sharing of a common cultural identification which is symbolized by the term 'mizo' and which is overtly expressed in language, dress, social customs and other social interactions and which structurally binds them together as one separate ethnic group. With this framework, the present study limits itself to elements pertaining to the Mizo ethnic group and the factors giving rise to ethnicity and tribalism. The dominant group of India is, for the purposes, presumed

to form homogeneous group in cultural traits against which the subordinate group or groups are vying for economic and political powers. It is the nature of internal constituent elements and composition of each discrete ethnic group which gives rise to the differential stress on ethnicity and outgroup hostility.

Thus, while there is a relative lack of structural linkages between centre (dominant culture) and the periphery (tribes of hill areas of north-east India), the level of group homogeneity may be instrumental in shaping outgroup hostility and consequently to the maintenance of ethnic boundary. Distributive performance beyond the mere reservation of seats and jobs could bridge the gap between the two, but neglect of it on the part of the dominant political culture only aggravates the situation. In the absence of structural linkages, the members of the segment of the larger group adopt a policy of cultural assimilation as against integration, and shun the tribal culture by assuming an air of superiority. In the circumstances, the tribals' fear of losing their basic cultural identity as entity stands in the way of state formation and integration. For them, to become Indian means losing their cultural identity which they highly cherish. They are thus, faced with a basic dilemma—whether to integrate themselves with the dominant group at the probable cost of losing their basic identity and according low status, or to move away from it at the probable cost of losing the benefits of integration along with modernization. Thus, we find various phases of political development in the hill areas of north-east India based on this dilemma. The Mizo underground movement and the Naga underground movement are all intended to preserve tribal basic identity against the encroachment of the dominant group. At the same time, the temptation of material benefits of integration is so high that some sections of the population are vying to join the dominant culture while at the same time asserting their tribal basic identity. However, with the separatist movement on the increase in the whole of north-east India, any attempt at emulating the dominant group falls back to asserting self-identity for the group. All this has to be explained in terms of the absence or otherwise of structural linkages between the centre and the periphery (tribal group) and in so doing, conceptual frameworks like subordinate-superordinate, dominant-dependent, ingroup-outgroup will be made use of. Thus, tribal groups

of the hill areas continue to maintain their structural existence despite contact and increasing interactions with the outgroup members at various levels. The increasing contacts did result in various forms of structural and ideological modification and adjustment among different groups. The extent of this modification or adjustment, and the absence or otherwise of structural linkages with outgroup have to be explored through the internal composition and historical process of each discrete group.

The historical facts and traditional social organization of the Mizos will be explored relating them to the changes and development taking place in the hills. As politics directly deals with social interactions and as social interactions are concerned and characterized by the constraining elements of the society, political interactions are based on a normative pattern of behaviour. However, in north-east hill areas, interactions take a dual normative pattern. Thus, the patterned behaviour between members of the ingroup and that of the intergroup may take a totally different form, giving rise to the existence of intergroup relations and intragroup relations. The different modes of interactions may be governed by different degrees of cooperation and conflict where in rare cases anomaly may prevail. Among the Mizos, intergroup relations are governed by conflict situation resulting in negative value orientations towards the dominant group. In so far as this negative orientations govern group interaction pattern, it has implications in the behavioural pattern in the political sub-structure as political activities mainly centre around intergroup relationships in Mizoram. Thus, negative orientations result in ethnicity as the central mobilizing factor in Mizoram.

III

The field-work on which the major thrust is based was carried out in Mizoram during which the author had met and interviewed most of the political leaders as well as other prominent leaders of the area through either formal interview or informal discussions. This was reinforced by data collected through subsequent visits. It was found that informal interview among the Mizos, where people were rather inhibited to give delicate information, was more fruitful in a number of different aspects. In order to bring out a more general picture of

the area, case study of a specific area or village was discarded and the study was focused on the whole area of Mizoram. However, with the difficulty of going to the interior villages and limited funds available to the author, and also the limited time available, it was possible to cover many villages in the course of field investigation; and as such, a large number of information and material was collected from informants in towns and easily accessible big grouping centres. But whatever information and material collected from the villages assure that leadership structure in the interior villages follows the same pattern that we find in towns. Much of the research work was carried out on the basis of informal interviews, discussions and observations.

In order to bring out the historical process and the manner in which Mizo ethnic identity developed during the course of history and an interplay of tradition versus modern political ethos, an exploration of the Mizo social structure, both traditional and modern, will be made in Chapters 2 and 3 taking care to examine through historical perspective. To explore the political sub-structure of Mizoram, Chapters 4 and 5 confine themselves to activities in the political arena. Chapter 6 deals with the significance of Mizo National Front (MNF) as portraying group identity and group solidarity, and the conscious effort at building ethnic boundary maintenance as determined by intergroup conflict situation.

While the author is fully aware of the theoretical importance of state-formation in the north-east India and the wider problem of nation-building in a diverse population like India, he is also guided, to some extent, by such work as those of C.W. Mills (1959), Myrdal (1953) who challenge neutral sociology, as also Inkeles (1965) who asserts the importance of practical sociology. It is therefore, hoped that the study will throw some light on the political system in Mizoram interacting with tribal institutions of the society, problems of state-building in India's north-east and the larger problem of social, economic and cultural integration. It is also to be remembered that due weightage is given to the background information in order to fill-in the gap as a result of lack of ethnographic record on Mizoram. The political consciousness during the British rule received tremendous push after India's independence due to the establishment of District Council. This ultimately led to the abolition of chiefship

in 1954-55. This subsequent political development has seen different phases of inter-tribal rivalry and cohesion and outgroup hostility giving rise to different levels of integration. In order to see the politics of state-formation in north-east India, the implication and linkages of the changing values and attitudes and their interactions with political processes as well as political response to changing societal organization in Mizoram will be the focus of the discussion.