Zomi[^1] is the name of a major tribe found in various parts of South and South East Asia. The term Zomi meaning, Zo People[^2]

is derived from the generic name ‘Zo’, the progenitor of the Zomi. They are found in northwestern Myanmar, northeastern India and Bangladesh. Anthropologists classify them as Tibeto-Burman speaking member of the Mongoloid race. In the past they were little known by this racial nomenclature. They were known by the non-tribal plain peoples of Myanmar, Bangladesh and India as Chin, Kuki, or Lushai. Subsequently the British employed these terms to christen those ‘wild hill tribes’ living in the “un-admiral. They are Zomi not because they live in the highlands or hills, but are Zomi and call themselves Zomi because they are the descendants of their great great ancestor, ‘Zo’.”[^3]
This map is pointing out Zomi Inhabited Areas from the immemorial they occupied.

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Geographical Location

The Zomi have a common primordial name (i.e., Zo) common history, cultural affinities, belief system, economic life and cherished the dream of restoring their glorious past. They remain independent, self-sufficient and were never subjugated until the advent of the British imperialist. They governed themselves according to their traditional polity and legal system ensuring justice for all. The consequences of British imperialism proved disastrous and painful for the Zomi as they were subjected to subjugation, segmentation, division and confusion. As a result, their primordial identity was almost completely forgotten and neglected.

The Zomi and their land was dismembered, bifurcated and appended to three sovereign countries—India, Burma and Bangladesh—by British imperialists to fit their own administrative conveniences without Zo people’s knowledge and consent. The state boundaries within the nation-state further scattered Zomi and they became ethnic minorities wherever they are. They are deprived of their socio-economic, political and cultural rights and were subjugated as aliens in their ancestral homeland.

Nevertheless, it was the British themselves who later realized the undeniable common anthropological, historical, cultural and ethnic traits, existing among the Zomi whom they called Kuki, Chin or Lushai. Thus, the Britishers convened the famous Chin-Lushai Conference at Fort Williams in 1982 and decided to amalgamate the Chin-Lushai country (Zoland or Zogam). The process of bringing Zomi under a single administrative unit is not realised completely till today. Initially, the Zomi were politically ignorant to take full advantages of such bold steps initiated by the British, however today, they are aware of their true national identity and steadfastly pursue the vision to restore their glorious past.

The Zomi occupy a contiguous geographical areas measuring about 96,540 sq. miles. The total population of the tribe is estimated to be around
two and a half million. In Northeast India, the Zomi live in Mizoram, Manipur, the Kohima district of Nagaland, the Cachar, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, in parts of the Khasi and Jaintia area of Meghalaya, and in Tripura. In that region they are scattered through several districts of six states. In Myanmar, they live mainly in the Chin Hills, in the Khamti and Somra tracts, and in the Kale-Kabaw-Myittha valleys as well as in parts of the Arakan Hills. The Zomi inhabited the area extending from latitude 25.30° North in the Somra tracts facing Mt Saramati, and in Nagaland across the Namtalak River and North Cachar Hills, to 20.30° North. The Asho lives further South of the Arakan Yomas, Irrawady valleys and Pegu Yomas (below Prome and Sandaway). All these areas fall between 92.10° E and 94.20°. The North to South length of the Zo country(Zogam) is roughly 350 miles (560 km) and it is about 120 miles (192) wide.[5]

S. T. Hau Go, a former Lecturer of Mandalay University and an authority on the Zomi wrote:

Our present geographical distribution extends from the Naga Hills and the Hukawng Valley in the north to Bassein and the Irrawaddy Delta in the south, from the Irrawaddy and Sittang Valleys in the east to the Arakan coast, Bangladesh, Assam and Manipur in the West. In short, we occupy the mountainous region between India and Bangladesh in the west and the Chindwin-Irrawaddy valleys in the east, and the plains and valleys adjacent to these hilly regions.

One Zomi folksong tellingly delineates the area of Zogam as follows:

::Penlehpi leh Kangtui minthang,
::A tua tong Zouta kual sung chi ua;
::Khang Vaimang leh tuan a pupa,
::Tongchiamna Kangtui minthang aw”
Free translation:

::The famous Penlehpi and Kangtui,
::Between the two is the Zomi country;
::The Southern King and our forefathers,
::Made an agreement at the famous Kangtui

This old folk song clearly tells us the area of the Zomi ancestral homeland, for Penlehpi is a Burmese word for the Bay of Bengal and Kangtui is identified with Tuikang (Chindwin River). This Zogam[6] is geographically contiguous, compact and has been the land where the Zomi permanently settled for centuries. Here they lived in complete independence before the advent of the British. They lived without any outside interference and domination, and no part of her territory had been subjugated. Within their territory, they were knitted together by common traditions, customs, cultures; mode of living; language and social life. They governed themselves in accordance with their customary laws. It was a sovereign land where the people enjoyed perfect harmony on their own.

History

Who are the Zomi

The Generic Name

F.K. Lehman, Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics, University of Illinois (USA), who had done extensive study on the Chin of Burma, said:

No single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but all – or nearly all of the peoples have a special word for themselves and those of their congeners with whom they are in regular contact. This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which appears as Zo, Yo, Ysou, Shou.
Relating to this generic name, Fan-Cho a diplomat of the Tang dynasty of China, mentioned in 862 AD a Kingdom in the Chindwin Valley whose Princes and Chiefs were called Shou (Zo). In 1783, Father Vincentius Sangermano in his book, ‘A Description of the Burmese Empire’ described them as, “a petty nation called JO (JAW)”[6]. Sir Henry Yule, as early as 1508 mentioned about the YO country the location of which was west of the mouth of the Kyen-dwen (Chindwin) the interior of Doab, between the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin, from Mout-Shabo upwards and the whole of the hill country east and north-east of the capital, towards the Ruby-mines, the upper course of Hyitnge, and the Chinese frontier”[7].

Rev. Howard Malcolm also testified thus,

The YAW (ZO) is on the lower waters of the Khyendiwen (Chindwin) not far from Ava. The district is sometimes called YO or JO”.[8]

Another early use of the name ZO with reference to the Zomi (Kuki-Chin-Lushai), the first on the Lushai Hills side which till then was a terra incognito, was by Col. T.H. Lewin, the first white man to know the inhabitants of Lushai Hills (Mizoram). He wrote that he came to know, during the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72 that,

the generic name of the whole nation is Dzo’[9]

Dr. Francis Buchanan also wrote of Zomi and Zomi language[10], while
Captain Pemberton mentioned Zo or Jo in his Reports on the Eastern Frontiers of British India, 1835[^11]. The fact that the Zomi were known as ZOU or YO or YAW, before their society evolved into clan based organisation and lineage segmentation, was pointed out by Dr. G.A. Grierson in his survey, thus,

> The name (Kuki and Chin) is not used by the tribes themselves, who use titles such as ZOU or YO or CHO.\[^{12}\]

Rev Sukte T. Hau Go, a former lecturer of Mandalay University (Burma) also shared the same view,

> Zomi is the correct original historical name of our people, from the Naga hill to the Bay of Bengal. To the north of Tedim, the Thadous and other tribes call themselves Yo; in Falam, Laizo. The Tedim people call themselves Zo; the Lushais, Mizo; in Haka, Zotung, Zophei, Zokhua. In Gangaw area Zo is pronounced as YAW, in Mindat Jo or CHO; and in Paletwa Khomi. In Prome, Thayetmyo, Sandoway and Bassein areas they call themselves A-Sho. So, in spite of slight variations Zomi is our original historical national name.\[^{13}\]

Regarding the truth of Zomi as the racial designation of the so-called Kuki-Chin people, U Thein Pe Myint, a well known Burmese Writer, who knew Chin history, perhaps better than the Chin themselves remarks:

> Even though these tribes of people, who are called Chin, do not necessarily protest their name, their original name is, in fact, Zomi.\[^{14}\]

Two British administrators, Bertram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck who place
Zomi under modern system of administration record as thus:

Those of the Kuki tribes which we designate as “Chins” do not recognise that name……they call themselves YO (ZO)...and YO (ZO) is the general name by which the Chins call their race.\(^{15}\)

Another European writer, Sir J. George Scott also claimed that, the Zomi never called themselves by such names as Kuki or Chin or Lushai. He wrote:

The names like Kuki and Chin are not national, and have been given to them by their neighbours. Like others, the people do not accept the name given by the Burmese and ourselves; they do not call themselves Chins, and they equally flout the name of Kuki which their Assamese neighbours use. They call themselves Zhou or Shu and in other parts Yo or Lai.\(^{16}\)

It is, therefore, no wonder that Zomi use the term Zo, Zou, Zhou, Chou, Shou, Yo, Jo, Yaw, Shu, etc. in their speech and poetic language as Zo-Vontawi, Zo-lei, Zogam or Zoram, Zo-tui, Zo-fa, etc.; in naming geographical names such as Zotlang, Zopui, Zobawks; and in some of the clan names like Zophei, Zotung, Zokhua, Laizo, Bawmzo, Zote, etc. All these have a common derivation from the generic name, “ZO”. It is also because of this fact that scholars like Dr. Vum Kho Hau, Prof. Laldena, Dr. Vum Son, Dr. Tualchin Neihsial, Dr. H. Kamkhenthang, Dr. Mangkhosat Kipgen, Cap. Sing Khaw Khai, Dr. J. M. Paupu, Pu K. Zawla, Pu R. Vanlawma, B. Langthanliana, Dr. V. Lunghnema, Dr. Hawl Ngam Haokip, Pu L. S. Gangte, Pu T. Gougin, Pu Thang Khan Gin Ngaihte\(^{17}\)\(^{18}\), Rev. S. Prim Vaiphei, Rev. Khup Za Go, Pu L. Keivom, Rev. S. T. Hau Go, Dr. Khen Za Sian, Prof. Thang Za Tuan, Rev. Sing Ling etc. concluded that ZO is the ancestor of the Zo people (Zomi). However, there are several contestations that the ‘Zo’ people be recognised as
‘Mizo’ in Mizoram state of India, ‘Zomi’/‘Chins’ in Chin Hills province of Myanmar and ‘Kuki’ in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sagiang Division of Myanmar. [19]

The Origin Of The Name
There are two views about the origin of the word, ‘ZO’. The first and most acceptable view is that Zo is a person whose descendants are called Zo-fate or Zo-suante. Some scholars like Pu Thawng Khaw Hau [20] and Pu Captain K. A. Khup Za Thang presented the genealogical table of various Zomi clans in which they strongly claim that they are the descendants of Zo. Zo Khang Simna Laibu and Zo Suan Khang Simna Laibu (Genealogy of the Zo Race of Burma) [21] cover extensively the genealogy of Zomi in Chin State as well as those living in Mizoram and Manipur. Dr. Vum Kho Hau [22] and Dr. Vum Son [23] trace all the Zomi lineal to Zo. Pu Dr. V. Lunghnema wrote the Genealogy of the Hmar tribes, a branch of the Zo family, and he identified Zo as the ancestor of the Hmar clan. This interpretation of the term ‘ZO’ is substantiated by the fact that Zomi have a tradition of naming their clans after the head of each clan, thereby, Hualngo, Zahao, Guite, Singsit, Sailo, etc. clans carry each of their fore-father’s name. Likewise, it is logically true with Zo, Dzo or a very similar sounding one for the name of Zo as the founder of Zo people or Zomi. So, the word Zo is a generic name and Zomi is derived from the name of the ancestor with reference to his descendants.

The second view suggests that the term Zo might have been derived from the Zo King of the Zhou Dynasty (B.C. 1027-225) of China. The main argument in this regard is that in ancient times the names of the ruling dynasty became the identity for the subjects.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be, regarding the origin of Zomi, there is ample historical evidence to support that they are Zomi from time immemorial, and lived together under the umbrella of one cultural unity of ancient Zo.
Meaning Of The Name
On the meaning of the term Zo, there are intellectuals who translate Zo as Highlanders. This translation of Zo as highland or cold region and subsequently Mizo or Zomi as highlanders or people of the hills is too simplistic and misleading, because the people called themselves Zomi when they lived in the plains of the Chindwin Valley and elsewhere. The word ‘ZO’ or ‘Zo LO’ might mean highland or highland farms but not highlanders nor highland farmers. Pu R. Vanlawma, a veteran politician and a prolific writer of Mizoram has correctly advocated that,

> It was not the people who derived their name ZO from the high altitude of their abode, but on the contrary it was the high lands and especially the farm lands there, called ‘Zo Lo’ which derived their name from the Zo people who cultivated the farms.

The generic name ‘ZO’ has no relation with the geographical-climatic term ‘Zo’. As a matter of fact, Zo is a generic name whose word is of local origin and needs no further explanation, whereas ‘mi’ means man or people and there is no ambiguity about it. In this way of historical process, Zo people identified themselves with Zo and emerged as a race to be called ZOMI among mankind. The Zomi are, therefore, those ethnic or linguistic, or cultural groupings of people who had commonly inherited the history, tradition and culture of Zo as their legacies, irrespective of the names given to them by outsiders. Zo is the Name derived from “Pu Zo” or “Grand Father Zo”. The Legends said that “Pu Zo” was the Father of all Zomi Tribes and from him came out Zo, Sim, Mal, Thei zang, Shi zang, Thado, Paite, Vaiphei, in which Zo is the first born among others and even in other Tribes who are called Chins in Burma and Mizo India. Even some of the Naga Tribes in India have Resemblance in Language with Zo and even in Cultural Origins.
Generic Name / Imposed Names

It is unfortunate and quite confusing for insiders as well as outsiders that the Zomi, who belong to the same racial stock, shared history, culture and traditions are recognised by different names: while the Burmese called them ‘Chin’ or ‘Khyan’, the Bengalis and others in India called them ‘Kuki’, with a variety of spellings. The British added a third name, Lushai, in the early 1870s to compound the confusion. However, key British Military Officers and Civil Administrators soon realized that the people whom they called by various names were the same people and that they should be dealt with as a single group. Thus, they began to refer to them by various hyphenated names, e.g. Chin-Lushai (A.S. Reid), Lusei-Kuki (J. Shakespear), Kuki-Chin (G.A. Grierson), and even a triple hyphenated form was used, e.g. Kuki-Lushai-Chin (S. Fuchs).

What did they call themselves before terms like Kuki, Chin or Lushai were imposed upon them have been much discussed. For better understanding of our racial and national nomenclature, the origin and meaning of the imposed names may be discussed. Please click below links for further study:

Chin

As already mentioned, in Burma the Zomi are known as Chin. It has since become a matter of great controversy how this terminology originated. In this respect many scholars advanced different theories. B. S. Carey and H. N. Tuck asserted it to be a Burmese corruption of the Chins word “Jin” or “Jen” which means man. Prof. F. K. Lehman was of the view that the term might be from the Burmese word ‘Khyan’ which means ‘basket’, saying,

The term ‘Chin’ is imprecise. It is a Burmese word (khyan), not a Chin Word. It is homologous with the contemporary Burmese word meaning basket.
Implied thus is that the basket carrying inhabitants of the Chin Hills bordering the plain Burmans are Chin.

But according to Prof. G. H. Luce, an eminent scholar of the early Burmese history, the term “Chin” (khyan in old Burmese) was derived from the Burmese word meaning “ally” or “comrade” in describing the peaceful relationship which existed between the Chins and the Pagan Burman in their historical past. His interpretation was based on the thirteenth century Pagan inscription. However, the same inscription also revealed the controversial slave trade along the Chindwin River. However, in the year 1950 the Burmese Encyclopaedia defined Chin as “ally”.

This official publication was challenged by Pu Tanuang, an M.P. from Mindat (Chin State) in the Burmese Parliament. He criticized the Government for politicizing the name. The Revered S. T. Hau Go, a former lecturer of Mandalay University writes,

> Whatever it meant or means, however it originated and why, the obvious fact is that the appellation “Chin” is altogether foreign to us. We respond to it out of necessity. But we never appropriate it and never accept it and never use it to refer to ourselves. It is not only foreign but derogatory, for it has become more or less synonymous with being uncivilized, uncultured, backward, even foolish and silly. And when we consider such name calling applied to our people as “Chinbok” (stinking Chin) we cannot but interpret it as a direct and flagrant insult and the fact that we have some rotten friends.

Whatever the case may be, from the above evidence it can be concluded that the word was coined by the Burmese and it was adopted by the British officials. Investigation and research, however, proves that such a word as “Chin” does not exist in the vocabulary of the Zomi. The people themselves do not use in their folksongs, poetry or language. Even today the name remains strange to the illiterate people.
of the countryside in the very region called Chin Hills in Burma.

Kuki

Probably the first recorded used of the name “Kuki” appeared in the History of Tripura as early as 1512 AD. During the reign of Tripura Raja Dhanya Manikya (around 1490 AD), it was pointed out that, wild race called Kukees live Thannangchi Forest of Tripura. Yet the origin of the word itself is most obscure. The colonial historians divided the Zomi under two names, i.e. the “Kuki” and the “Lushai”. This was clearly demonstrated in the writing of Rawlins. In his paper published in the Asiatic Research Vol. II, p.12 he called the people “Cucis” or “Mountaineers from Tipra” by adopting the name used by the Bengali and Assamese when referring to the Zomi of Chittagong Hill Trace and Tripura Hills. Colonel John Shakespear clubbed them together and called them “the Lushai-Kuki Clans”. He even included most of the hill tribes of the Lushai Hills, parts of Manipur, North Cachar Hills, and Tripura, who have the same cultural affinity, customs and mode of living. In this he was supported by the British statesmen, ethnographers and linguists. On the other hand, he was also fully aware that the words “Kuki” and “Lushai” were not accepted by the people to whom the name applied. In fact, there never was such a word as “Kuki” in the vocabulary of any of the Zomi dialects. It is neither a clan name nor family name. The Lushai too were averse to the name Kuki. In the meantime William Shaw wrote a book on the Thadou Kuki and he tried to put all the people of the group under the racial nomenclature of Thadou Kukis. All the other tribes, except the Thadou speaking and those willing to call themselves Kuki, do not accept it at all. It has instead now become a bone of contention among the two-the Thadou and the Kuki, which is exemplified by the existence of Association/ Organisations like KSO, TSA, TKSU, TTC, etc. It is known that they even submitted a memorandum to the Government of Manipur to ban the book.

The anti-Kuki stand of the various Tribes of Manipur was further strengthened by the resolution of a meeting held on 26 June 1942 in
which they expressed their desire not to identify themselves as Kuki.

Lushai
The term Lushai, native ‘Lusei,’ is commonly used to refer to the Zomi of the Lushai Hills. It was Mr. Edger, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar who first officially used the term “Lushai” instead of “Zomi” around the year 1897. It may be mentioned that the term may have been derived from the custom of certain tribes keeping their hair long and fastening it in a knot at the back of the head (Lu-head, shei-long i.e. keeping the head long or long head). It could also have originated from the custom of head hunting (Lu=head, Shai=cut i.e. head cutting). Such interpretations or fanciful explanations were not accepted by John Shakespear, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills and an authority on the Lushai. He made it clear that “Lushai is our way of spelling the word, the proper way to spell the word, so as to represent the actual sound, as spoken by the people, is Lushei (Lusei). From this writer it is apparent that the word “Lushai” is derived from “Lusei”, the name of the most powerful dominating tribe of the Lushai Hills who rule under the title “Sailo”. However, the British later adopted “Lushai” as the official designation of all Zomi of the Lushai Hills. Then in the year 1946 the tribes of the Lushai Hills changed their nomenclature into Mizo. It was on 9 April 1946 that the Mizo Union was founded at the Muallunghu (Lushai Hills) Conference. The primary object of the Mizo Union was to bring the Zomi under one nomenclature and when the British left their country to set up an independent state of the Zomi living in the Indo-Burma borderland.

Mizo and Zomi
Synonymously and literally, Zomi and Mizo are the same, having the etymological root, ‘Zo’. The term Mizo covers all Zo peoples as does Zomi according to their respective users. It is only a matter of prefixation and suffixation of ‘MI’, meaning man or people to ‘ZO’. If ‘MI’ is prefixed to Zo, we get Mizo, whereas if it is suffixed, we get
ZOMI. According to K. Zawla, Mizo is a poetical form of Zomi. For instance, the accepted poetical expression for a barking deer and a hornbill will be Khisa and Phualva respectively, whereas their accepted non-poetical expressions are Sakhi and Vaphual. However, Zomi is more logical and is the right sequence of syllables, in contrast to Mizo. Because even the people who are more or less familiar with the word Mizo normally accept Zo-fa as the correct grammatical combination of the word when they wish to mean sons of Zoland. They do not say Fa-Zo poetically or literally. If ZOFA is deemed to be correct, Zomi should be deemed to be correct. Moreover, the term Zomi is much older than Mizo. Pu K. Zawla believes that the Zo people had called themselves ‘Zomi’ around the 14th century AD whereas ‘Mizo’ became the official name of the people of Mizoram in 1954 only when the Lushai Hills was changed to ‘Mizo Hills’.

Once Zo is accepted as the generic name of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people, affixing ‘MI’ to ‘ZO’ either as a prefix or suffix should no longer be a problem. The affix ‘mi’ was considered necessary only due to the earlier misinterpretation of the term ‘Zo’ as hill or highland. As the general population became aware of their progenitor, Zo the people may still be called ZOMI (Zo + People) or Mizo (People + Zo) and their country Zogam/Zoram. Even Mizoram is endearingly referred to as Zoram as in the Mizoram state song….. “Kan Zoram……” (Our Zoland).

In short, imposed names like Kuki, Chin, or Lushai which may have had derogatory origins have no acceptability for common nomenclature among the affected people themselves because they are:

- Alien and imposed and not born of the people;
- If they have any intelligible meaning at all they incline to be on the abusive, unpalatable and derogatory side; Only popularly used by outsiders and have not taking root in the social fabric of the tribes themselves, and There has been a tendency to reserve these terms for a particular tribe or a dialectical group and not for all the tribes as their common name.
Adoption of Zomi Nomenclature

There is a clear consciousness among different sections of the people like students, cultural organisations, social units, church groups, political segments and various organisations about the absence of a popularly accepted nomenclature for the Chin-Kuki-Lushai people. One name after another was propounded but failed to get popular acceptance. This, in spite of the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group. So the terms, Kuki, Chin, or Lushai, or their combinations like Lusei-Kuki, Kuki-Chin, Kuki-Lusei-Chin or even acronyms like CHIKUMI (for Chin-Kuki-Mizo) or CHIKIM (for Chin-Kuki-Mizo) could not be firmly in the minds of the people, who intrinsically know that they are foreign terms having no meaning in any local dialects. Two wrongs or three wrongs can not make right. They cannot but help resist because they were imposed upon them by rulers and outsiders to be their identity, without their knowledge and readiness to accept them.

It is a fact of modern history that in the past Zomi identified themselves willy-nilly either as Chin or Kuki or Lushai in order to be accepted in Military services. Today things have changed. The search for an acceptable name that is not only popular, appropriate and meaningful but is the original name for a common identity of the Zo racial group ends with Zomi, after the progenitor, Zo.

The arguments for Zomi nomenclature have been dealt with extensively in the section on the generic name, and needs no further explanation. However, the manner in which Zomi gets maximum organisations pleading for its acceptance at various levels may be highlighted as under:

In Burma, a Committee was formed in 1953 to remove the existing confusion over names for a common racial nomenclature. After thorough research, the Committee realised that they were indeed descendants of Zo, and realised they had always called themselves – Zo, Yo, Yaw, Shou, Jo and the like from time immemorial. Thus, they unanimously recommended the term ‘Zomi’ for their racial nomenclature. This was subsequently adopted in a general meeting at Saikah village at Thantlang, Chin State[7]. In 1983, after a gap of thirty years, the
name Zomi was reviewed in a Convention held at Thantlang, where out of 434 delegates from different areas of the region, 424 voted in favour of the earlier 1953 recommendation. Today the term Zomi is widely used by various organisations like Zomi Baptist Conventions, Zomi Christian Literature Society, Zomi Baptist Press, Zomi Theological College, Rangoon University Zomi Students’ Association, Zomi Literature Upliftment Society, etc.

In 1988 the Burmese Government officially recognised the name Zomi as an ethnic group of the country, and formally accepted Zomi National Congress as a political party in Burma. In their proclamation, the Zomi National Congress wrote:

We proclaim that the racial name ‘Chin’ should be done away with and Zou (Zo) must be re-instated to its proper place and status of racial identity.

On the Indian administered areas, the descents of Zo rejected the name Lushai and changed it to Mizo (People + Zo) in the 1940s on realising the fact that their progenitor was Zo. All sections of Zomi were actively involved in Mizo Union movement at its initial stage. However, some sections gradually disassociated from the movement on the ground of linguistic imposition, and their suspicion was vindicated by the Peace Accord signed in 1988 which covered only Lushai speaking areas. Today Mizoram stands as one Zomi state within Zoland, the Zomi inhabited areas of the region.

In Manipur, the question of Zomi nomenclature was not an issue until the recent factional clash between PRA/ZRA and KNF(P), which is also called Thadou-Paite conflict of 1997 in local parlance due to the innumerable loss of maximum life from the Thadou and Paite tribe. In 1971, a political organisation called Zomi National Congress (ZNC) was formed at Daizang, Manipur. It was at the initiative of the party that the First World Zomi Convention was held at Champhai, Mizoram from May 19–21, 1988. Thousands of delegates of all Zo clans from around the
world attended the Convention and declared that, ‘the people of Zo ethnic group are descendants of one ancestor, Zo’[27], It issued a historic declaration on the question of ethnic identify as follows: ::DECLARATION

::“We, the people of Zo ethnic group, 
::Inhabitants of the highlands in 
::The Chin Hills and Arakans of Burma, 
::The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, 
::The Mizoram State and adjoining hill areas of India 
::Are descendants of one ancestor. 
::Our language, our culture and tradition, 
::And no, less our social and customary practices 
::Are clear evidences of the ethnological facts. 
::Further, our historical records, 
::And footprints both written and unwritten 
::In the sands of time testify 
::To the truth of our common ancestry.

:: “Much against the interest for preservation, 
::Consolidation and promotion of our ethnic identity, 
::The British colonial rulers after subjugating us 
::During the later part of the 19th century, 
::Exercised the imperialistic policy 
::Of ‘Divide and Rule’. 
::As a result, our ancestral homeland was divided, 
::So were members of the Zo community distributed 
::Like cattle sold and separated.

::“Adding grave insult to injury, 
::The emergence of the sovereign state 
::Of India, Burma and Pakistan in 1940s 
::Had the administrative fragmentations aggravated 
::And gave birth to deeper agonies of separation 
::For the constitutional laws of respective countries
::Divided Zo ethnic origin into different nationalities.

::“For better part of the century,
::Largely because of our limited outlook
::Both in terms historical and political,
::The gravity of our uncertain situation
::And the danger for our ethnological demise
::Received no meaningful political response.
::The genocidal threat of neo-colonialism
::Against our Zo ethnic survival
::Still remain ever unredeemed.

::“Now with political consciousness gaining momentum,
::And the spirit of nationalism quickening us
::Come fuller realization of our human rights
::And of our political prerogatives
::We cannot but feel burdened
::With the paramount importance of Zo Reunification
::For preservation and existence of Zo ethnic identity.

::“Re-asserting, therefore, our faith and confidence
::In the code of comity of Nation
::For redeeming injustices done to Zo ethnic origin,
::We, the delegates to the First World Zo Convention of Zo Reunification
::Ethnically enshrined on this day
::Twentieth Day of the Month of May
::In the year of our Lord Nineteen Eighty-Eight
::Upon the alter of Zo Reunification
::As under:

::CHARTER OF AGREEMENT
I
“We solemnly affirm the truth
That members of Zo ethnic origin
Now living in Burma, India and Bangladesh
Are a people of common ancestry
Speaking a common language,
Blessed with common social,
Cultural and religious background,
And destined to common political fate and destiny.

II
We sincerely pledge and affirm
Solidarity and integration to take on
A just struggle for Zo Re-Unification
Under one Administrative umbrella
In conformity with the resolution of the Chin-Lushai Conference
Held at Ford William, Calcutta
On January 29, 1892.

III
We firmly hold the universal truth
That our political aspirations for Zo Reunification
Regardless of international boundary constraints
Are the inalienable rights of all Zo ethnic origin,
Further, we solemnly acknowledge the claim
For Zo Re-unification to be wholly legitimate.

IV
“We firmly adopt the principle of non-violence
For attaining the Zo Re unification.
We sincerely appeal to the consciences of all heads of States and Governments under whom Zo Communities are citizens respectively to recognize and acknowledge the rightful claim for Zo Reunification. Further, we appeal to one and all believing in the Universal Human Rights to lend support to the just struggle for Zo Reunification at all levels and at different stages.”

The same year a significant proclamation released by the Zomi National Congress in Burma concluded on a strong note: “We proclaim that the racial name Chin should be done away with and Zo must be reinstated to its proper place and status of racial identity.”

In early 1980s an awakening for common identity was aroused among Zomi intellectuals of Manipur. A wide ranging consultation was organised by Kuki-Chin Baptists Leaders during 1981-83. They published a book called, “In search of Identity” in which all the writers stressed on the homogeneous characteristics of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people, and recommended Zomi nomenclature. Dr H Kamkhenthang, the Editor of the booklet wrote thus:

To me Zomi is an indigenous term having its own meaning to the people. This term remained buried in the stratum of socio-cultural layers of the people that is taking its own germination though retarded by the imposition of foreign terms to which the people respond externally.

The Zomi Tribes, who are recognized by the Indian government under the Scheduled Tribes in India, would like to have a common nomenclature by
Zomi: Who They Are

which they should be known. Zomi being their original name, seven tribes from Manipur State — Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Simte, Tedim-Chin, Vaiphei, Zou adopted the name Zomi on June 26, 1993 at Pearsonmun, Churachandpur. One of the important resolutions reads thus:

Common Identity: In the continuation of Zomi movement, the members felt the necessity of having a common identity with which all tribes can identify themselves without any reservation or hesitation for unity, solidarity and safety. The leaders present, therefore, adopted the name ZOMI for common identity which will take immediate effect from today.

Today a large number of organisations have started in different parts of the world under the name Zomi viz. Zomi Christian Fellowship, Zomi Christian International, All Zomi Students’ Association, Zomi Welfare Society, Zomi Democratic Front, Zomi Christian Church, Zomi Innkuan, Zomi Nam Ni Magazine, Zomi Students’ Federation, Zomi Youth Association, Zomi Mothers’ Association, etc. Further more and more Zomi tribes realised the impropriety of calling themselves ‘Nation’ and while accepting Zomi as their national name effected a change in the naming of their tribe’s apex organisation, viz, Simte National Council was changed into Simte Tribe Council, Paite National Council to Paite Tribe Council, Gangte Tribes Union, and more and more of such progressive changes are on the offerings among the tribes. Thus, Zomi as the racial common nomenclature of all Zo descendants is an undeniable historical and anthropological fact. There is not an iota of bigotry when Zomi champion that ‘Zomi’ is the genuine national name of those who have been called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people by imposition. The remedy to having confusing names lies in calling ourselves Zomi, as Pu Dr. Vum Kho Hau, had pointed out:

Had the word Kuki or Chin or Lushai been changed to ZOMI at that
time, the right word for calling the various tribes and clans of the Zo race inhabiting the areas joining Burma, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and Assam (India) would have been answered a long time ago.\(^{[30]}\)

The era of truth and nationalism begin to dawn upon the Zomi. The name, Zomi, which remained inactive in the social, cultural layers and folksongs of the past, is now surfacing in the social, cultural, religious and political folds.

Zomi Nationalism
Nationalism, by definition, ‘is a state or a condition of mind characteristic of certain peoples with a homogeneous culture, living together in a close association in a given territory, and sharing a belief in a distinctive existence and a common destiny’.\(^{[31]}\) It ‘implies the identification of the state or nation with the people or at least the desirability of determining the extent of the state according to the ethnographic principles’.\(^{[32]}\)

This concept is particularly true for the Zomi who now live in three different countries. The ethnological unit and the relationship of the Zomi of India, Burma and Bangladesh have been conspicuously transmitted through their history, culture, social life, traditions, language, customs, folktales, poetry and songs. Before elaborating on the ethnic homogeneity of Zomi, it will be interesting to present here some important studies on the Zomi conducted by British who unanimously concluded that the Zomi in India and Burma are ‘of one and the same stock’\(^{[33]}\). On the Indian side, Lt. Col. John Shakespear, the first Superintendent
of the amalgamated Lushai Hills District, wrote his monograph, “The Lushei-Kuki Clans”, which covers all the Zomi clans living in Lushai Hills and Manipur Hills. The Monograph was written during a period of more than twenty years of service among the Zomi, and he was, perhaps, the best informed of the early administrators concerning Zomi ethnicity. Shakespear came to a definite conclusion on the homogeneity question and wrote,

There is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins, and Lushais are all of the same race.\[34\]

In his monograph, Shakespear used ‘Clan’, not ‘tribe’, consistently for the different Zomi groups because of the high degree of identity which he found existing among the people in language, culture and history. Another monograph, “Notes on the Thadou Kukis”, written by William Shaw was published in 1919. On the question of ethnic homogeneity Shaw was equally emphatic:

The Koms, Aimols, Khothang, Thadous, Chins, Lushai, Pois, Soktes (Sukte), Paites, Gangtes, etc. are undoubtedly connected. The language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again these are their customs which have a common principle running through them all.\[35\]

Commenting on the above statement, J.H. Hutton, one of the greatest authorities of his time on the Tribes of North East, gives unqualified support: “The affinity of the Thado with the other branches of the Kuki race mentioned by Mr. Shaw is unquestionable.”\[36\] Col. E. B. Elly on his “Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country” also makes this comments:
All these were people of the same race, speaking dialects of the same language, wearing the same dress, and having the same customs, form of politics, and religious belief.\[^{37}\]

On the Burmese side, Betram S. Carey, the political officer of Chin Hills, and H. N. Tuck his Assistant, were engaged in preparing a substantial book, “The Chin Hills: A History of the People, our dealing with them, and their customs and manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country,” which was published in two volumes by the Government of Burma in 1896. At the initial stage of their study they have the feeling that ‘the Chins have nothing in common with the Lushais of Assam’. However, after a thorough investigation they modified their position and concluded that:

Without pretending to speak with authority on the subject, we think we may reasonably accept the theory that the Kukis of Manipur the Lushai of Bengal and Assam and the Chins originally lived in what we know as Tibet, and are of one and the same stock: their form of government, method of cultivation, manners, and customs, beliefs and traditions all point to one origin.\[^{38}\]

They also summarize the common traits of all the Zomi throughout the Chin-Lushai Hills. Another monumental work which supports the homogeneity of the Zomi (Chin-Kuki-Lushai people) is the well known linguist, G. A. Grierson’s “Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. III, Part III, published in 1904”. Through careful and elaborate comparisons of the various languages spoken in India and Burma he demonstrated clearly the dialects spoken by the Zomi are a distinct language group under the Assam-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages.
Apart from the above scholars, every writer of note dealing with one or more sections of the Zomi has noted the homogeneity of the tribe. These include Stephen Fuchs, F. K. Lehman, B. C. Chakraborty, S. K. Chaube, B. B. Goswami, H. K. Barpujari, etc. among outsiders writing in English, and among Zomi writers Pastor Liangkhaia, R. Vanlawma, Lalthangliana, T. Gougin, Dr. Tualchin Neihsial, Mangkhosat Kipgen, Vum Kho Hau etc. all speaks of the cultural, historical and traditional homogeneity of Zomi Tribes.

The nationality of Zomi as a distinct racial stock can be elaborated on the following points:-

Common Race
People are easily tied to each other by the factor of common race or kinship. The Zomi are distinctly different from the Aryans of India and Burmans of Burma. All the Zomi tribes and sub-tribes resemble each other very closely in appearance, and their characteristics, behaviour and colour identify them as being of the Mongolian race. A unique Mongolian characteristic which is found among the Zomi is the ‘blue Mongolian spot”, which can be seen on the back and buttock of every new-born child, male or female. Being the Mongoloid stock, their skin colour varies between dark yellow-brown, dark olive copper and yellow olive. The face is nearly as broad as it is long and is generally round or square, the cheek bone high, broad and prominent, eyes small and almond-shaped, the nose short and flat, thick hair and usually straight and jet black. ‘The Zomi are well-built with strong limbs and good figures; the average height of the man is about 5 feet and 6 inches. Other common characteristics of the Zomi, as observed by Carey and Tuck are worth mentioning:

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........the main Kuki characteristics can be universally traced as –
The slow speech, the serious manner, the respect for birth and the knowledge of pedigrees, the duty of revenge, the taste for and the treacherous method of warfare, the curse of drink, the virtue of hospitality, the clannish feeling, the vice of avarice, the filthy
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state of the body, mutual distrust, impatience under control, the
want of power of combination and continued effort, arrogance in
victory, speedy discouragement and panic in defeat are common
traits throughout the hills.\[^{39}\]

These traits were quite applicable to the Zomi in the past during the
period of British rule. There are some traits which still hold good
today, e.g. clannish feeling, knowledge of pedigree, impatience under
control, virtue of hospitality and mutual distrust. The other traits
are on the wane as a result of the influence of Christianity and
exposure to outside world.

Common Religion
Religion has played a very important part in uniting the Zomi. The
Zomi were not proselytized into Buddhism of Burma or Islam of East
Pakistan (now Bangladesh) nor Hinduism of India. They maintained their
traditional belief, viz. animism up till the coming of the British
who, not only conquered but also introduced Christianity in Zo
country. The efforts of the Christian Missionaries\[^{40}\] of various
denominations were nowhere more successful than in Zo country, and it
was estimated that by 1947, about 80% of Zomi were converted into
Christianity.

Common Language
of India, Vol. III, Part III” demonstrated clearly that Zomi language
is a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. The Zomi speaks
numerous dialects, but linguistic affinities prevail among them, and
verbal or non-verbal communication has never been too great a problem.
Much less in the olden days Vum Kho Hau writes:

\begin{quote}
But in traditional songs and poetry, they still retain its
original uniformity and the meaning is generally understood by the
\end{quote}
hearer regardless of whether he comes from Teddim, Tukhiang, Assam, Manipur. [41]

Thus, not only do the old songs preserved among different clans but even the folk songs being composed at present, reveal the extent of the uniformity of language that existed in the not-so-distant past. The small dialectical differences that are there stem from the words that are borrowed from Burmese, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri or Arakanese, so that they sound mutually unintelligible to an unaccustomed ear. They remain basically the same, nevertheless. On the basis of slight differences, the Zomi language may be divided into two: R-Group and Non-R-Group. The non-R-Group (like the Thadou, Paite, Simte, Vaiphei, Zoute, etc.) has no R-sound and is devoid of some consonant clusters like Tl, Hm,... in their dialects. The R-Group includes Lushai, Hmar, Lakher, Pawi and all the so-called Old Kukis like Kom, Anal, Chiru which have R-sound and are closer to the Lushai or Hmar dialects. Professor Gordon Luce analysed 700 words of Zomi Language common to at least three Zo dialects. From these 700 words 230 words are common in all dialects of Zomi. Pu Lalthangliana also estimated that the Zomi dialects share about 60% of the words in common. About 40% are peculiar to the locality in which they are spoken. An illustration of these linguistic affinities are provided by Lamka Town in Manipur, where people belonging to various zomi groups live together and are able to communicate with ease, each using their own dialect. William Shaw also wrote:

The Koms, Aimols, Khothlangs, Thadous, Lushei, Chirus, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes, etc are undoubtedly all connected. The language also has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar.
Common History
The Zomi have undoubtedly passed through the same historical experiences, notwithstanding slight differences in its presentation, dates and figures due to the absence of written records for a greater period of their history.\footnote{42}

Common Political Aspiration
In the pre-colonial period, the Zomi were independent. They were never subjugated by the Ahom of Assam; by the Kingdoms of Tripura and Bengal; nor by the Meithei or Burman (Ava). It was only the might of a modern state (British) that subjugated them completely for the first time. The British, however, soon realized their mistakes in fragmenting unified Zo country and tried to amalgamate the Zomi in Burma, Bangladesh and India into a single administrative unit in the 1890s. However, around that time there was no political consciousness/awareness among the Zomi who could envisage the fruits of such unification. Only on the eve of Indian independence did a few Zomi leaders become aware of the implications of being scattered under three different political units. Since then the Zomi has been fighting for integration in various forms and intensity. Their just demand for uniting all the members of the Zomi nationality under the same government of their own choice and creation has not been fulfilled till today!

Geographical Contiguity
The fact that the Zomi live in a geographically contiguous area in the Indo-Burma-Bangladesh borderlands needs no further elaboration. The country inhabited by the Zo people confines between 92˚ and 95˚ Longitude East and 2˚ and 25˚ Latitude North.\footnote{9}

The whole area is roughly about 91000 sq.\footnote{10} miles with a population of about 5 millions in 1991. This is their ancestor homeland where no other nationality lived except the Zomi.
Common Culture
The existence of common cultural traits among the Zomi is another indication of their being a nation. A few examples may be cited, click the below links to read more:

Clan Songs
Possession of clan songs by the clans forming the tribes is a unique feature of the Zomi. Members of the same clan in each tribe possess clan songs which were revered and sang at the time of mourning dead only.

Agamous Marriage
The majority of the tribes follow agamous marriage in which a man can marry any woman within and outside his clan. All the major tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Lakher, Lushai, Paite, Tedim-Chin, Thadou, Vaiphei, etc. follow agamy. The only exception to this rule are the so-called Old-Kukis (Anal, Kom, Mongsangs, etc.) where there are definite wife-takers and wife-giver.

Common Folktales
There are many folktales common and current among the Zomi. They have such tales as “Khupching (Khupting) and Ngambawm”, “Thanghou and Liandou”, “Ngalngam (Ralngam)”, “Temptatpu (Tingtinpaa- the Dao sharpener)”, “A Wild Cat and a Domestic Hen,” etc. These stories are found among the Zomi in Manipur, Assam, Burma etc. in a more or less similar forms. ‘Possession of the same folktales means nothing but the people are of the same folk having similar social ritual norms and similar philosophy of life’.

Hair Dress / Styles
The Zomi in general, with some exceptions, do not cut their hair. They keep their hair long and have two coiffure: (I) The top knot on the top of the head, as in the case of Fanai, Marings, Pois (Haka), and Tashons (II) The chingnon on the nape of the neck as in the case of
Anal, Gangte, Hmar, Lushai, Paite, Simte, Siyins, Suktes, Thado, Vaipheis, Zoute, etc.

Belief in Common Origin
The different Zomi tribes hold the common belief that they originally emerged out of a cave or h***. This mythological cave is known by various names like Khuul, Khur, Khurpui, Khurtu-bijur, Sinlung, Chinlung, etc. by various tribes like Thadou (Shaw 1929:24-26), Lushai (Shakespear: 1912), Lakher (Parry 1976:4), Tedim/Paite-Chin (Kamkhenthang 1967:1-2) and Moyon-Monsang, etc.

Common System of Naming a Child
In naming a child, the Zomi have a strong emphasis on taking the names of their ancestors. In a society that is patrilineal and patrilocal the eldest son of the eldest male member is compulsorily named after the last syllable of the paternal grandfather. This rule serves as a yardstick for tracing the family lineage in successive generations.[48] Today, the Falam, Hmars, Lushai and a few other Zomi Tribes no longer practice this customs.

From the above common cultural traits everything suggest that the Zomi are one nation, inhabiting contiguous area, sharing common customs, languages, culture, folktales and history. It may be concluded with a common folk song sang by the Zomi ever since they live as one nation around Chiimnuai (i.e known also Ciimnuai) area in the early 18th century:

::'Eiteng khawlkhawm a tuam omlou,
::Vannuai chiteng KHUUL a piang;
::Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
::Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,
::Suahpih sanggam khat hi hang;
::Laizom khat hi ngeingei hang.'
Free translation:

::We, people who are in aggregation are of one stock,
::Every body under the heaven is born of a cave (Khuul)
::And born of the same mother,
::Being born of the same mother,
::We are all born together as siblings,
::We are really descendants of the same siblings.

Note: The KHUUL ‘cave’ mentioned here might be the SAIZANG CAVE in Burma. The Zo tribe of Burma and India do not claim to have emerge from KHUUL as given in this song.

Zomi inhabited area in the post colonial period

Early History and Migration

Zomi Inhabited Area in Post-Colonial

The early history of the Zomi is obscure, shrouded in myths and
legends. In the absence of written documents, it is extremely difficult to trace their early history. However, through historical, linguistics, archaeological findings, and ethnic relationships, it is now accepted that they belong to the Tibeto-Burman. Thus their movements can only be studied and identified in terms of the general movements of the Tibeto-Burman tribes. Like the other tribes of the Indo-Burma frontier areas, the Zomi too could have originated from China.

The area which lies between the upper course of the Yangtze Kiang and the Hwang Ho Rivers are believed to be the original home of these people. S. K. Chatterji also makes an attempt to identify the area of the “North-West China, between the head waters of the Hwang Ho and the Yangtze Kiang Rivers” as the origin of the “Sino-Tibetan migration into India and Burma.”[45]

Dr. Geirson wrote,

...tradition and comparative physiology agree in pointing to North-Western China between the upper course of the Yangtze Kiang and of the Hwang Ho as the original home of the Tibeto-China race, to which the Tibeto-Burman and the Siamese-Chinese groups belong”.[46]

Though acceptable because of lack of any other plausible explanation, the original home of the Zomi remain indeterminate. But still it is quite obscure to know when and how they were originated from this place.

It is claimed that the Zomi is one of the oldest groups of people who settled in Burma. Regarding the pattern of their historical movements, the theory advanced by F. K. Lehman quoted below is worthwhile to note –

Ethnic and linguistic differentiation certainly existed at an early period. The ancestor of the Chin and of the Burmans must have been distinct from each other even before they first
appeared in Burma. Undoubtedly, these various ancestral groups were descended in part from groups immigrating into Burma, starting about the Christian era. But it is also probable that some of these groups were in Burma in the remote past, long before the date indicated by any present historical evidence.\footnote{47}

There is, however, no doubt that the Zomi had entered into Burma in different waves along with other groups of people. This argument is supported by folklores, oral tradition and legends. They came into this region by different routes. Some groups had gone up into the Tibetan plateau to the north while other groups moved into Burma in three waves. The First people who migrated from China were the Mon-Khmer races, and the second wave was that of the Tibeto-Burman races which consist of the Zomi, the Burmese, Lolo, Kachin, etc.

The third wave was that of the Tai-Chinese consisting of Shan, Siamese, Karen, etc. The Mon-Khmer group moved first from Central Asia and entered into the Indo-Chinese peninsula.\footnote{48}

They mainly moved southwards following the Mekong Valley as far south as into Kampuchea and Thailand, whence by a lateral westward movement they reached Burma.\footnote{49}

The Tibeto-Burman wave, which includes the Zomi, moved south-westward, on the line of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin (Tuikang) and disbursed along the mountainous regions of the Indo-Burma areas and of Burma on its western side.

Regarding the north southward migrations, Prof. F. K. Lehman wrote:
Historical linguistics, archaeology, and racial relationships definitely indicate the ancestors of these various peoples did indeed come from the North... history shows, however, that both hills and plain peoples have moved about within the general region of South-West China and Southeast Asia over considerable distances for many centuries until recent past.\[50\]

With regard to the Zomi, it is mentioned that they had migrated from the north to the southern valley areas of the Chindwin River, and then stopped by the Bay of Bengal before turning to the north again.\[51\] Carey and Tuck are also of the same opinion.\[52\] And when they reached the plains of Burma they were divided into several groups. One group moved towards the areas lying between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers.

The other groups moved towards the south and the west of Chindwin via Hukawang valley, Zou country and Arakan before 1000 A.D.\[53\]

The last immigrants were perhaps the Lushei and Hmar ancestors who, according to Pu K. Zawla, came to the Chindwin belt around 996 A.D.

According to their local tradition, the first known settlement of the Hmar tribes was the Shan Village (Shan Khua) where they came in contact with the Shans as borne out by folk songs like the one quoted below:

:: “Ka pa lam thak a tha’n dang,
::Sinlung lam thak aw a tha’n dang;
::Shan khua ah thapo in vang....
::(My father’s step were remarkably good,
::Sinlung’s steps were remarkably good;
According to legendary sources, right from the early historical period the Zomi made their settlement in the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin valleys. After their kingdom was destroyed by the Chinese, they crossed the Chindwin and settled in the area of Kale-Kabaw-Myitha-Yaw Valleys and Panduang Hills. They made a permanent settlement in the valley areas of the river which they called ‘Tuikang’ – white water. But later the Burmese called the river ‘Chindwin’ (Cin/Chin= Burmese name for Zomi; Dwin = valley or region) and the name stuck through British acceptance.

Another theory based on folktales and legends claim that the Zomi had founded a kingdom called “Pugam” and its capital was Pagan. According to Chinese writers, this kingdom was situated between two and three hundred li (1 li = ½ kilometer) to the south-west of Yung-Chiang, a border state of China, on the north and northeast Nanchao (Thai) states of Upper Burma and Northern Siam; on the north and north-east of the Cheula (Kamboja), and to the east the seas (Gulf of Marteban) to the south (Cambodia). The Burmese and Chinese called this place “Piao-khua”.

It is said that the Zomi ancestors had settled there since 484 B.C. Fan Ch’o, a historian-turned-diplomat of the Tang dynasty, who was the author of “Man-Shu” (Story of Nanchao), 863 A.D. had identified the Chindwin river as “Mi-no-Chiang” (Chiang means River). He also mentioned the existence of three kingdoms in the ninth century A. D. They were Mino, Min-Ch’en and P’iao. Prof. Luce tried to identify the “Mi-Ch’en” (Zomi) as the ‘Man Kingdom of Kyontu’, a Burmese area situated near Waw qt, the old mouth of Pegu river, about 20 miles northeast of Pegu and P’iao with the Pyu or Pu Kingdom at Halin town in Shwabo area in Burma. Regarding Mino, it was, with Zo kingdom, situated near the Chindwin River.
As Sir J. G. Scott remarks,

Probably they (the Zomi) may be taken to be a presentiment of the Pagan Burman before he acquired Buddhism. It is also undisputed that the Thet or Sak, of Thara Keltara, who moved from to found and start the Burmese race as we know, are a Chin clan.\[63\]

The Asho Zomi tradition says that the original name of Pagan was “Pugam” which literally means country or Kingdom of our ancestors. ({{1}})

But, unfortunately, it has come to be written as “Pugan” in Burmese. Yet “Pugam”, “Pugan” and “Pagan” are not Burmese words. They are Zomi words. Moreover, Mount Popa also is simply “Pupa Mual”, a word or term absent in the Burmese vocabulary.

This undeniable fact has been approved as true by the Burmese Socialist Programme Party Research office, Rangoon.\[64\]

Apart from this tradition, the Zomi of Yaw country in the Pakokku District also claims that they had come from Pupa (Popa) hills. The Zomi folksongs give the picture of their settlement, prosperity and the civilization that evolved in the plains of Burma until the hand of Tartars (Mongols) struck them in the last part of the 13th century A.D.\[65\] Dr. Francis Mason also
mentioned that the Zomi had established an independent state in the Upper Chindwin areas.\[66\] The observation about the establishment of a kingdom is clearly evident by the terms “Kumpi”, “Mang”, and “Leng” which are equivalent to Kingship. However, their prosperity did not last long. They were destroyed by the Mongols. Lt. Trant wrote:

The interlopers disposed their king and put many of their chieftains to death; they obligated the others to seek for refuge in flight...with them went some members of the royal family, but in course of time, and from deaths and changes of residence, all traces of them were lost and they know not whether any of the royal blood exists or not.[67]

Archaeological Remains
Archaeological evidences also have clearly pointed out the settlement of the Zomi in the plains of Burma. In 1971, S.B. Khamtinzamvungh had discovered beads from necklace, remnants of copper belts, and pieces of smoking pipes, made of copper, etc. from Sabani village in the present Sagang Division of Burma. All these articles are quite identical with the articles used by the Zomi. From this finding,[68] it can also be deduced that the Zomi had their settlement in the plain areas of Burma.\[68\] Evidence of ancient manufacture of beads of fossilized wood called Chin Padi or Zomi beads which were discovered in 1904 near the pale-walled city of Wate, suggests that there were trends of communication between the Zomi and the Pagan Burmans. The Burmese too recognized the settlement of Zomi in the plain areas. Some sort of social intercourse developed between the Zomi and the Burmese. King Alaunghpha of Ava (1044-1287 AD) even established a separate army of Zomis and called the areas where the Zomi had made their settlements as Zou country or Yaw country. Yaw was derived from Zo.[69]
Entry Into Zogam
According to traditional verses, a sizeable group of the Zomi from the Kale-Kabaw valley area of the Myitha River entered the north-western corner of Burma and made their settlements there. This area or region came to be called Zogam or Zomi Country. He (Pemberton) used Jo Country and its meaning seems to Zogam or Zomi Country. Because, early writings use J instead Z. But is now called Chin State. Another group went up from the Kalemyo area and settled at Thuamvum (also known as Kennedy Peak). From there again another small group went to Nawmkailou and established a village called Zangpitam where they joined the people of Chiimnuai. Pu Thangtuan wrote:

Chiimnuai is a place situated between the modern Phaileng and Saizang villages, about 10 miles from Tedim. Subsequently, the descendants of the various northern Zomi clans spread along the different sides of Chiimnuai, and Sihzang. The Galte, Gangte, Paite, Sukte, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zoute, etc. are the branches of the Zomi people of this area.

Another later group of the Zomi who moved from the Myitha River went to the central Chin Hills and made a temporary settlement at Hmunli. From Hmunli they moved to Lailun near Sunthla Village located between Falam and Haka. According to the version of the Hualngou or Lushei and Ngawn people their forefathers originated from Seipui and Kawlni areas of the valley of the Manipur River which was running through the Falam and the Tedim townships.

As mentioned above, the settlement of the Zomi in the plain areas was severely disturbed by the invasion of the Tartars and the influx of the Shans. Thus, they fled into the hill areas and made their settlement either in caves or in cliffy areas. From this a new notion developed among the Zomi of the northern areas that they originated from Khul. For example, the people of Saizang strongly believed that
the Zomi were descendants of a couple named Thungthu and Nemvung, whom they took to have been from Leinuai (underworld) and sprung out of the khul. On the basis of this belief the people of Saizang area even today perform a religious rite by sacrificing a he-goat every year at the Khul. The same practice is done at the Lailun cave also by the Zomi people of the Falam area.[73] “For about four generations all the northern Zomi lived at Chiimnuai without any problems.” In due course there was a tremendous increase in population. Then evolved clan divisions, the institution of tulip (priesthood) on clan or family lines and the naming of clans emerged gradually. Added that “It is said that the clan system which exists today in the Zomi society started during this time.”[74]

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After some decades, the people again started to settle in different areas under different names. The practice of assuming names after the topographical or place names and the names of their ancestors began and their speech, too, began to crystallize or change into various local
It is mentioned that these people who settled at a place where “Gamsai” (a kind of wood/grass) was abundant, are called “Saizangs”; those who lived in a region of “Gang” (a kind of creeper) are called “Gangte” and those who lived in a place where “Teising” (a kind of hard wood) grew, are known as “Teizangs” while those who lived beyond the Manipur River are known as “Gaalte”. Similarly, those people
who settled down at the Thangtang-hilly place are known as Zoute and those

people who went southward are known as “Sukte”. Thus the Zo people expanded

their settlements under different names or nomenclature. Later on they emerged

as a distinctive ethnic group under able leaderships.

It is recorded that in the middle of the 14th century AD a group of Zomi people entered into Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Assam and Lushai Hills and made their settlements there. They were called “Kuki” by the plain people. The other groups of Zomi who had migrated first from Chin Hills into the Lushai Hills, Cachar, Tripura and Manipur were also called by different names, such as the Khelma, the Bete (Baite), the Rangkhols, the Langrong, the Aimagul (Aimol), the Anal, the Chiru, the Lamkang, the Kolken, the Kom, the Chote (Purum) and the Hmar (Mar).
The Hmar tribes after crossing the Thantlang and Len range of the Chin Hills settled at Champhai and its surrounding areas. They were, however, soon ousted by the Pawis. As a result, many clans of the Hmars, such as the Darlong, Dawn, Bawng, Mualthuam, Faihriam and Hrangkhawl moved westward and later along/across the Dawiartlang and Mawmrang ranges (in present Mizoram) and from there they entered into Tripura and North Cachar Hills.

The Anal migrated from the Chin Hills to Manipur via the Lushai Hills. According to John Shakespear, “the Chiru and Anal are mentioned in the Manipur Chronicle as early as the sixteenth century while the Aimol made their first appearance in 1723.” The Chirus, another group of Zomi, who settled in the areas between Phaileng and Darlawn in the Lushai Hills, migrated towards the north and settled down at Tinsuang, Sanglel, Chorui Kholen and Dolang and lastly at Luanglevaisuah in the tri-junction area of Manipur-Mizoram-Assam state of India.

The Gaalte was the first group of the northern Zomi who migrated from Chiimnuai and made their settlement at Tonglui, Suangphai, Heiki and Kawlni, bordering Ngawn area of present Falam District.

The Vaiphei began their migration from Chiimnuai to Khovaiphei in the Sihzang area and settled down there for quite some time. The tribe name “Vaiphei”, originated from there. (Kho=village, Vai=breadth; phei=plains).

The first wave of the Zomi who settled in Sadar Hills area of Manipur came to be known as the Kukis by anthropologists, whereas the second group of the Vaiphei moved during the Chin Hills Expedition (1892-93). During the years 1772-74 the Thadous, along with other tribes, like the Gangte, the Vaiphei, the Simte, the Zoute, etc. migrated into the Lushai Hills.

In 1848-49, the Lusheis (Lusheis/Luseis) drove out the Thadous from the Lushai Hills and they entered into Cachar. From there, the Thadous entered into Manipur in three groups. The first group
consisting of Sithlous, Singsons, Changsans, Lhamgums, etc. moved towards the North Cachar Hills. The second group consisting of other Sithlous and their adherents moved along the hills between the Barak River and the valley of Manipur. The third group which was composed of the Haokip clans moved up the eastern hills. The Chahsat (Taksat) chief with his followers moved up along the hills on the east of the valley of Manipur. The majority of the Doungel clan migrated from the south-western hills to the eastern hills and settled in a country claimed by the Manipur and Thangdut states. The Luseis were the last major emigrants from the Chin Hills into the Lushai Hills. They built the town of Selesih and Zoupui after crossing the Tiau River. The Zopui town was built under the leadership of Lallula in about 1765 AD.

The Lushei clans under various chiefs of the Thangur family came into prominence in the eighteenth century. John Shakespear said that from the Thangura sprang Rokhum, Zadeng, Thangluah, Palian, Rivung and Sailo. About 1870 the great exodus of the Guite from around Tedim occurred. They adopted two routes, one was northward with settlement at and around Mualpi under Goukhothang and the other party migrated into the Lushai Hills and settled down among the Luseis under Chief Poiboi. In the Annual Administration Report of Manipur Agency, 1877-78, it is stated that about 2000 persons belonging to the Sukte clan migrated during the year into Manipur territory where they settled down on lands assigned to them by the Maharajah, in the neighbourhood of Moirang, to the south-west of the Valley. These people were chiefly the Paites as they are known today. Carey and Tuck says,

They migrated, by stages, northwards and we can now trace their course by the deserted ruins of large villages and heaps of stones and stone slabs which they set up as monuments in years gone by.
There are other groups who came to Manipur from the Tedim area via the Lushai hills. From Chin Hills they entered the then Lushai Hills and finally came over to Manipur. The Luseis called them “Dapzar”/”Dapzal”. The term “Dapzal” was derived from their practice of covering the roofs of houses with split bamboos. (Dap=split bamboo; zar/zal=spread/flatten). A dialect known as Dapzal was born there whose accent is nearer to the Lushei language because of their long contact and association with them.

Another group of Paite entered Manipur in the year 1870 under the leadership of Hen-Gou of the Naulak clan. They came from Chin Hills through Mizoram. They left Dimpi Village and went to Lushai Hills and settled in Ngurtlang. At Ngurtlang they lived in a big cave called Bukpi (now Bukpui).

The Teizang group of Paites entered the Lushai Hills late in 1830 during British rule. They made their first settlement at Vapar. They were followed by some other groups or clans who founded villages at Ngur, Kelkang, Leisenzou, Sesih, Mualkawk, Lailiphai and Ngaizawl.

The Zomi movements and present settlement today, however, should not be misconstrued as an intrusion or being immigrants to a particular country because they settle in an ‘uninhabited’, ‘un-administered area’ which remains terra incognito for decades even after the arrival of the British in their country. Their independent settlement towards south of the famous Loktak Lake (Manipur) can be corroborated by the peace agreement made between the Maharaja of Manipur and Sumkam, s/o Raja Goukhothang in March 1873. Based on this agreement, the Zomi folksong tellingly delineates their country as:

::“Tuan a pupa leh Khang vaimangte, Tongchiam kangtui minthang aw,
History of Zomi Struggle
The Zomi are struggling for their Self-determination as they had before the time of Colonial System was introduced. In the pre-colonial period, the Zomi were independent. They were never subjugated by the Ahom of Assam; by the Kingdoms of Tripura and Bengal; nor by the Meithei or Burman (Ava).

It was only the might of a modern state (British) that subjugated them completely for the first time.[93]

Colonial Rule and Record
Unlike those areas of India’s north-east where indigenous peoples are in a dominant position, the hill tribes of two princely states (Manipur and Tripura) occupy an anomalous status within the Indian constitutional arrangement. Political and demographic factors like the Partition and immigration from a densely populated neighbour (Bangladesh) reduced the indigenous “Borok” people in Tripura to a minority status. Similar demographic pressures in the valley of Manipur vitiate the normally good relationship between the locally dominant community and the indigenous hill tribes of Manipur today. After British control of Assam in 1826 and of Upper Burma in 1886, vast areas of hill tracts between India and Burma still remained beyond imperial surveys and colonial conquest. Of indigenous populations sandwiched between imperial Calcutta and Rangoon, the so-called Chin-Kuki-Lushai tribes were one of the last resistant forces
to succumb to British rule. Due to linguistic affinities and geographical contiguity, their land was often described simply as “Chin-Lushai country” (Elly 1893) and the people were variously called “Chin-Kuki” or “Lushei Kuki clans” (Shakespear, 1912). Till the Lushai Expedition of 1871, the inhabitants of Lushai Hills were rather loosely termed “Kukis” or “Kookies” in colonial records. To create the deepest impressions of British power on the local societies, major military expeditions to the contiguous hill tracts between the Chin Hills, Lushai Hills and the southern hills of Manipur were always coordinated. These military strikes culminated in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 that permanently brought the Lushai Hills under colonial rule.

Following on the heels of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, the Chin-Lushai Conference took place at Fort William (Calcutta) on 29 January 1892. Significantly it was a military officer, R G Woodthorpe, who apparently initiated the idea of the conference almost four months earlier in his “Note on our Dealing with Savage Tribes and the Necessity for having them under One Rule”. From a logistic and military point of view, the administrative division of the “Chin Lushai country” impeded the operational manoeuvrability of the British frontier forces “working under different orders”. That explains why Woodthorpe lamented, “The Chin Lushai files abound in instances of difficulties having been caused by the three governments of Bengal, Assam and Burma having jurisdiction in these hills”. In the face of stiff opposition from civilian interests, some military officers at the conference advocated the administrative unification of the Chin Lushai hill tracts. A recent research in the Indian Historical Review describes this colonial tussle as “administrative rivalries on a frontier”. Since the unified administration was proposed to be “subordinate” to Assam, the chief commissioner of Burma and other non-Assam cadres in this turf war expectedly opposed the move. The Chin Lushai Conference eventually reached a compromise. While it was “very desirable” to unify
the whole tract of country known as the Chin-Lushai Hills”, it was implied that this new step would be delayed. On a positive note, it was unanimously “agreed” — not merely desirable — that north Lushai in Assam and south Lushai in Bengal would be unified “under Assam at once”.\[99\]

The delimitation of colonial boundaries at the Calcutta conference had indirect but long-term political imprint on later indigenous struggles and political possibilities. The administrative unification of north and south Lushai due to strategic concerns of military officers ironically rendered indigenous Mizo “peoples” locally dominant within a well-demarcated territorial unit in British Assam. Though unintended by the then colonial authorities, the concerns of the 1892 Conference retrospectively acquired new resonance with Zo indigenous leadership who met almost a century later at their first mammoth “world conference” in 1988 – this time at Champhai town, on the border of Mizoram and Myanmar. Usable pasts (including unhappy colonial pasts) can be rescued from oblivion to inform present social possibilities and future political imaginations. Though the second half of the resolutions of the conference was immediately implemented, the first half was destined to be aborted by new administrative developments in the shape of the Government of India Act 1935. Under this important act, the administration of British Burma was once and for all severed from that of British India. By demarcating an international boundary between India and Burma, colonial cartography mapped by the 1935 Act inadvertently partitioned an open Asian borderland — “Chin Lushai country” — inhabited by various Zo indigenous tribes referred to derogatorily as “savages newly brought under British control” in the minutes of the Chin Lushai Conference. A shared ancestral territory (to borrow Sunil Khilnani’s phrase) got “severed by the hasty scrawl of an imperial pen between India and Burma” (2004: 31). An important feature of the 1935 Act relates to the introduction of
certain safeguards in the form of Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. This ensured full autonomy in the internal administration of certain indigenous tribal polities by insulating them from the control of ministerial India. But there was an anomaly in colonial northeast India: the hill areas of two princely states (Manipur and Tripura) did not figure in the colonial map of internally autonomous Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (in quaint colonial parlance) in the 1935 Act. Since the Constituent Assembly’s “debt to the 1935 Act in particular is very great”\[100\], indigenous hill peoples of Manipur and Tripura predictably did not figure in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in independent India.

The Sixth Schedule was created by the Bardoloi Sub-Committee in which three men – Bardoloi, Nichols-Roy and B N Rau – played crucial roles. Formed on 27 February 1947, the Bardoloi Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India tried to work out within a period of five months a compromise formula between the bureaucratic dreams of a British Crown protectorate on the one hand, and the Indian nationalist haste to abolish the special safeguards enjoyed by the hill tribes under the raj, on the other. Anyway, it later transpired that the Bardoloi Sub-Committee made a curious omission of two hill areas of the north-east. This rendered the indigenous tribes of the Tripura predictably vulnerable to a serious demographic crisis in the wake of the Partition, and the hill areas of modern Manipur soon turned into hotbeds of political unrest that has spilled over into the Indo-Naga problem. S K Chaube of CSSS (Kolkota) attempts to explain why the hill tribes of Manipur and Tripura have remained outside the purview of the Bardoloi Sub-Committee – and hence, the Sixth Schedule:

The problem of the princely states, because of its all-India dimension, missed the special attention needed in the north-eastern region. Tripura and Manipur were partly ‘tribal states’ ... No special arrangement was made for the hill areas of Tripura and Manipur. Perhaps the Constituent Assembly felt that, as the integrated Indian states would be
constituted as part B and part C states under the rigorous control of the Centre, no special scheme for their minorities would be necessary.”

It was only as an afterthought that the hill areas of Tripura received in 1985 protection of indigenous rights under the Sixth Schedule. But unfortunately by then, the demographic deluge had happened. A similar demand for Sixth Schedule by the indigenous hill tribes of Manipur was snubbed by locally dominant interests. Indigenous tribal elites in the hills of Manipur were sensitive to their relatively vulnerable status vis-à-vis the special status of other hill tribes of the north-east. They also readily perceive real or imagined threats — especially linguistic chauvinism — of the dominant Hindu Meitei community that tends to forget the cultural diversity of Manipur. Further, the “postcolonial miseries” of the Zo people and the articulation of their contested indigenous identities were inflected by colonial contingencies and expedients played out in the ironies of historical trajectories.

Zomi National Movements for Re-Unification

The Democratic Burmese Parliament was dissolved and military gov’t was installed in 1962. Under Gen. Newin individuals like Ex Lt. Col. Sonkhopau, Damkhopau and Mang Khan Pau started their own resistance movement in 1964. The best organized anti-Burmese gov’t was the Chin National Organization under the leadership of Hrangnawl and Sonchinlian. This resistance movement was supported by Thualzen, Rothang and Ralhmung, Hmunhre and Tunkhopum Baite for Sovereign Zomi state in 1960’s. When the British gov’t transferred power to India, the independence of 1936 did not clarify the status for the excluded areas i.e. the Chin Lushai land (Zogam).
It is clear that the British gov’t leave the Zomi free and independent with the power to decide their future political destiny. Sadly due to their political immaturity, lack of vision and political consciousness they count not decide for freedom but choose integration with free India. In the early part of 1960’s, the Zomi Liberation Front was started in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) for liberating Zomi inhabited areas, which was disagreed with the United Chin Gov’t of Tunkhopum by Mizo National Front (MNF). In Manipur the Paite National Council under the leadership of Pu T. Goukhenpau submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India (L)Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960, demanding the formation of Chinland comprising 30 different tribes to be put under the category “CHIN”. It argued that all this are similar linguistically, culturally, physically and traditionally. The memorandum is a booklet form titled as ‘RE-UNIFICATION OF THE CHIN PEOPLE OF INDIA AND BURMA UNDER ONE COUNTRY’. This might be one significant re-unification movement among the Zo people in India. In 1962 a group of young people believing in retaining the independence and sovereignty of the Zomi formed the Chinland Independence Organisation(CIO) and it co-ordinated with the uprising of 1965. In 1966, the CIO was changed to the Zomi National Front(ZNF) and was in close contact with all revolutionaries movements in Burma which was against the Rangoon gov’t. Its main activity was to find out whether Zo/Zomi nationalist in Mizo hills, Chin hills and Manipur were interested in forming a combined forced aimed at attaining and independent Zo state. An organization called the Chin Democratic Party (CDP) was formed in 1971 under the leadership of Pu Mangtling and Wiliam Salianzam. Again some man of this party started the Chin Liberation Army (CLA). William Salianzam marched from Kachinland to Zoland with a Group of people for establishing a base at Bangladesh border for organizing a movement for Zoland. Unfortunately they were found out by the Burmese Army on the Kalemyo-Tedim road and they were all moved down with a machine gun. In 1972, on 21st January, the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) came into be at Daizang, a small hamlet near Lamka town. Its founding father was Pu
T. Gougin who declared that the birth of ZNC was the good of the age-old, down trodden people known as Zomis.\footnote{111} The ZNC’s ultimate goal is the unification of all the Zomis in the world and their political emancipation. It is true and through the activities of the ZNC that people began to gain political consciousness and awakening among the Zomis in Manipur. The ZNC is the instrumental to the birth of Zo Re-unification Organization (ZORO), the largest forum for Zo peoples re-unification movement today. The 1st world Zomi Convention took place at Champhai, a town in Mizoram-Myanmar border from 19-21 May 1988.\footnote{112} The conference attended by two lakhs people from three countries, among others made a declaration and a charter of agreement affirming solidarity and integration for the RE-UNIFICATION of Zo people in India, Burma and Bangladesh which was signed by 40 delegates representing different Zo organizations in India Burma and Bangladesh.\footnote{13}

The ZORO highlighted the caused of Zomi re-unification and political emancipation to the highest world body, the UNO and world leaders by submitting memorandum to the Secretary General of the UNO (Butrous Ghali), the Prime Minister of England (John Major) and the President of USA (Bill Clinton) and Indian Prime Minister and President (1990-‘95). The ZORO observed the 100th anniversary year of the historical conference (convened at Fort William 29-1-1892 – 29-1-1992) and made 100 year of struggle for Zo re-unification declaration signed by 100 delegates and appealed to the gov’t of Britain, USA, India, Burma and Bangladesh for the restoration of Zogam in their spirit of Atlantic Charter of 1892. Another Zomi Re-unification Organization was formed at Phupian, Kachin state of Myanmar in 1993 to achieve Zomi political goal of uniting all Zomis under one common platform i.e. a Gov’t of Zomi, for the Zomis and by the Zomis from the world of its founding President Pu Khaizasong Guite “A land or people, which was once union need to be re-unified...a broken needs to be patch up, hence re-unification...the bigs task of reunifying the Zomis and the land they occupied is the main aim of the organization.

The ZORO submitted a well documented memorandum to the Secy. Gen. of
the UNO on 20-5-1995 which contains 20 documents and memos. Clearly mentioned the struggle for the rightful cause of the Zo nation cannot be called off but shall continue till the whole ancestral homeland of the Zo peoples is brought under one administration. In the latter part of 1980’s Pu T. Zahau founded the Chin National Front (CNF) and later on he was succeeded by John Khawkimthang alias Nothankap. Pu John Khawkimthang in his address to the UN conference of indigenous people in Geneva on 27 July 1994 declared in the spirit of the ZORO charter that “The Chin or Asho Chin also known as the Kuki called themselves ZO, MIZO, ASHO, ZOMI, LAIMI, etc., formed as a nation before the advent of the British. However in 1890, our country was subdue and divided into three administrative segment and annexed to India, Burma and Bengal by the British gov’t for administrative convenience and it remain divided till today”. In 1988, the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) was re-established in Burma under the leadership of Pu Chinsianthang and Pu Thanglianpau. The ZNC (Burma) got recognition as a political Party and contested the 1989 Burma General election. The ZNC (Burma) released “The proclamation of the name Zomi” on the 6th Dec. 1988 in a book form which contains historical background of the origin of the Zo people and the evidence and proof of the racial name of the Zomi.

Zomi Nam Ni
The Zo people are proud of this day because it epitomizes their struggle for a place in the sun, a struggle that began almost a hundred years ago amongst the Zomi of Burma under the banner of the Chin Hills Union Organisation (CHUO). On 20th February, 1928 the Chin Hills Union Organisation (CHUO) was formed at Hlingzung (Mahtungnu village) in Mindat Township. The founding father of the organization were U Law Ha Hing Thang (Chairman).[14] This was a milestone in the history of the people because for the first time a home-grown political organization was formed. It also laid down the foundation for the introduction of a national day.
The first general meeting of the Chin Hills Union Organization was successfully held at Ware Village, Chin State on 29 September, 1932. The meeting resolved to work together for success in the fields of education, health, economy and social affairs. They also took the difficult and painful decision to drive out the imperialists as soon as possible. In fact, they extended their whole-hearted help in the 1936 Students’ Strike. Subsequently the political momentum picked up with the CHUO submitting nine petitions to the British Burma Government for the improvement of Chin Hills in various fields, including:

[A] to grant equal rights in administration to Zomi similar to other foreign national;

[B] to administer Chin Hills according to the rules and regulations adopted by the Zomi;

[C] to permit freedom of religions;

[D] to allow Zomi to have freedom of relationship with any nationality;

[E] to grant independence to Zomi simultaneously with Myanmar.

There was heated debate between the CHUO leaders and the British on the above memorandum. The Zomi were very angry with the unfriendly
attitudes of the British, thus demonstrations against the Government took place in various parts of Kanpetlet. The 36 members of circle Chairmen declared their resignations from the public service in defiance of the detention of Zomi political leaders. Demonstrations against the Government also took place in many parts of the area. They said that they would no longer pay tax and would not also serve as their coolies.

Furthermore, Aung San-Atlee Agreement was signed on 27 January 1947. In line with the agreement, the Constituent Assembly was to be elected to determine future administrative affairs of Myanmar. As such, Panglong Conference was held on 7 February 1947 and Panglong Agreement was signed on 12 February 1947.

Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry was formed in March 1947 under the chairmanship of the Committee, the Zomi opted to elect their own respective constituent assembly.

At the request of the Zomi, Chin Hills Enquiry Commission was formed with three members on 5 February 1948.[15] The Commission conducted enquiry from 12 to 23 February 1948 and they recommended the introduction of the rule of democratic system of administration in Chin Hills and to grant compensation to the chiefs and headmen.

A general meeting was held in Falam from 19 to 22 February to make a choice on the administrative system in Chin Hills and the election of Zomi representatives. The meeting was attended by over 5000 representatives of Zomi.

On 20 February 1948, the representative of Tedim, U Thawng Za Khup submitted a proposal in the general meeting. According to his proposal the Zomi had suffered untold misery under the hereditary feudal chiefs and headmen. They imposed heavy taxes on the common people. So, the majority of Zomi were in favour of the abolition of hereditary feudal system of administration and they would like to bring about modern democratic system of administration in the Chin Hill.

The popular vote was taken and 5000 representatives voted in favour of the proposal whereas 17 representatives voted against the proposal. Colonialism, the rule of hereditary feudal system by chiefs and
headmen were then eliminated for the first time in Chin Hills at this mass meeting and introduced the democratic system which advocates the rule of the people by the people for the people. It is landmark in the history of Chin Hills because it was the first time that all the Zomi were able to hold the general meeting and achieves national unity among themselves. So, 20 February is a historic and meaningful day for the Zomi because all the Zomi were able to achieve national solidarity and unity on this very day.

On 9 October 1950, the Chin Affairs Council decided officially to honour 20 February as Zomi National Day. Since then, the Day was observed as one of the National Holiday in Burma. The Day had been celebrated by Zomi worldwide till today although the Burmese Government officially recorded as Chin National Day. It is, therefore, the fundamental duty of all Zomi to safeguard its National Day\[114\] to preserve and maintain its culture, language, religion, and literature if we would like to keep our Zomi identity among the family of nations. The Zos in Mizoram got their statehood on February 20, 1987. Hence, this day is celebrated yearly in Mizoram as the “Mizoram State Inauguration Day” as well.\[115\]

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- Zogam.com
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Total population
ca. 2,500,000

Languages
Various Kuki, Mizo, Chin, Naga, Paite

Religion
Christianity, Animism, Buddhism, Laipian

Related ethnic groups
Naga, Meitei, Hmar, Mizo, Kuki

Zomi is the name of a major tribe found in various parts of South and South East Asia. The term Zomi meaning, Zo People, is derived from the generic name ‘Zo’, the progenitor of the Zomi. They are found in northwestern Myanmar, northeastern India and Bangladesh. Anthropologists classify them as Tibeto-Burman speaking member of the Mongoloid race. In the past they were little known by this racial nomenclature. They were known by the non-tribal plain peoples of Myanmar, Bangladesh and India as Chin, Kuki, or Lushai. Subsequently the British employed these terms to christen those ‘wild hill tribes’ living in the “un-admiral. They are Zomi not because they live in the highlands or hills, but are Zomi and call themselves Zomi because they are the descendants of their great great ancestor, ‘Zo’.

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Geographical Location
The Zomi have common primordial name (i.e. Zo) common history, cultural affinities, belief system, economic life and cherished the dream of restoring their glorious past. They remain independent, self-sufficient and were never subjugated until the advent of the British imperialist. They governed themselves according to their traditional polity and legal system ensuring justice for all. The consequences of British imperialism proved disastrous and painful for the Zomi as they were subjected to subjugation, segmentation, division and confusion. As a result their primordial identity was almost completely forgotten and neglected.

The Zomi and their land was dismembered, bifurcated and appended to three sovereign countries – India, Burma and Bangladesh – by British imperialists to fit their own administrative conveniences without Zo people’s knowledge and consent. The state boundaries within the nation-state further scattered Zomi and they became ethnic minorities wherever they are. They are deprived of their socio-economic, political and cultural rights and were subjugated as aliens in their ancestral homeland.

Nevertheless, it was the British themselves who later realized the
undeniable common anthropological, historical, cultural and ethnic traits, existing among the Zomi whom they called Kuki, Chin or Lushai. Thus, the Britishers convened the famous Chin-Lushai Conference at Fort Williams in 1982 and decided to amalgamate the Chin-Lushai country (Zoland or Zogam). The process of bringing Zomi under a single administrative unit is not realised completely till today. Initially, the Zomi were politically ignorant to take full advantages of such bold steps initiated by the British, however today, they are aware of their true national identity and steadfastly pursue the vision to restore their glorious past.

The Zomi occupy a contiguous geographical areas measuring about 96,540 sq. miles. The total population of the tribe is estimated to be around two and a half million. In Northeast India, the Zomi live in Mizoram, Manipur, the Kohima district of Nagaland, the Cachar, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, in parts of the Khasi and Jaintia area of Meghalaya, and in Tripura. In that region they are scattered through several districts of six states. In Myanmar, they live mainly in the Chin Hills, in the Khamti and Somra tracts, and in the Kale-Kabaw-Myittha valleys as well as in parts of the Arakan Hills. The Zomi inhabited the area extending from latitude 25.30° North in the Somra tracts facing Mt Saramati, and in Nagaland across the Namtalak River and North Cachar Hills, to 20.30° North. The Asho lives further South of the Arakan Yomas, Irrawaddy valleys and Pegu Yomas (below Prome and Sandaway). All these areas fall between 92.10° E and 94.20°. The North to South length of the Zo country (Zogam) is roughly 350 miles (560 km) and it is about 120 miles (192) wide.

S. T. Hau Go, a former Lecturer of Mandalay University and an authority on the Zomi wrote:

Our present geographical distribution extends from the Naga Hills and the Hukawng Valley in the north to Bassein and the Irrawaddy Delta in the south, from the Irrawaddy and Sittang
Valleys in the east to the Arakan coast, Bangladesh, Assam and Manipur in the West. In short, we occupy the mountainous region between India and Bangladesh in the west and the Chindwin-Irrawaddy valleys in the east, and the plains and valleys adjacent to these hilly regions.

One Zomi folksong tellingly delineates the area of Zogam as follows:

::Penlehpi leh Kangtui minthang,
::A tua tong Zouta kual sung chi ua;
::Khang Vaimang leh tuan a pupa,
::Tongchiamna Kangtui minthang aw”

Free translation:

::The famous Penlehpi and Kangtui,
::Between the two is the Zomi country;
::The Southern King and our forefathers,
::Made an agreement at the famous Kangtui

This old folk song clearly tells us the area of the Zomi ancestral homeland, for Penlehpi is a Burmese word for the Bay of Bengal and Kangtui is identified with Tuikang (Chindwin River). This Zogam[6] is geographically contiguous, compact and has been the land where the Zomi permanently settled for centuries. Here they lived in complete independence before the advent of the British. They lived without any outside interference and domination, and no part of her territory had been subjugated. Within their territory, they were knitted together by common traditions, customs, cultures; mode of living; language and social
life. They governed themselves in accordance with their customary laws. It was a sovereign land where the people enjoyed perfect harmony on their own.

This map is the Zomi inhabited area before colonial rule and until today which separated into three international boundaries.

**History**

**Who are the Zomi**

**The Generic Name**

F.K. Lehman, Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics, University of Illinois (USA), who had done extensive study on the Chin of Burma, said:

> No single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but all – or nearly all of the peoples have a special word for themselves and those of their congener with whom they are in regular contact. This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which appears as Zo, Yo, Ysou, Shou and the like.\(^4\)

Relating to this generic name, Fan-Cho a diplomat of the Tang dynasty of China, mentioned in 862 AD a Kingdom in the Chindwin Valley whose Princes and Chiefs were called Shou\(^5\) (Zo). In 1783, Father Vincentius Sangermano in his book, ‘A Description of the Burmese Empire’ described them as, “a petty nation called JO (JAW)”\(^6\). Sir Henry Yule, as early as 1508 mentioned about the YO country the location of which was west of the mouth of the Kyen-dwen (Chindwin) the interior of
Doab, between the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin, from Mout-Shabo upwards and the whole of the hill country east and north-east of the capital, towards the Ruby-mines, the upper course of Hyitnge, and the Chinese frontier”[7]

Rev. Howard Malcolm also testified thus,

The YAW (ZO) is on the lower waters of the Khyendiwen (Chindwin) not far from Ava. The district is sometimes called YO or JO”.[8]

Another early use of the name ZO with reference to the Zomi (Kuki-Chin-Lushai), the first on the Lushai Hills side which till then was a terra incognito, was by Col. T.H. Lewin, the first white man to know the inhabitants of Lushai Hills (Mizoram). He wrote that he came to know, during the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72 that,

the generic name of the whole nation is Dzo’[9]

Dr. Francis Buchanan also wrote of Zomi and Zomi language[10], while Captain Pemberton mentioned Zo or Jo in his Reports on the Eastern Frontiers of British India, 1835[11]. The fact that the Zomi were known as ZOU or YO or YAW, before their society evolved into clan based organisation and lineage segmentation, was pointed out by Dr. G.A. Grierson in his survey, thus,

The name (Kuki and Chin) is not used by the tribes themselves, who use titles such as ZOU or YO or CHO.[12]

Rev Sukte T. Hau Go, a former lecturer of Mandalay University
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(Burma) also shared the same view,

Zomi is the correct original historical name of our people, from the Naga hill to the Bay of Bengal. To the north of Tedim, the Thadous and other tribes call themselves Yo; in Falam, Laizo. The Tedim people call themselves Zo; the Lushais, Mizo; in Haka, Zotung, Zophei, Zokhua. In Gangaw area Zo is pronounced as YAW, in Mindat Jo or CHO; and in Paletwa Khomi. In Prome, Thayetmyo, Sandoway and Bassein areas they call themselves A-Sho. So, in spite of slight variations Zomi is our original historical national name.\[^{13}\]

Regarding the truth of Zomi as the racial designation of the so-called Kuki-Chin people, U Thein Pe Myint, a well known Burmese Writer, who knew Chin history, perhaps better than the Chin themselves remarks:

Even though these tribes of people, who are called Chin, do not necessarily protest their name, their original name is, in fact, Zomi.\[^{14}\]

Two British administrators, Bertram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck who place Zomi under modern system of administration record as thus:

Those of the Kuki tribes which we designate as “Chins” do not recognise that name......they call themselves YO (ZO)...and YO (ZO) is the general name by which the Chins call their race.\[^{15}\]

Another European writer, Sir J. George Scott also claimed that, the Zomi never called themselves by such names as Kuki or Chin or Lushai. He wrote:
The names like Kuki and Chin are not national, and have been given to them by their neighbours. Like others, the people do not accept the name given by the Burmese and ourselves; they do not call themselves Chins, and they equally flout the name of Kuki which their Assamese neighbours use. They call themselves Zhou or Shu and in other parts Yo or Lai.\textsuperscript{[16]}

It is, therefore, no wonder that Zomi use the term Zo, Zou, Zhou, Chou, Shou, Yo, Jo, Yaw, Shu, etc. in their speech and poetic language as Zo-Vontawi, Zo-lei, Zogam or Zoram, Zo-tui, Zo-fa, etc.; in naming geographical names such as Zotlang, Zopui, Zobawks; and in some of the clan names like Zophei, Zotung, Zokhua, Laizo, Bawmzo, Zote, etc. All these have a common derivation from the generic name, “ZO”. It is also because of this fact that scholars like Dr. Vum Kho Hau, Prof. Laldena, Dr. Vum Son, Dr. Tualchin Neihsial, Dr. H. Kamkhenthang, Dr. Mangkhosat Kipgen, Cap. Sing Khaw Khai, Dr. J. M. Paupu, Pu K. Zawla, Pu R. Vanlawma, B. Langthanliana, Dr. V. Lunghnema, Dr. HawlNgam Haokip, Pu L. S. Gangte, Pu T. Gougin, Pu Thang Khan Gin Ngaihete\textsuperscript{[17][18]}, Rev. S. Prim Vaiphei, Rev. Khup Za Go, Pu L. Keivom, Rev. S. T. Hau Go, Dr. Khen Za Sian, Prof. Thang Za Tuan, Rev. Sing Ling etc. concluded that ZO is the ancestor of the Zo people (Zomi). However, there are several contestations that the ‘Zo’ people be recognised as ‘Mizo’ in Mizoram state of India, ‘Zomi’/’Chins’ in Chin Hills province of Myanmar and ‘Kuki’ in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sagiang Division of Myanmar.\textsuperscript{[19]}

The Origin Of The Name

There are two views about the origin of the word, ‘ZO’. The first and most acceptable view is that Zo is a person whose descendants are called Zo-fate or Zo-suante. Some scholars like Pu Thawng Khaw Hau\textsuperscript{[20]} and Pu Captain K. A. Khup Za Thang presented the genealogical table of various Zomi clans in which they strongly
claim that they are the descendants of Zo. Zo Khang Simna Laibu and Zo Suan Khang Simna Laibu (Genealogy of the Zo Race of Burma)\textsuperscript{[21]} cover extensively the genealogy of Zomi in Chin State as well as those living in Mizoram and Manipur. Dr. Vum Kho Hau\textsuperscript{[22]} and Dr. Vum Son\textsuperscript{[23]} trace all the Zomi lineal to Zo. Pu Dr. V. Lunghnema wrote the Genealogy of the Hmar tribes, a branch of the Zo family, and he identified Zo as the ancestor of the Hmar clan. This interpretation of the term ‘ZO’ is substantiated by the fact that Zomi have a tradition of naming their clans after the head of each clan, thereby, Hualngo, Zahao, Guite, Singsit, Sailo, etc. clans carry each of their fore-father’s name. Likewise, it is logically true with Zo, Dzo or a very similar sounding one for the name of Zo as the founder of Zo people or Zomi. So, the word Zo is a generic name and Zomi is derived from the name of the ancestor with reference to his descendants.

The second view suggests that the term Zo might have been derived from the Zo King of the Zhou Dynasty (B.C. 1027-225) of China. The main argument in this regard is that in ancient times the names of the ruling dynasty became the identity for the subjects. Whatever differences of opinion there may be, regarding the origin of Zomi, there is ample historical evidence to support that they are Zomi from time immemorial, and lived together under the umbrella of one cultural unity of ancient Zo.

Meaning Of The Name

On the meaning of the term Zo, there are intellectuals who translate Zo as Highlanders. This translation of Zo as highland or cold region and subsequently Mizo or Zomi as highlanders or people of the hills is too simplistic and misleading, because the people called themselves Zomi when they lived in the plains of the Chindwin Valley and else where. The word ‘ZO’ or ‘Zo LO’ might mean highland or highland farms but not highlanders nor highland farmers. Pu R. Vanlawma, a veteran politician and a prolific writer of Mizoram has correctly advocated that,
It was not the people who derived their name ZO from the high altitude of their abode, but on the contrary it was the high lands and especially the farm lands there, called ‘Zo Lo’ which derived their name from the Zo people who cultivated the farms.

The generic name ‘ZO’ has no relation with the geographical-climatic term ‘Zo’. As a matter of fact, Zo is a generic name whose word is of local origin and needs no further explanation, whereas ‘mi’ means man or people and there is no ambiguity about it. In this way of historical process, Zo people identified themselves with Zo and emerged as a race to be called ZOMI among mankind.

The Zomi are, therefore, those ethnic or linguistic, or cultural groupings of people who had commonly inherited the history, tradition and culture of Zo as their legacies, irrespective of the names given to them by outsiders.

Zo is the Name derived from “Pu Zo” or “Grand Father Zo”. The Legends said that “Pu Zo” was the Father of all Zomi Tribes and from him came out Zo, Sim, Mal, Thei zang, Shi zang, Thado, Paite, Vaiphei, in the which Zo is the first born among others and even in other Tribes who are called Chins in Burma and Mizo India. Even some of the Naga Tribes in India have Resemblance in Language with Zo and even in Cultural Origins.

Generic Name / Imposed Names
It is unfortunate and quite confusing for insiders as well as outsiders that the Zomi, who belong to the same racial stock, shared history, culture and traditions are recognised by different names: while the Burmese called them ‘Chin’ or ‘Khyan’, the Bengalis and others in India called them ‘Kuki’, with a variety of spellings. The British added a third name, Lushai, in the early 1870s to compound the confusion. However, key British Military
Officers and Civil Administrators soon realized that the people whom they called by various names were the same people and that they should be dealt with as a single group. Thus, they began to refer to them by various hyphenated names, e.g. Chin-Lushai (A.S. Reid), Lusei-Kuki (J. Shakespear), Kuki-Chin (G.A. Grierson), and even a triple hyphenated form was used, e.g. Kuki-Lushai-Chin (S. Fuchs).

What did they call themselves before terms like Kuki, Chin or Lushai were imposed upon them have been much discussed. For better understanding of our racial and national nomenclature, the origin and meaning of the imposed names may be discussed. Please click below links for further study:

Chin
As already mentioned, in Burma the Zomi are known as Chin. It has since become a matter of great controversy how this terminology originated. In this respect many scholars advanced different theories. B. S. Carey and H. N. Tuck asserted it to be a Burmese corruption of the Chins word “Jin” or “Jen” which means man. Prof. F. K. Lehman was of the view that the term might be from the Burmese word ‘Khyan” which means ‘basket’, saying,

The term ‘Chin’ is imprecise. It is a Burmese word (khyan), not a Chin Word. It is homologous with the contemporary Burmese word meaning basket.

Implied thus is that the basket carrying inhabitants of the Chin Hills bordering the plain Burmans are Chin.
But according to Prof. G. H. Luce, an eminent scholar of the early Burmese history, the term “Chin” (khyan in old Burmese) was derived from the Burmese word meaning “ally” or “comrade” in describing the peaceful relationship which existed between the Chins and the Pagan Burman in their historical past. His
interpretation was based on the thirteenth century Pagan inscription. However, the same inscription also revealed the controversial slave trade along the Chindwin River. However, in the year 1950 the Burmese Encyclopaedia defined Chin as “ally”. This official publication was challenged by Pu Tanuang, an M.P. from Mindat (Chin State) in the Burmese Parliament. He criticized the Government for politicizing the name. The Revered S. T. Hau Go, a former lecturer of Mandalay University writes,

> Whatever it meant or means, however it originated and why, the obvious fact is that the appellation “Chin” is altogether foreign to us. We respond to it out of necessity. But we never appropriate it and never accept it and never use it to refer to ourselves. It is not only foreign but derogatory, for it has become more or less synonymous with being uncivilized, uncultured, backward, even foolish and silly. And when we consider such name calling applied to our people as “Chinbok” (stinking Chin) we cannot but interpret it as a direct and flagrant insult and the fact that we have some rotten friends.

Whatever the case may be, from the above evidence it can be concluded that the word was coined by the Burmese and it was adopted by the British officials. Investigation and research, however, proves that such a word as “Chin” does not exist in the vocabulary of the Zomi. The people themselves do not use in their folksongs, poetry or language. Even today the name remains strange to the illiterate people of the countryside in the very region called Chin Hills in Burma.

Kuki

Probably the first recorded used of the name “Kuki” appeared in the History of Tripura as early as 1512 AD. During the reign of Tripura Raja Dhanya Manikya (around 1490 AD), it was pointed out
that, wild race called Kukees live Thannangchi Forest of Tripura. Yet the origin of the word itself is most obscure. The colonial historians divided the Zomi under two names, i.e. the “Kuki” and the “Lushai”. This was clearly demonstrated in the writing of Rawlins. In his paper published in the Asiatic Research Vol. II, p.12 he called the people “Cucis” or “Mountaineers from Tipra” by adopting the name used by the Bengali and Assamese when referring to the Zomi of Chittagong Hill Trace and Tripura Hills. Colonel John Shakespear clubbed them together and called them “the Lushai-Kuki Clans”. He even included most of the hill tribes of the Lushai Hills, parts of Manipur, North Cachar Hills, and Tripura, who have the same cultural affinity, customs and mode of living. In this he was supported by the British statesmen, ethnographers and linguists. On the other hand, he was also fully aware that the words “Kuki” and “Lushai” were not accepted by the people to whom the name applied. In fact, there never was such a word as “Kuki” in the vocabulary of any of the Zomi dialects. It is neither a clan name nor family name. The Lushai too were averse to the name Kuki. In the meantime William Shaw wrote a book on the Thadou Kuki and he tried to put all the people of the group under the racial nomenclature of Thadou Kukis. All the other tribes, except the Thadou speaking and those willing to call themselves Kuki, do not accept it at all. It has instead now become a bone of contention among the two- the Thadou and the Kuki, which is exemplified by the existence of Association/ Organisations like KSO, TSA, TKSU, TTC, etc. It is known that they even submitted a memorandum to the Government of Manipur to ban the book.

The anti-Kuki stand of the various Tribes of Manipur was further strengthened by the resolution of a meeting held on 26 June 1942 in which they expressed their desire not to identify themselves as Kuki.

Lushai

The term Lushai, native ‘Lusei,’ is commonly used to refer to the
Zomi of the Lushai Hills. It was Mr. Edger, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar who first officially used the term “Lushai” instead of “Zomi” around the year 1897. It may be mentioned that the term may have been derived from the custom of certain tribes keeping their hair long and fastening it in a knot at the back of the head (Lu-head, shei-long i.e. keeping the head long or long head). It could also have originated from the custom of head hunting (Lu=head, Shai=cut i.e. head cutting). Such interpretations or fanciful explanations were not accepted by John Shakespear, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills and an authority on the Lushai. He made it clear that “Lushai is our way of spelling the word, the proper way to spell the word, so as to represent the actual sound, as spoken by the people, is Lushei (Lusei). From this writer it is apparent that the word “Lushai” is derived from “Lusei”, the name of the most powerful dominating tribe of the Lushai Hills who rule under the title “Sailo”. However, the British later adopted “Lushai” as the official designation of all Zomi of the Lushai Hills. Then in the year 1946 the tribes of the Lushai Hills changed their nomenclature into Mizo. It was on 9 April 1946 that the Mizo Union was founded at the Muallungthu (Lushai Hills) Conference. The primary object of the Mizo Union was to bring the Zomi under one nomenclature and when the British left their country to set up an independent state of the Zomi living in the Indo-Burma borderland.

Mizo and Zomi
Synonymously and literally, Zomi and Mizo are the same, having the etymological root, ‘Zo’. The term Mizo covers all Zo peoples as does Zomi according to their respective users. It is only a matter of pre-fixation and suffixation of ‘MI’, meaning man or people to ‘ZO’. If ‘MI’ is prefixed to Zo, we get Mizo, whereas if it is suffixed, we get ZOMI. According to K. Zawla, Mizo is a poetical form of Zomi. For instance, the accepted poetical expression for a barking deer and a hornbill will be Khisa and Phualva.
respectively, whereas their accepted non-poetical expressions are Sakhi and Vaphual. However, Zomi is more logical and is the right sequence of syllables, in contrast to Mizo. Because even the people who are more or less familiar with the word Mizo normally accept Zo-fa as the correct grammatical combination of the word when they wish to mean sons of Zoland. They do not say Fa-Zo poetically or literally. If ZOFA is deemed to be correct, Zomi should be deemed to be correct. Moreover, the term Zomi is much older than Mizo. Pu K. Zawla believes that the Zo people had called themselves ‘Zomi’ around the 14th century AD whereas ‘Mizo’ became the official name of the people of Mizoram in 1954 only when the Lushai Hills was changed to ‘Mizo Hills’.

Once Zo is accepted as the generic name of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people, affixing ‘MI’ to ‘ZO’ either as a prefix or suffix should no longer be a problem. The affix ‘mi’ was considered necessary only due to the earlier misinterpretation of the term ‘Zo’ as hill or highland. As the general population became aware of their progenitor, Zo the people may still be called ZOMI (Zo + People) or Mizo (People + Zo) and their country Zogam/Zoram. Even Mizoram is endearingly referred to as Zoram as in the Mizoram state song….. “Kan Zoram……” (Our Zoland).

In short, imposed names like Kuki, Chin, or Lushai which may have had derogatory origins have no acceptability for common nomenclature among the affected people themselves because they are:

- Alien and imposed and not born of the people;
- If they have any intelligible meaning at all they incline to be on the abusive, unpalatable and derogatory side; Only popularly used by outsiders and have not taking root in the social fabric of the tribes themselves, and There has been a tendency to reserve these terms for a particular tribe or a dialectical group and not for all the tribes as their common name.
Adoption of Zomi Nomenclature
There is a clear consciousness among different sections of the people like students, cultural organisations, social units, church groups, political segments and various organisations about the absence of a popularly accepted nomenclature for the Chin-Kuki-Lushai people. One name after another was propounded but failed to get popular acceptance. This, in spite of the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group. So the terms, Kuki, Chin, or Lushai, or their combinations like Lusei-Kuki, Kuki-Chin, Kuki-Lusei-Chin or even acronyms like CHIKUMI (for Chin-Kuki-Mizo) or CHIKIM (for Chin-Kuki-Mizo) could not be firmly in the minds of the people, who intrinsically know that they are foreign terms having no meaning in any local dialects. Two wrongs or three wrongs cannot make right. They cannot but help resist because they were imposed upon them by rulers and outsiders to be their identity, without their knowledge and readiness to accept them. It is a fact of modern history that in the past Zomi identified themselves willy-nilly either as Chin or Kuki or Lushai in order to be accepted in Military services. Today things have changed. The search for an acceptable name that is not only popular, appropriate and meaningful but is the original name for a common identity of the Zo racial group ends with Zomi, after the progenitor, Zo.

The arguments for Zomi nomenclature have been dealt with extensively in the section on the generic name, and needs no further explanation. However, the manner in which Zomi gets maximum organisations pleading for its acceptance at various levels may be highlighted as under:
In Burma, a Committee was formed in 1953 to remove the existing confusion over names for a common racial nomenclature. After thorough research, the Committee realised that they were indeed descendants of Zo, and realised they had always called themselves – Zo, Yo, Yaw, Shou, Jo and the like from time immemorial. Thus, they unanimously recommended the term ‘Zomi’ for their racial
This was subsequently adopted in a general meeting at Saikah village at Thantlang, Chin State[7]. In 1983, after a gap of thirty years, the name Zomi was reviewed in a Convention held at Thantlang, where out of 434 delegates from different areas of the region, 424 voted in favour of the earlier 1953 recommendation[25]. Today the term Zomi is widely used by various organisations like Zomi Baptist Conventions, Zomi Christian Literature Society, Zomi Baptist Press, Zomi Theological College, Rangoon University Zomi Students’ Association, Zomi Literature Upliftment Society, etc. In 1988 the Burmese Government officially recognised the name Zomi as an ethnic group of the country, and formally accepted Zomi National Congress as a political party in Burma. In their proclamation, the Zomi National Congress wrote:

We proclaim that the racial name ‘Chin’ should be done away with and Zou (Zo) must be re-instated to its proper place and status of racial identity.[26]

On the Indian administered areas, the descents of Zo rejected the name Lushai and changed it to Mizo (People + Zo) in the 1940s on realising the fact that their progenitor was Zo. All sections of Zomi were actively involved in Mizo Union movement at its initial stage. However, some sections gradually disassociated from the movement on the ground of linguistic imposition, and their suspicion was vindicated by the Peace Accord signed in 1988 which covered only Lushai speaking areas. Today Mizoram stands as one Zomi state within Zoland, the Zomi inhabited areas of the region. In Manipur, the question of Zomi nomenclature was not an issue until the recent factional clash between PRA/ZRA and KNF(P), which is also called Thadou-Paite conflict of 1997 in local parlance due to the innumerable loss of maximum life from the Thadou and Paite tribe. In 1971, a political organisation called Zomi National
Congress (ZNC) was formed at Daizang, Manipur. It was at the initiative of the party that the First World Zomi Convention was held at Champhai, Mizoram from May 19–21, 1988. Thousands of delegates of all Zo clans from around the world attended the Convention and declared that, ‘the people of Zo ethnic group are descendants of one ancestor, Zo’[27], It issued a historic declaration on the question of ethnic identity as follows:

::DECLARATION

::“We, the people of Zo ethnic group,
::Inhabitants of the highlands in
::The Chin Hills and Arakans of Burma,
::The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh,
::The Mizoram State and adjoining hill areas of India
::Are descendants of one ancestor.
::Our language, our culture and tradition,
::And no, less our social and customary practices
::Are clear evidences of the ethnomological facts.
::Further, our historical records,
::And footprints both written and unwritten
::In the sands of time testify
::To the truth of our common ancestry.

::“Much against the interest for preservation,
::Consolidation and promotion of our ethnic identity,
::The British colonial rulers after subjugating us
::During the later part of the 19th century,
::Exercised the imperialistic policy
::Of ‘Divide and Rule’.
::As a result, our ancestral homeland was divided,
::So were members of the Zo community distributed
::Like cattle sold and separated.

::“Adding grave insult to injury,
:: The emergence of the sovereign state
:: Of India, Burma and Pakistan in 1940s
:: Had the administrative fragmentations aggravated
:: And gave birth to deeper agonies of separation
:: For the constitutional laws of respective countries
:: Divided Zo ethnic origin into different nationalities.

:: “For better part of the century,
:: Largely because of our limited outlook
:: Both in terms historical and political,
:: The gravity of our uncertain situation
:: And the danger for our ethnological demise
:: Received no meaningful political response.
:: The genocidal threat of neo-colonialism
:: Against our Zo ethnic survival
:: Still remain ever unredeemed.

:: “Now with political consciousness gaining momentum,
:: And the spirit of nationalism quickening us
:: Come fuller realization of our human rights
:: And of our political prerogatives
:: We cannot but feel burdened
:: With the paramount importance of Zo Reunification
:: For preservation and existence of Zo ethnic identity.

:: “Re-asserting, therefore, our faith and confidence
:: In the code of comity of Nation
:: For redeeming injustices done to Zo ethnic origin,
:: We, the delegates to the First World Zo Convention of Zo Reunification
:: Ethnically enshrined on this day
:: Twentieth Day of the Month of May
:: In the year of our Lord Nineteen Eighty-Eight
:: Upon the alter of Zo Reunification
::CHARTER OF AGREEMENT

::I
::“We solemnly affirm the truth
::That members of Zo ethnic origin
::Now living in Burma, India and Bangladesh
::Are a people of common ancestry
::Speaking a common language,
::Blessed with common social,
::Cultural and religious background,
::And destined to common political fate and destiny.

::II
::We sincerely pledge and affirm
::Solidarity and integration to take on
::A just struggle for Zo Re-Unification
::Under one Administrative umbrella
::In conformity with the resolution of the Chin-Lushai Conference
::Held at Ford William, Calcutta
::On January 29, 1892.

::III
::We firmly hold the universal truth
::That our political aspirations for Zo Reunification
::Regardless of international boundary constraints
::Are the inalienable rights of all Zo ethnic origin,
::Further, we solemnly acknowledge the claim
::For Zo Re-unification to be wholly legitimate.
::IV
::“We firmly adopt the principle of non-violence
::For attaining the Zo Re unification.

::V
::“We sincerely appeal to the consciences
::Of all heads of States and Governments
::Under whom Zo Communities are citizens respectively
::To recognize and acknowledge
::The rightful claim for Zo Reunification.
::Further, we appeal to one and all
::Believing in the Universal Human Rights
::To lend support to the just struggle
::For Zo Reunification
::At all levels and at different stages.”[8]

The same year a significant proclamation released by the Zomi National Congress in Burma concluded on a strong note: “We proclaim that the racial name Chin should be done away with and Zo must be reinstated to its proper place and status of racial identity.”

In early 1980s an awakening for common identity was aroused among Zomi intellectuals of Manipur. A wide ranging consultation was organised by Kuki-Chin Baptists Leaders during1981-83. They published a book called, “In search of Identity” in which all the writers stressed on the homogeneous characteristics of the so-called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people, and recommended Zomi nomenclature. Dr H Kamkhenthang, the Editor of the booklet wrote thus:

To me Zomi is an indigenous term having its own meaning to the people. This term remained buried in the stratum of socio-cultural layers of the people that is taking its own germination though retarded by
the imposition of foreign terms to which the people respond externally.\textsuperscript{[28]}

The Zomi Tribes, who are recognized by the Indian government under the Scheduled Tribes in India, would like to have a common nomenclature by which they should be known. Zomi being their original name, seven tribes from Manipur State – Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Simte, Tedim-Chin, Vaiphei, Zou adopted the name Zomi on June 26, 1993 at Pearsonmum, Churachandpur. One of the important resolutions reads thus:

\begin{quote}
Common Identity: In the continuation of Zomi movement, the members felt the necessity of having a common identity with which all tribes can identify themselves without any reservation or hesitation for unity, solidarity and safety. The leaders present, therefore, adopted the name ZOMI for common identity which will take immediate effect from today.\textsuperscript{[29]}
\end{quote}

Today a large number of organisations have started in different parts of the world under the name Zomi viz. Zomi Christian Fellowship, Zomi Christian International, All Zomi Students’ Association, Zomi Welfare Society, Zomi Democratic Front, Zomi Christian Church, Zomi Innkuan, Zomi Nam Ni Magazine, Zomi Students’ Federation, Zomi Youth Association, Zomi Mothers’ Association, etc. Further more and more Zomi tribes realised the impropriety of calling themselves ‘Nation’ and while accepting Zomi as their national name effected a change in the naming of their tribe’s apex organisation, viz, Simte National Council was changed into Simte Tribe Council, Paite National Council to Paite Tribe Council, Gangte Tribes Union, and more and more of such progressive changes are on the offerings among the tribes.
Thus, Zomi as the racial common nomenclature of all Zo descendants is an undeniable historical and anthropological fact. There is not an iota of bigotry when Zomi champion that ‘Zomi’ is the genuine national name of those who have been called Kuki-Chin-Lushai people by imposition. The remedy to having confusing names lies in calling ourselves Zomi, as Pu Dr. Vum Kho Hau, had pointed out:

Had the word Kuki or Chin or Lushai been changed to ZOMI at that time, the right word for calling the various tribes and clans of the Zo race inhabiting the areas joining Burma, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and Assam (India) would have been answered a long time ago.\[^{30}\]

The era of truth and nationalism begin to dawn upon the Zomi. The name, Zomi, which remained inactive in the social, cultural layers and folksongs of the past, is now surfacing in the social, cultural, religious and political folds.

Zomi Nationalism

Nationalism, by definition, ‘is a state or a condition of mind characteristic of certain peoples with a homogeneous culture, living together in a close association in a given territory, and sharing a belief in a distinctive existence and a common destiny’.\[^{31}\] It ‘implies the identification of the state or nation with the people or at least the desirability of determining the extent of the state according to the ethnographic principles’.\[^{32}\]

This concept is particularly true for the Zomi who now live in three different countries. The ethnological unit and the relationship of
the Zomi of India, Burma and Bangladesh have been conspicuously transmitted through their history, culture, social life, traditions, language, customs, folktales, poetry and songs. Before elaborating on the ethnic homogeneity of Zomi, it will be interesting to present here some important studies on the Zomi conducted by British who unanimously concluded that the Zomi in India and Burma are ‘of one and the same stock’ \[33\].

On the Indian side, Lt. Col. John Shakespear, the first Superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills District, wrote his monograph, “The Lushei-Kuki Clans”, which covers all the Zomi clans living in Lushai Hills and Manipur Hills. The Monograph was written during a period of more than twenty years of service among the Zomi, and he was, perhaps, the best informed of the early administrators concerning Zomi ethnicity. Shakespear came to a definite conclusion on the homogeneity question and wrote,

There is no doubt that the Kukis, Chins, and Lushais are all of the same race.\[34\]

In his monograph, Shakespear used ‘Clan’, not ‘tribe’, consistently for the different Zomi groups because of the high degree of identity which he found existing among the people in language, culture and history. Another monograph, “Notes on the Thadou Kukis”, written by William Shaw was published in 1919. On the question of ethnic homogeneity Shaw was equally emphatic:

The Koms, Aimols, Khothang, Thadous, Chins, Lushai, Pois, Soktes (Sukte), Paites, Gangtes, etc. are undoubtedly connected. The language alone has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar. Again these are their customs which have a common principle running through them all.\[35\]
Commenting on the above statement, J.H. Hutton, one of the greatest authorities of his time on the Tribes of North East, gives unqualified support: “The affinity of the Thado with the other branches of the Kuki race mentioned by Mr. Shaw is unquestionable.”

Col. E. B. Elly on his “Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country” also makes this comments:

> All these were people of the same race, speaking dialects of the same language, wearing the same dress, and having the same customs, form of politics, and religious belief.\[^{37}\]

On the Burmese side, Betram S. Carey, the political officer of Chin Hills, and H. N. Tuck his Assistant, were engaged in preparing a substantial book, “The Chin Hills: A History of the People, our dealing with them, and their customs and manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country,” which was published in two volumes by the Government of Burma in 1896. At the initial stage of their study they have the feeling that ‘the Chins have nothing in common with the Lushais of Assam’. However, after a thorough investigation they modified their position and concluded that:

> Without pretending to speak with authority on the subject, we think we may reasonably accept the theory that the Kukis of Manipur the Lushai of Bengal and Assam and the Chins originally lived in what we know as Tibet, and are of one and the same stock: their form of government, method of cultivation, manners, and customs, beliefs and traditions all point to one origin.\[^{38}\]

They also summarize the common traits of all the Zomi throughout the Chin-Lushai Hills.
Another monumental work which supports the homogeneity of the Zomi (Chin-Kuki-Lushai people) is the well known linguist, G. A. Grierson’s “Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. III, Part III, published in 1904”. Through careful and elaborate comparisons of the various languages spoken in India and Burma he demonstrated clearly the dialects spoken by the Zomi are a distinct language group under the Assam-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages.

Apart from the above scholars, every writer of note dealing with one or more sections of the Zomi has noted the homogeneity of the tribe. These include Stephen Fuchs, F. K. Lehman, B. C. Chakraborty, S. K. Chaube, B. B. Goswami, H. K. Barpujari, etc. among outsiders writing in English, and among Zomi writers Pastor Liangkhaia, R. Vanlawma, Lalthangliana, T. Gougin, Dr. Tualchin Neihial, Mangkhosat Kipgen, Vum Kho Hau etc. all speaks of the cultural, historical and traditional homogeneity of Zomi Tribes.

The nationality of Zomi as a distinct racial stock can be elaborated on the following points:-

Common Race
People are easily tied to each other by the factor of common race or kinship. The Zomi are distinctly different from the Aryans of India and Burmans of Burma. All the Zomi tribes and sub-tribes resemble each other very closely in appearance, and their characteristics, behaviour and colour identify them as being of the Mongolian race. A unique Mongolian characteristic which is found among the Zomi is the ‘blue Mongolian spot”, which can be seen on the back and buttock of every new-born child, male or female. Being the Mongoloid stock, their skin colour varies between dark yellow-brown, dark olive copper and yellow olive. The face is nearly as broad as it is long and is generally round or square, the cheek bone high, broad and prominent, eyes small and almond-shaped, the nose short and flat, thick hair and usually straight and jet black. ‘The Zomi are well-built with strong limbs
and good figures; the average height of the man is about 5 feet and 6 inches. Other common characteristics of the Zomi, as observed by Carey and Tuck are worth mentioning:

.....the main Kuki characteristics can be universally traced as
- The slow speech, the serious manner, the respect for birth and the knowledge of pedigrees, the duty of revenge, the taste for and the treacherous method of warfare, the curse of drink, the virtue of hospitality, the clannish feeling, the vice of avarice, the filthy state of the body, mutual distrust, impatience under control, the want of power of combination and continued effort, arrogance in victory, speedy discouragement and panic in defeat are common traits throughout the hills.\[39\]

These traits were quite applicable to the Zomi in the past during the period of British rule. There are some traits which still hold good today, e.g. clannish feeling, knowledge of pedigree, impatience under control, virtue of hospitality and mutual distrust. The other traits are on the wane as a result of the influence of Christianity and exposure to outside world.

Common Religion
Religion has played a very important part in uniting the Zomi. The Zomi were not proselytized into Buddhism of Burma or Islam of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) nor Hinduism of India. They maintained their traditional belief, viz. animism up till the coming of the British who, not only conquered but also introduced Christianity in Zo country. The efforts of the Christian Missionaries\[40\] of various denominations were nowhere more successful than in Zo country, and it was estimated that by 1947, about 80% of Zomi were converted into Christianity.
Common Language
Well known linguist, G. A. Grierson in his book, “Linguistics Survey of India, Vol. III, Part III” demonstrated clearly that Zomi language is a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. The Zomi speaks numerous dialects, but linguistic affinities prevail among them, and verbal or non-verbal communication has never been too great a problem. Much less in the olden days Vum Kho Hau writes:

But in traditional songs and poetry, they still retain its original uniformity and the meaning is generally understood by the hearer regardless of whether he comes from Teddim, Tukhiang, Assam, Manipur.\textsuperscript{[41]}

Thus, not only do the old songs preserved among different clans but even the folk songs being composed at present, reveal the extent of the uniformity of language that existed in the not-so-distant past. The small dialectical differences that are there stem from the words that are borrowed from Burmese, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri or Arakanese, so that they sound mutually unintelligible to an unaccustomed ear. They remain basically the same, nevertheless.

On the basis of slight differences, the Zomi language may be divided into two: R-Group and Non-R-Group. The non-R-Group (like the Thadou, Paite, Simte, Vaiphei, Zoute, etc.) has no R-sound and is devoid of some consonant clusters like Tl, Hm,….. in their dialects. The R-Group includes Lushai, Hmar, Lakher, Pawi and all the so-called Old Kukis like Kom, Anal, Chiru which have R-sound and are closer to the Lushai or Hmar dialects.

Professor Gordon Luce analysed 700 words of Zomi Language common to at least three Zo dialects. From these 700 words 230 words are common in all dialects of Zomi. Pu Lalthangliana also estimated that the Zomi dialects share about 60% of the words in common.
About 40% are peculiar to the locality in which they are spoken. An illustration of these linguistic affinities are provided by Lamka Town in Manipur, where people belonging to various zomi groups live together and are able to communicate with ease, each using their own dialect. William Shaw also wrote:

The Koms, Aimols, Khothlangs, Thadous, Lushei, Chirus, Pois, Suktes, Paites, Gangtes, etc are undoubtedly all connected. The language also has many similarities and the syntax is not dissimilar.

Common History
The Zomi have undoubtedly passed through the same historical experiences, not-with-standing slight differences in its presentation, dates and figures due to the absence of written records for a greater period of their history.\(^{[42]}\)

Common Political Aspiration
In the pre-colonial period, the Zomi were independent. They were never subjugated by the Ahom of Assam; by the Kingdoms of Tripura and Bengal; nor by the Meithei or Burman (Ava). It was only the might of a modern state (British) that subjugated them completely for the first time. The British, however, soon realized their mistakes in fragmenting unified Zo country and tried to amalgamate the Zomi in Burma, Bangladesh and India into a single administrative unit in the 1890s. However, around that time there was no political consciousness/awareness among the Zomi who could envisage the fruits of such unification. Only on the eve of Indian independence did a few Zomi leaders become aware of the implications of being scattered under three different political units. Since then the Zomi has been fighting for integration in various forms and intensity. Their just demand for uniting all the
members of the Zomi nationality under the same government of their own choice and creation has not been fulfilled till today!

Geographical Contiguity
The fact that the Zomi live in a geographically contiguous area in the Indo-Burma-Bangladesh borderlands needs no further elaboration. The country inhabited by the Zo people confines between 92° and 95° Longitude East and 2° and 25° Latitude North.[9]

The whole area is roughly about 91000 sq.[10] miles with a population of about 5 millions in 1991. This is their ancestor homeland where no other nationality lived except the Zomi.

Common Culture
The existence of common cultural traits among the Zomi is another indication of their being a nation. A few examples may be cited, click the below links to read more:

Clan Songs
Possession of clan songs by the clans forming the tribes is a unique feature of the Zomi. Members of the same clan in each tribe possess clan songs which were revered and sang at the time of mourning dead only.

Agamous Marriage
The majority of the tribes follow agamous marriage in which a man can marry any woman within and outside his clan.[43] All the major tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Lakher, Lushai, Paite, Tedim-Chin, Thadou, Vaiphei, etc. follow agamy. The only exception to this rule are the so-called Old-Kukis (Anal, Kom, Mongsangs, etc.) where there are definite wife-takers and wife-giver.[44]
Common Folktales
There are many folktales common and current among the Zomi. They have such tales as “Khupching (Khupting) and Ngambawm”, “Thanghou and Liandou”, “Ngalngam (Ralngam)”, “Temtatpu (Tingtinpa- the Dao sharpener)”, “A Wild Cat and a Domestic Hen,” etc. These stories are found among the Zomi in Manipur, Assam, Burma etc. in a more or less similar forms. ‘Possession of the same folktales means nothing but the people are of the same folk having similar social ritual norms and similar philosophy of life’.

Hair Dress / Styles
The Zomi in general, with some exceptions, do not cut their hair. They keep their hair long and have two coiffure: (I) The top knot on the top of the head, as in the case of Fanai, Marings, Pois (Haka), and Tashons (II) The chingnon on the nape of the neck as in the case of Anal, Gangte, Hmar, Lushai, Paite, Simte, Siyins, Suktes, Thado, Vaipheis, Zoute, etc.

Belief in Common Origin
The different Zomi tribes hold the common belief that they originally emerged out of a cave or h***. This mythological cave is known by various names like Khuul, Khur, Khurpui, Khurtu-bijur, Sinlung, Chinlung, etc. by various tribes like Thadou (Shaw 1929:24-26), Lushai (Shakespear: 1912), Lakher (Parry 1976:4), Tedim/Paite-Chin (Kamkhenthang 1967:1-2) and Moyon-Monsang, etc.

Common System of Naming a Child
In naming a child, the Zomi have a strong emphasis on taking the names of their ancestors. In a society that is patrilineal and patrilocal the eldest son of the eldest male member is compulsorily named after the last syllable of the paternal grandfather. This rule serves as a yardstick for tracing the family lineage in successive generations.[48] Today, the Falam, Hmars, Lushai and a few other Zomi Tribes no longer practice this
From the above common cultural traits everything suggest that the Zomi are one nation, inhabiting contiguous area, sharing common customs, languages, culture, folktales and history. It may be concluded with a common folk song sang by the Zomi ever since they live as one nation around Chiimnuai (i.e known also Ciimnuai) area in the early 18th century:

::'Eiteng khawlkhawm a tuam omlou,  
::Vannuai chiteng KHUUL a piang;  
::Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,  
::Tuunsung khat a piang hi ngeingei,  
::Suahpih sanggam khat hi hang;  
::Laizom khat hi ngeingei hang.'

Free translation:

::We, people who are in aggregation are of one stock,  
::Every body under the heaven is born of a cave (Khuul)  
::And born of the same mother,  
::Being born of the same mother,  
::We are all born together as siblings,  
::We are really descendants of the same siblings.

Note: The KHUUL ‘cave’ mentioned here might be the SAIZANG CAVE in Burma. The Zo tribe of Burma and India do not claim to have emerge from KHUUL as given in this song.
Zomi inhabited area in the post colonial period

Early History and Migration
The early history of the Zomi is obscure, shrouded in myths and legends. In the absence of written documents, it is extremely difficult to trace their early history. However, through historical, linguistics, archaeological findings, and ethnic relationships, it is now accepted that they belong to the Tibeto-Burman. Thus their movements can only be studied and identified in terms of the general movements of the Tibeto-Burman tribes. Like the other tribes of the Indo-Burma frontier areas, the Zomi too could have originated from China.
The area which lies between the upper course of the Yangtze Kiang and the Hwang Ho Rivers are believed to be the original home of these people. S. K. Chatterji also makes an attempt to identify the area of the “North-West China, between the head waters of the Hwang Ho and the Yangtze Kiang Rivers” as the origin of the Sino-Tibetan migration into India and Burma.\[^{[45]}\]
Dr. Geirson wrote

...tradition and comparative physiology agree in pointing to North-Western China between the upper course of the Yangtze Kiang and of the Hwang Ho as the original home of the Tibeto-China race, to which the Tibeto-Burman and the Siamese-Chinese groups belong”. [46]

Though acceptable because of lack of any other plausible explanation, the original home of the Zomi remain indeterminate. But still it is quite obscure to know when and how they were originated from this place.

It is claimed that the Zomi is one of the oldest groups of people who settled in Burma. Regarding the pattern of their historical movements, the theory advanced by F. K. Lehman quoted below is worthwhile to note –

Ethnic and linguistic differentiation certainly existed at an early period. The ancestor of the Chin and of the Burmans must have been distinct from each other even before they first appeared in Burma. Undoubtedly, these various ancestral groups were descended in part from groups immigrating into Burma, starting about the Christian era. But it is also probable that some of these groups were in Burma in the remote past, long before the date indicated by any present historical evidence”. [47]

There is, however, no doubt that the Zomi had entered into Burma in different waves along with other groups of people. This argument is supported by folklores, oral tradition and legends. They came into this region by different routes. Some groups had
gone up into the Tibetan plateau to the north while other groups moved into Burma in three waves. The First people who migrated from China were the Mon-Khmer races, and the second wave was that of the Tibeto-Burman races which consist of the Zomi, the Burmese, Lolo, Kachin, etc.

The third wave was that of the Tai-Chinese consisting of Shan, Siamese, Karen, etc. The Mon-Khmer group moved first from Central Asia and entered into the Indo-Chinese peninsula.[48]

They mainly moved southwards following the Mekong Valley as far south as into Kampuchea and Thailand,

whence by a lateral westward movement they reached Burma.[49]

The Tibeto-Burman wave, which includes the Zomi, moved south-westward, on the line of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin (Tuikang) and disbursed along the mountainous regions of the Indo-Burma areas and of Burma on its western side.

Regarding the north southward migrations, Prof. F. K. Lehman wrote:

Historical linguistics, archaeology, and racial relationships definitely indicate the ancestors of these various peoples did indeed come from the North... history shows, however, that both hills and plain peoples have moved about within the general region of South-West China and Southeast Asia over
considerable distances for many centuries until recent past.[50]

With regard to the Zomi, it is mentioned that they had migrated from the north to the southern valley areas of the Chindwin River, and then stopped by the Bay of Bengal before turning to the north again.[51]

Carey and Tuck are also of the same opinion.[52] And when they reached the plains of Burma they were divided into several groups. One group moved towards the areas lying between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers.

The other groups moved towards the south and the west of Chindwin via Hukawang valley, Zou country and Arakan before 1000 A.D.[53]

The last immigrants were perhaps the Lushei and Hmar ancestors who, according to Pu K. Zawla, came to the Chindwin belt around 996 A.D. According to their local tradition, the first known settlement of the Hmar tribes was the Shan Village (Shan Khua) where they came in contact with the Shans as borne out by folk songs like the one quoted below:

:: “Ka pa lam thak a tha’n dang,
::Sinlung lam thak aw a tha’n dang;
::Shan khua ah thapo in vang....
::(My father’s step were remarkably good,
::Sinlung’s steps were remarkably good;
According to legendary sources, right from the early historical period the Zomi made their settlement in the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin valleys. After their kingdom was destroyed by the Chinese, they crossed the Chindwin and settled in the area of Kale-Kabaw-Myitha-Yaw Valleys and Panduang Hills. They made a permanent settlement in the valley areas of the river which they called ‘Tuikang’ — white water. But later the Burmese called the river ‘Chindwin’ (Cin/Chin= Burmese name for Zomi; Dwin = valley or region) and the name stuck through British acceptance. Another theory based on folktales and legends claim that the Zomi had founded a kingdom called “Pugam” and its capital was Pagan. According to Chinese writers, this kingdom was situated between two and three hundred li (1 li = ½ kilometer) to the south-west of Yung-Chiang, a border state of China, on the north and northeast Nanchao (Thai) states of Upper Burma and Northern Siam; on the north and north-east of the Cheula (Kamboja), and to the east the seas (Gulf of Marteban) to the south (Cambodia). The Burmese and Chinese called this place “Piao-khua”. It is said that the Zomi ancestors had settled there since 484 B.C. Fan Ch’o, a historian-turned-diplomat of the Tang dynasty, who was the author of “Man-Shu” (Story of Nanchao), 863 A.D. had identified the Chindwin river as “Mi-no-Chiang” (Chiang means River).

He also mentioned the existence of three kingdoms in the ninth century A.D. They were Mino, Min-Ch’en and P’iao. Prof. Luce tried to identify the “Mi-Ch’en” (Zomi) as the ‘Man Kingdom of Kyontu’, a Burmese area situated near Waw qt, the old mouth of Pegu river, about 20 miles northeast of Pegu and P’iao with the
Pyu or Pu Kingdom at Halin town in Shwabo area in Burma. Regarding Mino, it was, with Zo kingdom,

situated near the Chindwin River.\[62\]

As Sir J. G. Scott remarks,

Probably they (the Zomi) may be taken to be a presentiment of the Pagan Burman before he acquired Buddhism. It is also undisputed that the Thet or Sak, of Thara Keltara, who moved from to found and start the Burmese race as we know, are a Chin clan.\[63\]

The Asho Zomi tradition says that the original name of Pagan was “Pugam” which literally means country or Kingdom of our ancestors.

But, unfortunately, it has come to be written as “Pugan” in Burmese. Yet “Pugam”, “Pugan” and “Pagan” are not Burmese words. They are Zomi words. Moreover, Mount Popa also is simply “Pupa Mual”, a word or term absent in the Burmese vocabulary.

This undeniable fact has been approved as true by the Burmese Socialist Programme Party Research office, Rangoon.\[64\]
Apart from this tradition, the Zomi of Yaw country in the Pakokku District also claims that they had come from Pupa (Popa) hills.

The Zomi folksongs give the picture of their settlement, prosperity and the civilization that evolved in the plains of Burma until the hand of Tartars (Mongols) struck them in the last part of the 13th century A.D. Dr. Francis Mason also mentioned that the Zomi had established an independent state in the Upper Chindwin areas.

The observation about the establishment of a kingdom is clearly evident by the terms “Kumpi”, “Mang”, and “Leng” which are equivalent to Kingship. However, their prosperity did not last long. They were destroyed by the Mongols. Lt. Trant wrote:

The interlopers disposed their king and put many of their chieftains to death; they obligated the others to seek for refuge in flight...with them went some members of the royal family, but in course of time, and from deaths and changes of residence, all traces of them were lost and they know not whether any of the royal blood exists or not.

Archaeological Remains
Archaeological evidences also have clearly pointed out the settlement of the Zomi in the plains of Burma. In 1971, S.B. Khamtinzamvungh had discovered beads from necklace, remnants of copper belts, and pieces of smoking pipes, made of copper, etc. from Sabani village in the present Sagang Division of Burma. All these articles are quite identical with the articles used by the
Zomi. From this finding, it can also be deduced that the Zomi had their settlement in the plain areas of Burma.\[68\] Evidence of ancient manufacture of beads of fossilized wood called Chin Padi or Zomi beads which were discovered in 1904 near the pale-walled city of Wate, suggests that there were trends of communication between the Zomi and the Pagan Burmans. The Burmese too recognized the settlement of Zomi in the plain areas. Some sort of social intercourse developed between the Zomi and the Burmese. King Alaungphaya of Ava (1044-1287 AD) even established a separate army of Zomis and called the areas where the Zomi had made their settlements as Zou country or Yaw country. Yaw was derived from Zo.\[69\]

Entry Into Zogam
According to traditional verses, a sizeable group of the Zomi from the Kale-Kabaw valley area of the Myitha River entered the northwestern corner of Burma and made their settlements there.\[70\] This area or region came to be called Zogam or Zomi Country,\[71\] He (Pemberton) used

Jo Country

and its meanins seems to Zogam or Zomi Country. Because, early writings use J instead Z.\[72\] but is now called Chin State. Another group went up from the Kalemyo area and settled at Thumvum (also known as Kennedy Peak). From there again another small group went to Nawmkailou and established a village called Zangpitam where they joined the people of Chiimnuai. Pu Thangtuan wrote:

{{{1}}}
Chiimnuai is a place situated between the modern Phaileng and Saizang villages, about 10 miles from Tedim. Subsequently, the descendents of the various northern Zomi clans spread along the different sides of Chiimnuai, and Sihzang. The Galte, Gangte, Paite, Sukte, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zoute, etc. are the branches of the Zomi people of this area.

Another later group of the Zomi who moved from the Myitha River went to the central Chin Hills and made a temporary settlement at Hmunli. From Hmunli they moved to Lailun near Sunthla Village located between Falam and Haka. According to the version of the Hualngou or Lushei and Ngawn people their forefathers originated from Seipui and Kawlni areas of the valley of the Manipur River which was running through the Falam and the Tedim townships.

As mentioned above, the settlement of the Zomi in the plain areas was severely disturbed by the invasion of the Tartars and the influx of the Shans. Thus, they fled into the hill areas and made their settlement either in caves or in cliffy areas. From this a new notion developed among the Zomi of the northern areas that they originated from Khul. For example, the people of Saizang strongly believed that the Zomi were descendants of a couple named Thungthu and Nemvung, whom they took to have been from Leinuai (underworld) and sprung out of the khul. On the basis of this belief the people of Saizang area even today perform a religious rite by sacrificing a he-goat every year at the Khul. The same practice is done at the Lailun cave also by the Zomi people of the Falam area. “For about four generations all the northern Zomi lived at Chiimnuai without any problems.’ In due course there was a tremendous increase in population. Then evolved clan divisions, the institution of tulip (priesthood) on clan or family lines and the naming of clans emerged gradually. Added that “It is said that the clan system which exists today in the Zomi society started during this time.”[74]
After some decades, the people again started to settle in different areas under different names. The practice of assuming names after the topographical or place names and the names of their ancestors began and their speech, too, began to crystallize or change into various local dialects. It is mentioned that these people who settled at a place where “Gamsai” (a kind of wood/grass) was abundant, are called “Saizangs”; those who lived in a region of “Gang” (a kind of creeper) are called “Gangte” and those who lived in a place where “Teising” (a kind of hard wood) grew, are known as “Teizangs” while those who lived beyond the Manipur River are known as “Gaalte”. Similarly, those people who settled down at the Thangtang-hilly place are known as Zoute and those people who went southward are known as “Sukte”. Thus the Zo people expanded their settlements under different names or nomenclature. Later on they emerged as a distinctive ethnic group under able leaderships.

It is recorded that in the middle of the 14th century AD a group of Zomi people entered into Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Assam and Lushai Hills and made their settlements there. They were called “Kuki” by the plain people. The other groups of Zomi who had migrated first from Chin Hills into the Lushai Hills, Cachar, Tripura and Manipur were also called by different names, such as the Khelma, the Bete (Baite), the Rangkhols, the Langrong, the Aimual (Aimol), the Anal, the Chiru, the Lamkang, the Kolken, the Kom, the Chote (Purum) and the Hmar (Mar).

The Hmar tribes after crossing the Thantlang and Len range of the Chin Hills settled at Champhai and its surrounding areas. They were, however soon ousted by the Pawis. As a result, many clans of the Hmars, such as the Darlong, Dawn, Bawng, Mualthuam, Faihriam and
Hrangkhawl moved westward and later along/across the Dawiartlang and Mawmrang ranges (in present Mizoram) and from there they entered into Tripura and North Cachar Hills.[77]
The Anal migrated from the Chin Hills to Manipur via the Lushai Hills. According to John Shakespear, “the Chiru and Anal are mentioned in the Manipur Chronicle as early as the sixteenth century while the Aimol made their first appearance in 1723.”[78]
The Chirus, another group of Zomi, who settled in the areas between Phaileng and Darlawn in the Lushai Hills, migrated towards the north and settled down at Tinsuang, Sanglel, Chorui Kholen and Dolang and lastly at Luanglevaisuah in the tri-junction area of Manipur-Mizoram-Assam state of India.
The Gaalte was the first group of the northern Zomi who migrated from Chiimnuai and made their settlement at Tonglui, Suangphai, Heiki and Kawlni, bordering Ngawn area of present Falam District.[79]
The Vaiphei began their migration from Chiimnuai to Khovaiphei in the Sihzang area and settled down there for quite some time. The tribe name “Vaiphei”, originated from there. (Kho=village, Vai= breadth; phei=plains).
The first wave of the Zomi who settled in Sadar Hills area of Manipur came to be known as the Kukis by anthropologists, whereas the second group of the Vaiphei moved during the Chin Hills Expedition (1892-93).[80] During the years 1772-74 the Thadous, along with other tribes, like the Gangte, the Vaiphei, the Simte, the Zoute, etc. migrated into the Lushai Hills.
In 1848-49, the Lusheis (Lusheis/Luseis) drove out the Thadous from the Lushai Hills and they entered into Cachar.[81] From there, the Thadous entered into Manipur in three groups. The first group consisting of Sithlous, Singsons, Changsan, Lhamgums, etc. moved towards the North Cachar Hills. The second group consisting of other Sitlous and their adherents moved along the hills between the Barak River and the valley of Manipur.[82] The third group which was composed of the Haokip clans moved up the eastern hills. The
Chahsat (Taksat) chief with his followers moved up along the hills on the east of the valley of Manipur.\textsuperscript{[83]} The majority of the Doungel clan migrated from the south-western hills to the eastern hills and settled in a country claimed by the Manipur and Thangdut states.

The Luseis were the last major emigrants from the Chin Hills into the Lushai Hills. They built the town of Selesih and Zoupui after crossing the Tiau River. The Zopui town was built under the leadership of Lallula in about 1765 AD.\textsuperscript{[84]}

The Lushei clans under various chiefs of the Thangur family came into prominence in the eighteenth century. John Shakespear said that from the Thangura sprang Rokhum, Zadeng, Thangluah, Palian, Rivung and Sailo.\textsuperscript{[85]} About 1870 the great exodus of the Guite from around Tedim occurred.\textsuperscript{[86]} They adopted two routes, one was northward with settlement at and around Mualpi under Goukhothang and the other party migrated into the Lushai Hills and settled down among the Luseis under Chief Poiboi.\textsuperscript{[87]} In the Annual Administration Report of Manipur Agency, 1877-78, it is stated that about 2000 persons belonging to the Sukte clan migrated during the year into Manipur territory where they settled down on lands assigned to them by the Maharajah, in the neighbourhood of Moirang, to the south-west of the Valley.\textsuperscript{[88]} These people were chiefly the Paites as they are known today. Carey and Tuck says,

\begin{quote}
They migrated, by stages, northwards and we can now trace their course by the deserted ruins of large villages and heaps of stones and stone slabs which they set up as monuments in years gone by.\textsuperscript{[89]}
\end{quote}

There are other groups who came to Manipur from the Tedim area via
the Lushai hills. From Chin Hills they entered the then Lushai Hills and finally came over to Manipur. The Luseis called them “Dapzar”/“Dapzal”. The term “Dapzal” was derived from their practice of covering the roofs of houses with split bamboos. (Dap=split bamboo; zar/zal=spread/flatten). A dialect known as Dapzal was born there whose accent is nearer to the Lushei language because of their long contact and association with them. Another group of Paite entered Manipur in the year 1870 under the leadership of Hen-Gou of the Naulak clan. They came from Chin Hills through Mizoram. They left Dimpi Village and went to Lushai Hills and settled in Ngurtlang. At Ngurtlang they lived in a big cave called Bukpi (now Bukpui).

The Teizang group of Paites entered the Lushai Hills late in 1830 during British rule. They made their first settlement at Vapar. They were followed by some other groups or clans who founded villages at Ngur, Kelkang, Leisenzou, Sesih, Mualkawk, Lailiphai and Ngaizawl.

The Zomi movements and present settlement today, however, should not be misconstrued as an intrusion or being immigrants to a particular country because they settle in an ‘uninhabited’, ‘un-administered area’ which remains terra incognito for decades even after the arrival of the British in their country. Their independent settlement towards south of the famous Loktak Lake (Manipur) can be corroborated by the peace agreement made between the Maharaja of Manipur and Sumkam, s/o Raja Goukhothang in March 1873. Based on this agreement, the Zomi folksong tellingly delineates their country as:

::“Tuan a pupa leh Khang vaimangte,
::Tongchiam kangtui minthang aw,
::Pu leh Pi leh kangtui minthang,
::A tua Zota kual hî e.”
::(Free Translation:
::Our fore-fathers had a promise with the Meiteis of Loktak;
::From the famous Loktak to Chindwin,
::It is the land of the Zomi).

History of Zomi Struggle
The Zomi are struggling for their Self-determination as they had before the time of Colonial System was introduced. In the pre-colonial period, the Zomi were independent. They were never subjugated by the Ahom of Assam; by the Kingdoms of Tripura and Bengal; nor by the Meithei or Burman (Ava).

It was only the might of a modern state (British) that subjugated them completely for the first time.\[93\]

Colonial Rule and Record
Unlike those areas of India’s north-east where indigenous peoples are in a dominant position, the hill tribes of two princely states (Manipur and Tripura) occupy an anomalous status within the Indian constitutional arrangement. Political and demographic factors like the Partition and immigration from a densely populated neighbour (Bangladesh) reduced the indigenous “Borok” people in Tripura to a minority status. Similar demographic pressures in the valley of Manipur vitiate the normally good relationship between the locally dominant community and the indigenous hill tribes of Manipur today. After British control of Assam in 1826 and of Upper Burma in 1886, vast areas of hill tracts between India and Burma still remained beyond imperial surveys and colonial conquest. Of indigenous
populations sandwiched between imperial Calcutta and Rangoon, the so-called Chin-Kuki-Lushai tribes were one of the last resistant forces to succumb to British rule. Due to linguistic affinities and geographical contiguity, their land was often described simply as “Chin-Lushai country” (Elly 1893) and the people were variously called “Chin-Kuki” or “Lushei Kuki clans” (Shakespear, 1912). Till the Lushai Expedition of 1871, the inhabitants of Lushai Hills were rather loosely termed “Kukis” or “Kookies” in colonial records. To create the deepest impressions of British power on the local societies, major military expeditions to the contiguous hill tracts between the Chin Hills, Lushai Hills and the southern hills of Manipur were always coordinated. These military strikes culminated in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 that permanently brought the Lushai Hills under colonial rule.

Following on the heels of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, the Chin-Lushai Conference took place at Fort William (Calcutta) on 29 January 1892. Significantly it was a military officer, R G Woodthorpe, who apparently initiated the idea of the conference almost four months earlier in his “Note on our Dealing with Savage Tribes and the Necessity for having them under One Rule”. From a logistic and military point of view, the administrative division of the “Chin Lushai country” impeded the operational manoeuvrability of the British frontier forces “working under different orders”. That explains why Woodthorpe lamented, “The Chin Lushai files abound in instances of difficulties having been caused by the three governments of Bengal, Assam and Burma having jurisdiction in these hills”. In the face of stiff opposition from civilian interests, some military officers at the conference advocated the administrative unification of the Chin Lushai hill tracts. A recent research in the Indian Historical Review describes this colonial tussle as “administrative rivalries on a frontier”. Since the unified administration was proposed to be “subordinate” to Assam, the chief commissioner of Burma and other
non-Assam cadres in this turf war expectedly opposed the move. The Chin Lushai Conference eventually reached a compromise. While it was “very desirable” to unify

the whole tract of country known as the Chin-Lushai Hills”, it was implied that this new step would be delayed. On a positive note, it was unanimously “agreed” – not merely desirable – that north Lushai in Assam and south Lushai in Bengal would be unified “under Assam at once”.

The delimitation of colonial boundaries at the Calcutta conference had indirect but long-term political imprint on later indigenous struggles and political possibilities. The administrative unification of north and south Lushai due to strategic concerns of military officers ironically rendered indigenous Mizo “peoples” locally dominant within a well-demarcated territorial unit in British Assam. Though unintended by the then colonial authorities, the concerns of the 1892 Conference retrospectively acquired new resonance with Zo indigenous leadership who met almost a century later at their first mammoth “world conference” in 1988 – this time at Champhai town, on the border of Mizoram and Myanmar. Usable pasts (including unhappy colonial pasts) can be rescued from oblivion to inform present social possibilities and future political imaginations.

Though the second half of the resolutions of the conference was immediately implemented, the first half was destined to be aborted by new administrative developments in the shape of the Government of India Act 1935. Under this important act, the administration of British Burma was once and for all severed from that of British India. By demarcating an international boundary between India and Burma, colonial cartography mapped by the 1935 Act inadvertently partitioned an open Asian borderland – “Chin Lushai country” – inhabited by various Zo indigenous tribes referred to derogatorily
as “savages newly brought under British control” in the minutes of the Chin Lushai Conference. A shared ancestral territory (to borrow Sunil Khilnani’s phrase) got “severed by the hasty scrawl of an imperial pen between India and Burma” (2004: 31).

An important feature of the 1935 Act relates to the introduction of certain safeguards in the form of Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. This ensured full autonomy in the internal administration of certain indigenous tribal polities by insulating them from the control of ministerial India. But there was an anomaly in colonial northeast India: the hill areas of two princely states (Manipur and Tripura) did not figure in the colonial map of internally autonomous Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (in quaint colonial parlance) in the 1935 Act. Since the Constituent Assembly’s “debt to the 1935 Act in particular is very great”[100], indigenous hill peoples of Manipur and Tripura predictably did not figure in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in independent India.

The Sixth Schedule was created by the Bardoloi Sub-Committee in which three men – Bardoloi, Nichols-Roy and B N Rau – played crucial roles. Formed on 27 February 1947, the Bardoloi Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India tried to work out within a period of five months a compromise formula between the bureaucratic dreams of a British Crown protectorate on the one hand, and the Indian nationalist haste to abolish the special safeguards enjoyed by the hill tribes under the raj, on the other. Anyway, it later transpired that the Bardoloi Sub-Committee made a curious omission of two hill areas of the north-east. This rendered the indigenous tribes of the Tripura predictably vulnerable to a serious demographic crisis in the wake of the Partition, and the hill areas of modern Manipur soon turned into hotbeds of political unrest that has spilled over into the Indo-Naga problem. S K Chaube of CSSS (Kolkata) attempts to explain why the hill tribes of Manipur and Tripura have remained outside the purview of the Bardoloi Sub-Committee – and hence, the Sixth
Schedule:

The problem of the princely states, because of its all-India dimension, missed the special attention needed in the north-eastern region. Tripura and Manipur were partly ‘tribal states’ … No special arrangement was made for the hill areas of Tripura and Manipur. Perhaps the Constituent Assembly felt that, as the integrated Indian states would be constituted as part B and part C states under the rigorous control of the Centre, no special scheme for their minorities would be necessary.”[10]

It was only as an afterthought that the hill areas of Tripura received in 1985 protection of indigenous rights under the Sixth Schedule. But unfortunately by then, the demographic deluge had happened. A similar demand for Sixth Schedule by the indigenous hill tribes of Manipur was snubbed by locally dominant interests. Indigenous tribal elites in the hills of Manipur were sensitive to their relatively vulnerable status vis-à-vis the special status of other hill tribes of the north-east. They also readily perceive real or imagined threats – especially linguistic chauvinism – of the dominant Hindu Meitei community that tends to forget the cultural diversity of Manipur. Further, the “postcolonial miseries” of the Zo people and the articulation of their contested indigenous identities were inflected by colonial contingencies and expediens played out

in the ironies of historical trajectories.

Zomi National Movements for Re-Unification
The Democratic Burmese Parliament was dissolved and military gov’t
was installed in 1962. Under Gen. Newin individuals like Ex Lt. Col. Sonkhopau, Damkhopau and Mang Khan Pau started their own resistance movement in 1964. The best organized anti-Burmese gov’t was the Chin National Organization under the leadership of Hrangnawl and Sonchinlian. This resistance movement was supported by Thualzen, Rothang and Ralhmung, Hmunhre and Tunkhopum Baite for Sovereign Zomi state in 1960’s. When the British gov’t transferred power to India, the independence of 1936 did not clarify the status for the excluded areas i.e. the Chin Lushai land (Zogam).

It is clear that the British gov’t leave the Zomi free and independent with the power to decide their future political destiny. Sadly due to their political immaturity, lack of vision and political consciousness they count not decide for freedom but choose integration with free India. In the early part of 1960’s, the Zomi Liberation Front was started in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) for liberating Zomi inhabited areas, which was disagreed with the United Chin Gov’t of Tunkhopum by Mizo National Front (MNF). In Manipur the Paite National Council under the leadership of Pu T. Goukhenpau submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India (L) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960, demanding the formation of Chinland comprising 30 different tribes to be put under the category “CHIN”. It argued that all this are similar linguistically, culturally, physically and traditionally. The memorandum is a booklet form titled as ‘RE-UNIFICATION OF THE CHIN PEOPLE OF INDIA AND BURMA UNDER ONE COUNTRY’. This might be one significant re-unification movement among the Zo people in India. In 1962 a group of young people believing in retaining the independence and sovereignty of the Zomi formed the Chinland Independence Organisation(CIO) and it co-ordinated with the uprising of 1965.

In 1966, the CIO was changed to the Zomi National Front(ZNF) and was in close contact with all revolutionaries movements in Burma which was against the Rangoon gov’t. Its main activity was
to find out whether Zo/Zomi nationalist in Mizo hills, Chin hills and Manipur were interested in forming a combined force aimed at attaining an independent Zo state. An organization called the Chin Democratic Party (CDP) was formed in 1971 under the leadership of Pu Mangtling and William Salianzam. Again some members of this party started the Chin Liberation Army (CLA). William Salianzam marched from Kachinland to Zoland with a group of people for establishing a base at Bangladesh border for organizing a movement for Zoland. Unfortunately they were found out by the Burmese Army on the Kalemyo-Tedim road and they were all moved down with a machine gun. In 1972, on 21st January, the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) came into being at Daizang, a small hamlet near Lamka town. Its founding father was Pu T. Gougin who declared that the birth of ZNC was the good of the age-old, down trodden people known as Zomis. The ZNC’s ultimate goal is the unification of all the Zomis in the world and their political emancipation. It is true and through the activities of the ZNC that people began to gain political consciousness and awakening among the Zomis in Manipur. The ZNC is the instrumental to the birth of Zo Re-unification Organization (ZORO), the largest forum for Zo peoples re-unification movement today. The 1st world Zomi Convention took place at Champhai, a town in Mizoram-Myanmar border from 19-21 May 1988. The conference attended by two lakhs people from three countries, among others made a declaration and a charter of agreement affirming solidarity and integration for the RE-UNIFICATION of Zo people in India, Burma and Bangladesh which was signed by 40 delegates representing different Zo organizations in India Burma and Bangladesh. The ZORO highlighted the caused of Zomi re-unification and political emancipation to the highest world body, the UNO and world leaders by submitting memorandum to the Secretary General of the UNO (Butrous Ghali), the Prime Minister of England (John Major) and the President of USA (Bill Clinton) and Indian Prime
Minister and President (1990-‘95). The ZORO observed the 100th anniversary year of the historical conference (convened at Fort William 29-1-1892 – 29-1-1992) and made 100 year of struggle for Zo re-unification declaration signed by 100 delegates and appealed to the gov’t of Britain, USA, India, Burma and Bangladesh for the restoration of Zogam in their spirit of Atlantic Charter of 1892. Another Zomi Re-unification Organization was formed at Phupian, Kachin state of Myanmar in 1993 to achieve Zomi political goal of uniting all Zomis under one common platform i.e. a Gov’t of Zomi, for the Zomis and by the Zomis from the world of its founding President Pu Khaizasong Guite “A land or people, which was once union need to be re-unified...a broken needs to be patch up, hence re-unification...the bigs task of reunifying the Zomis and the land they occupied is the main aim of the organization. The ZORO submitted a well documented memorandum to the Secy. Gen. of the UNO on 20-5-1995 which contains 20 documents and memos. Clearly mentioned the struggle for the rightful cause of the Zo nation cannot be called off but shall continues till the whole ancestral homeland of the Zo peoples is brought at under one administration. In the latter part of 1980’s Pu T. Zahau founded the Chin National Front (CNF) and later on he was succeeded by John Khawkimthang alias Nothankap. Pu John Khawkimthang in his address to the UN conference of indigenous people in Geneva on 27 July 1994 declared in the spirit of the ZORO charter that “The Chin or Asho Chin also known as the Kuki called themselves ZO, MIZO, ASHO, ZOMI, LAIMI, etc., formed as a nation before the advent of the British. However in 1890, our country was subdue and divided into three administrative segment and annexed to India, Burma and Bengal by the British gov’t for administrative convenience and it remain divided till today”. In 1988, the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) was re-established in Burma under the leadership of Pu Chinsianthang and Pu Thanglianpau. The ZNC ) (Burmana) got recognition as a political Party and contested the 1989 Burma General election. The
ZNC (Burma) released “The proclamation of the name Zomi” on the 6th Dec. 1988 in a book form which contains historical background of the origin of the Zo people and the evidence and proof of the racial name of the Zomi.

Zomi Nam Ni
The Zo people are proud of this day because it epitomizes their struggle for a place in the sun, a struggle that began almost a hundred years ago amongst the Zomi of Burma under the banner of the Chin Hills Union Organisation (CHUO). On 20th February, 1928 the Chin Hills Union Organisation (CHUO) was formed at Hlingzung (Mahtungnu village) in Mindat Township. The founding father of the organization were U Law Ha Hing Thang (Chairman).[14] This was a milestone in the history of the people because for the first time a home-grown political organization was formed. It also laid down the foundation for the introduction of a national day.
The first general meeting of the Chin Hills Union Organization was successfully held at Ware Village, Chin State on 29 September, 1932.[113] The meeting resolved to work together for success in the fields of education, health, economy and social affairs. They also took the difficult and painful decision to drive out the imperialists as soon as possible. In fact, they extended their whole-hearted help in the 1936 Students’ Strike. Subsequently the political momentum picked up with the CHUO submitting nine petitions to the British Burma Government for the improvement of Chin Hills in various fields, including:

[A] to grant equal rights in administration to Zomi similar to other foreign national;

[B] to administer Chin Hills according to the rules and
regulations adopted by the Zomi;

[C] to permit freedom of religions;

[D] to allow Zomi to have freedom of relationship with any nationality;

[E] to grant independence to Zomi simultaneously with Myanmar.

There was heated debate between the CHUO leaders and the British on the above memorandum. The Zomi were very angry with the unfriendly attitudes of the British, thus demonstrations against the Government took place in various parts of Kanpetlet. The 36 members of circle Chairmen declared their resignations from the public service in defiance of the detention of Zomi political leaders. Demonstrations against the Government also took place in many parts of the area. They said that they would no longer pay tax and would not also serve as their coolies.

Furthermore, Aung San-Atlee Agreement was signed on 27 January 1947. In line with the agreement, the Constituent Assembly was to be elected to determine future administrative affairs of Myanmar. As such, Panglong Conference was held on 7 February 1947 and Panglong Agreement was signed on 12 February 1947.

Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry was formed in March 1947 under the chairmanship of the Committee, the Zomi opted to elect their own respective constituent assembly.

At the request of the Zomi, Chin Hills Enquiry Commission was formed with three members on 5 February 1948.[15] The Commission
conducted enquiry from 12 to 23 February 1948 and they recommended the introduction of the rule of democratic system of administration in Chin Hills and to grant compensation to the chiefs and headmen.

A general meeting was held in Falam from 19 to 22 February to make a choice on the administrative system in Chin Hills and the election of Zomi representatives. The meeting was attended by over 5000 representatives of Zomi.

On 20 February 1948, the representative of Tedim, U Thawng Za Khup submitted a proposal in the general meeting. According to his proposal the Zomi had suffered untold misery under the hereditary feudal chiefs and headmen. They imposed heavy taxes on the common people. So, the majority of Zomi were in favour of the abolition of hereditary feudal system of administration and they would like to bring about modern democratic system of administration in the Chin Hill.

The popular vote was taken and 5000 representatives voted in favour of the proposal whereas 17 representatives voted against the proposal. Colonialism, the rule of hereditary feudal system by chiefs and headmen were then eliminated for the first time in Chin Hills at this mass meeting and introduced the democratic system which advocates the rule of the people by the people for the people. It is landmark in the history of Chin Hills because it was the first time that all the Zomi were able to hold the general meeting and achieves national unity among themselves. So, 20 February is a historic and meaningful day for the Zomi because all the Zomi were able to achieve national solidarity and unity on this very day.

On 9 October 1950, the Chin Affairs Council decided officially to honour 20 February as Zomi National Day. Since then, the Day was observed as one of the National Holiday in Burma. The Day had been celebrated by Zomi worldwide till today although the Burmese Government officially recorded as Chin National Day. It is, therefore, the fundamental duty of all Zomi to safeguard its
National Day[^114] to preserve and maintain its culture, language, religion, and literature if we would like to keep our Zomi identity among the family of nations. The Zos in Mizoram got their statehood on February 20, 1987. Hence, this day is celebrated yearly in Mizoram as the “Mizoram State Inauguration Day“ as well.[^115]

External Links

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- Zomi.Org
- Zogam.com
- Zogam.Org
- Zomi Innkuan USA
- ZogamOnline
- Zomi Community Network
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