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THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

NAMING A PEOPLE:  
BRITISH FRONTIER MANAGEMENT IN EASTERN BENGAL AND  
THE ETHNIC CATEGORIES OF THE KUKI-CHIN: 1760-1860

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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by

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## CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES .....	vi
PREFACE .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS .....	ix
GLOSSARY .....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1. The Ethnic Categories of the Kuki-Chin People .....	1
2. The History of the Kuki-Chin People in the Nineteenth Century .....	19
3. Scope and Structure of the Thesis .....	31
CHAPTER 2 THE BEGINNING OF THE BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE KUKI-CHIN FRONTIER AREA: 1760s-1780s .....	35
1. Pre-Colonial Polities on the Kuki-Chin Frontier .....	35
2. The Advent of the British .....	57
CHAPTER 3 ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND EARLY SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES: 1780s-1820s .....	76
1. Administrative Reforms and Information on the Kuki-Chin .....	76
2. Scholarly Activities of Early Administrators on the Kuki-Chin .....	86

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 4 THE FIRST ANGLO-BURMESE WAR AND THE CHANGING FRONTIER: 1824-1833 .....</b>	<b>130</b>
1. The First Anglo-Burmese War .....	130
2. Surveys and the British Knowledge of the Kuki-Chin .....	146
 <b>CHAPTER 5 Beginning of the Frontier Administration: the 1830s.....</b>	 <b>179</b>
1. Arrangements for the Newly Acquired Territories .....	179
2. The Boundaries of the Frontier .....	200
 <b>CHAPTER 6 EXPEDITIONS INTO THE HILLS: the 1840s .....</b>	 <b>208</b>
1. Expeditions into the Hills .....	208
2. British Knowledge of the Kuki-Chin People .....	242
 <b>CHAPTER 7 THE LAST DECADE OF THE COMPANY: the 1850s.....</b>	 <b>259</b>
1. Rapprochements with the Kuki-Chin People .....	259
2. Ethnic Categories of the Kuki-Chin People .....	295
 <b>CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION .....</b>	 <b>321</b>
1. British Management of the Kuki-Chin Frontier .....	321
2. Administration and Ethnographic Knowledge .....	328
3. Categorisation of the Kuki-Chin People .....	330
 <b>Appendix A ‘Vocables’ of the Kuki-Chin collected by Buchanan .....</b>	 <b>338</b>
<b>Appendix B Genealogical Table of the Turanian Family of Language. – Southern Division, F. M. Müller.....</b>	 <b>340</b>
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	 <b>342</b>

## LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS	Page
Map 1. Current Area Inhabited by the Kuki-Chin People.....	xiii
Map 2. British Territorial Possessions around the Kuki-Chin Land (1765-1860) .....	xiv
Map 3. Northern Kuki-Chin Frontier Area .....	xv
Map 4. Southern Kuki-Chin Frontier Area .....	xvi
Map 5. Part of <i>Map of Hindoostan</i> by J. Rennell 1782 .....	72
Map 6, Part of <i>Map of the Burmese Empire</i> , by L. Herbert (1825) .....	106
Map 7. Part of <i>Map of the Eastern Frontier of British India with the Adjacent</i> <i>Countries</i> , by R. B. Pemberton (1838).....	161
Map 8. Part of <i>the New Map of Burma</i> , by H. Yule (1857).....	301
ILLUSTRATIONS	Page
Illustration 1. Lebbey, the ‘Abéu’ or Chief of the Bookee Clan of the Heumá or Shendu .....	249

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES	Page
Table 1. Ethnic Categories in Buchanan's Journal of His Journey to Ava, 1795 .....	100
Table 2. Ethnic Categories in Buchanan's Journal of South-Eastern Bengal .....	110
Table 3. Language Groups of Burma According to Buchanan .....	121

FIGURES	Page
Fig. 1. The Division of Chin Tribal Groups (from Lian Sakhong, <i>Religion</i> , 83).....	3
Fig. 2. The Line of Communication from Cachar to London in the 1830s.....	23
Fig. 3. The Poitoo Chiefs .....	212
Fig. 4. The Sailo Chiefs.....	221

## PREFACE

There are four countries where one can find British records regarding the Kuki-Chin people: Burma, India, Bangladesh and Britain. The documents used in this thesis are mainly from the Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) in the British Library, London and the National Archives of India in New Delhi.

I quote a document by the name of the author (sender), receiver, date of composition, and the title given in the letter, if applicable, rather than by the call numbers alone. This is the way in which official letters were written and quoted by the administrators during the colonial period and therefore the most definite way to identify a document even when copies of the same document appear in different places. For the same reason, I have used paragraph numbers, or dates in the case of diaries, rather than the page numbers when pointing to specific parts within documents. The details of the archives or published books in which the documents are found are included in brackets.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a lot to the Chin, Kuki and Mizo people who provided me with typical Kuki-Chin hospitality during my field research in Burma and India. Dr. Lian Sakhong, Rev. Lal Dangliana, Dr. S. Haokip, Ms. Arfina Haokip, and the Kuki Student Association of the Jawaharlal Nehru University helped me greatly in obtaining sources and other background information. It is a great pity that I cannot mention some of the names here due to the political situation in Burma. I also thank the staffs of the former Centre for South-East Asian Studies of the University of Hull. Many of them have provided help and advice beyond their duties even after their retirement or transfer. I especially thank Drs. Clive and Jan Christie, Dr. Fiona Kerlogue, Dr. Tim Huxley, Mr. Lewis Hill and Professor Victor King. I am also in debt to Dr. Mandy Sadan, who gave me the privilege to consult her unpublished Guide to the Sources in the Oriental and India Office Collections in the British Library and Mr. Alan Deighton who kindly corrected my English. Without their support this thesis would not have been completed.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
F.C.	Foreign Consultations (of Foreign Department Files in the National Archives of India)
JASB	<i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
JBRs	<i>Journal of Burma Research Society</i>
KNO	Kuki National Organisation
Lt.	Lieutenant
MNF	Mizo National Front
NAI	National Archives of India
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collections (at the British Library).
P.C.	Political Consultations (of Foreign Department Files in the National Archives of India)
ROB	<i>The Royal Orders of Burma</i>
S.C.	Secret Consultations (of Foreign Department Files in the National Archives of India)
ZORO	Zo Re-unification Organisation

## GLOSSARY

*NOTE:* The following terms are Anglo-Indian words unless specified.

Ahmú-dàn: (Burmese) Specialised servicemen. They provided service to the crown on a fixed, rotational basis. In modern usage, it means someone in the service of an institutional authority or non-gazetted government employee.

Athi: (Burmese) Free non-service taxpayers.

Burkundazee: Mercenaries composed of freebooters or soldiers of the disbanded Mughal army, who carried their own weapons. They were usually hired under *zemindars* as private guards but British administrators also hired them in the early days in Bengal. Some of these were later organised under the military as 'militia' or '*sebundy*' (irregular) corps.

Chuklah: A territorial subdivision under the Mughals.

Chowkidar: A watchman.

Chowky: An out-post.

Dah: Dagger widely used in the hills of North East India and Burma.

Dak: Post transported by relays of men and horses.

Darogah: A chief native officer in various departments of native government. It was also an Indian term for the Superintendent of Police.

Diwan: The head financial minister, whether of the state or a province, charged with the collection of the revenue, the remittance of it to the imperial treasury, and invested with extensive judicial powers in all civil and financial causes. It was also used to mean a minister under a rajah in a broader sense.

Diwani: The office of *diwan* and especially the right of receiving as *diwan* the revenue of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa.

Duar: (Assamese) Passes through which the hill people communicate with the plains. It also meant, the belt of fertile land at the foot of the hills.

Ghat: A landing place on the bank of a river.

Havildar: A sepoy non-commissioned officer corresponding to a sergeant.

Jemadar: A leader in a general sense. In the Indian army, it is the title of the second in rank of the native officers in a company of sepoy, *subadar* being the first. It is also applied to certain officers of police (under the *darogah*), of the customs, and of other civil departments.

Jhoom: Mode of cultivation widely practised in the hills of Eastern Bengal and Burma – swidden farming, shifting farming, or slash and burn cultivation – where farmers clear a portion of jungle by burning it, cultivate on it until the strength of the soil cannot sustain the crop, then move to another plot. It is called *toung-ya* in Burmese.

Kyoung: (Burmese) River. It was also used for the hill circles in Arakan. (cf. *Kyun*)

Kyun: (Burmese) Island. It was also used for the circles in the plains of Arakan. (cf. *Kyoung*)

Mooktear: An authorised agent or an attorney.

Munshee: A Language teacher.

Muntri: Minister or delegation representing government or chiefs.

Myo: (Burmese) Township. In most nuclear zone districts of Burma the gentry consisted of two tiers: headmen of townships (*myo*) and subordinate villages (*ywa*). There were at least fifty townships (*myo*) in the nuclear zone, each of which included anywhere from 12 to 145 villages (*ywa*).

Myo-thugyi: (Burmese) From Burmese *myo* (town) and *thugyi* (chief, headman), therefore, township headman, an overseer for the servile classes in his area.

Myo-tza: (Burmese) A collector of revenue.

Myo-wun: (Burmese) A governor appointed by the King.

Nawab: A Governor. The plural of Arabic na'ib, which means a deputy.

Naib-diwan: A deputy collector.

Naik: A native officer corresponding to the rank of corporal.

Nullah: Stream, or rivulet.

Pathian: (Kuki-Chin) A common word in Kuki-Chin tongues meaning the supreme-being, who created the world. Before the coming of Christianity, *Pathian* was seldom worshipped in rituals while other 'lesser' gods were more frequently invoked. Nowadays, *Pathian* is used as the term for God among the Kuki-Chin Christians.

Pergunnah: A subdivision of a district.

Pundit: A scholar or teacher, also an expert in law during the Mughal period.

Pyee : (Burmese) Country, with emphasis on the territory rather than the government; therefore, can be used for the integral part of the Burmese Kingdom (such as Yaw Pyee) as well as to the foreign lands (such as Tayoup Pyee, or China).

Rawa-goung: (Arakanese pronunciation for Burmese: *Ywa-Gain*) Village headmen.

Ryot: A tenant of the soil, or a (tax-paying) subject of a government.

Sawbwa: (Burmese) Shan chiefs or kings.

Sayer (or sair): Internal transit duty.

Sebundy: Irregular native soldiers, a sort of militia, or imperfectly disciplined troops for revenue or police duties.

Sirdar: A leader, a commander, an officer; a chief or a lord.

Subadar: First rank among native officers.

Sudder Diwani Adawlut: Chief Civil Court. One of the three supreme Muslim courts. The other two were Nizamut Adawlut or the Criminal Court and Fajdari Adawlut, which can be translated as a Police Court.

Thana : A fortified city with garrison, the word meant a police station in British India.

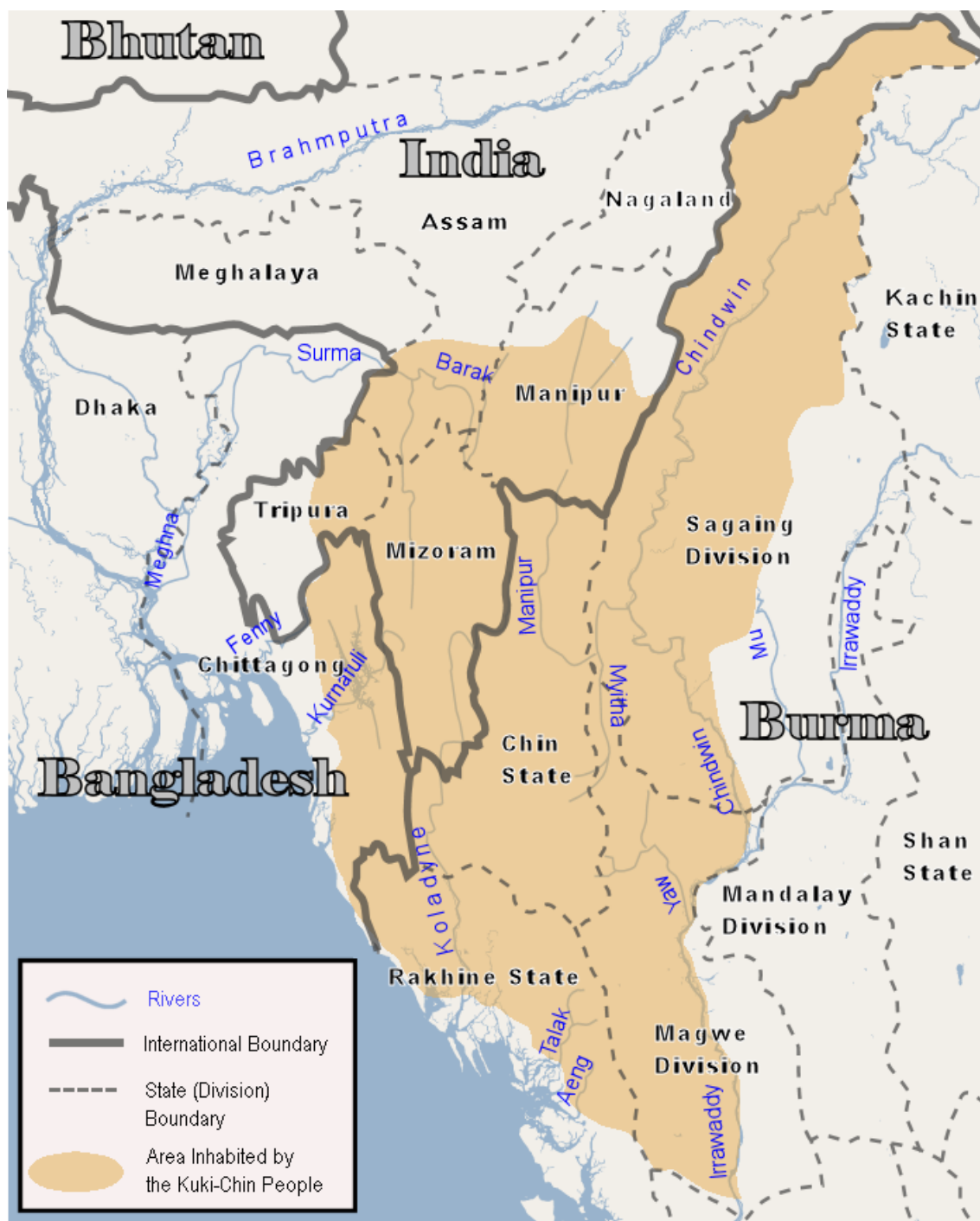
Toungya: See '*jhoom*' above.

Wun-gyi : (Burmese) minister of the *Hlutdaw* (Burmese ruling council)

Zemindar: A Landholder. In Bengal they were also the agents of the Mughal government collecting taxes from the cultivators or *ryots*. Nevertheless, the *ryots* also had their hereditary rights to cultivate lands, which could not be easily dispossessed by *zemindars*. Therefore, the land did not wholly belong to the *zemindar* and his position was a mixture of landlord and tax collector of the lands. They had police and magisterial powers over their lands as well.

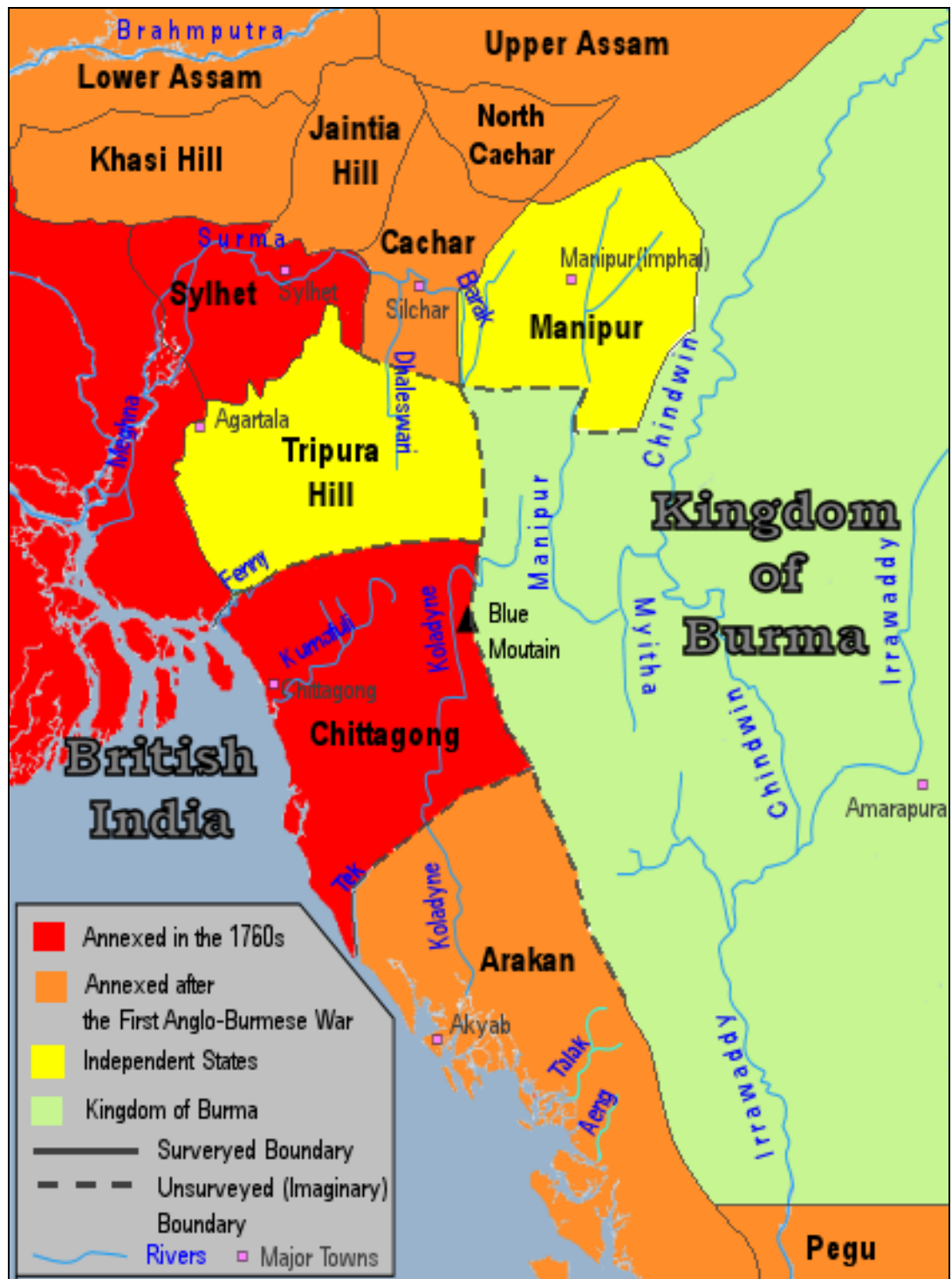
Zemindari: Land held by a *zemindar* or the right with which a *zemindar* held the land.

Zillah: A district.



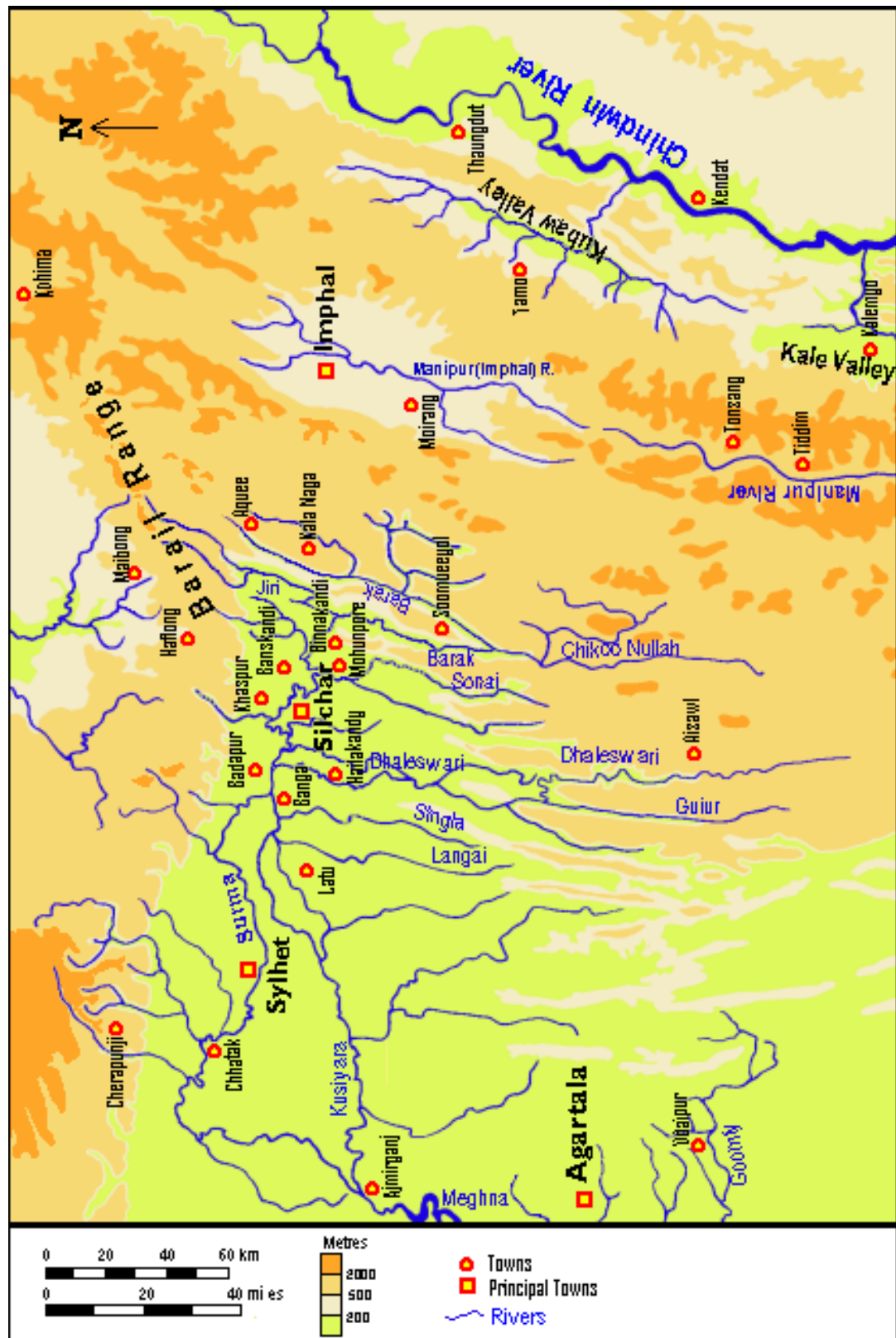
**Map 1. Current Area Inhabited by the Kuki-Chin People**

*Note:* Kuki-Chin inhabited area is shown as supposed by ZORO (Zo Reunification Organisation). It is taken from a map 'Zo Inhabited Area' found in the ZORO internet homepage (<http://www.zogam.org>) and redrawn here to show it in relation to current administrative divisions.



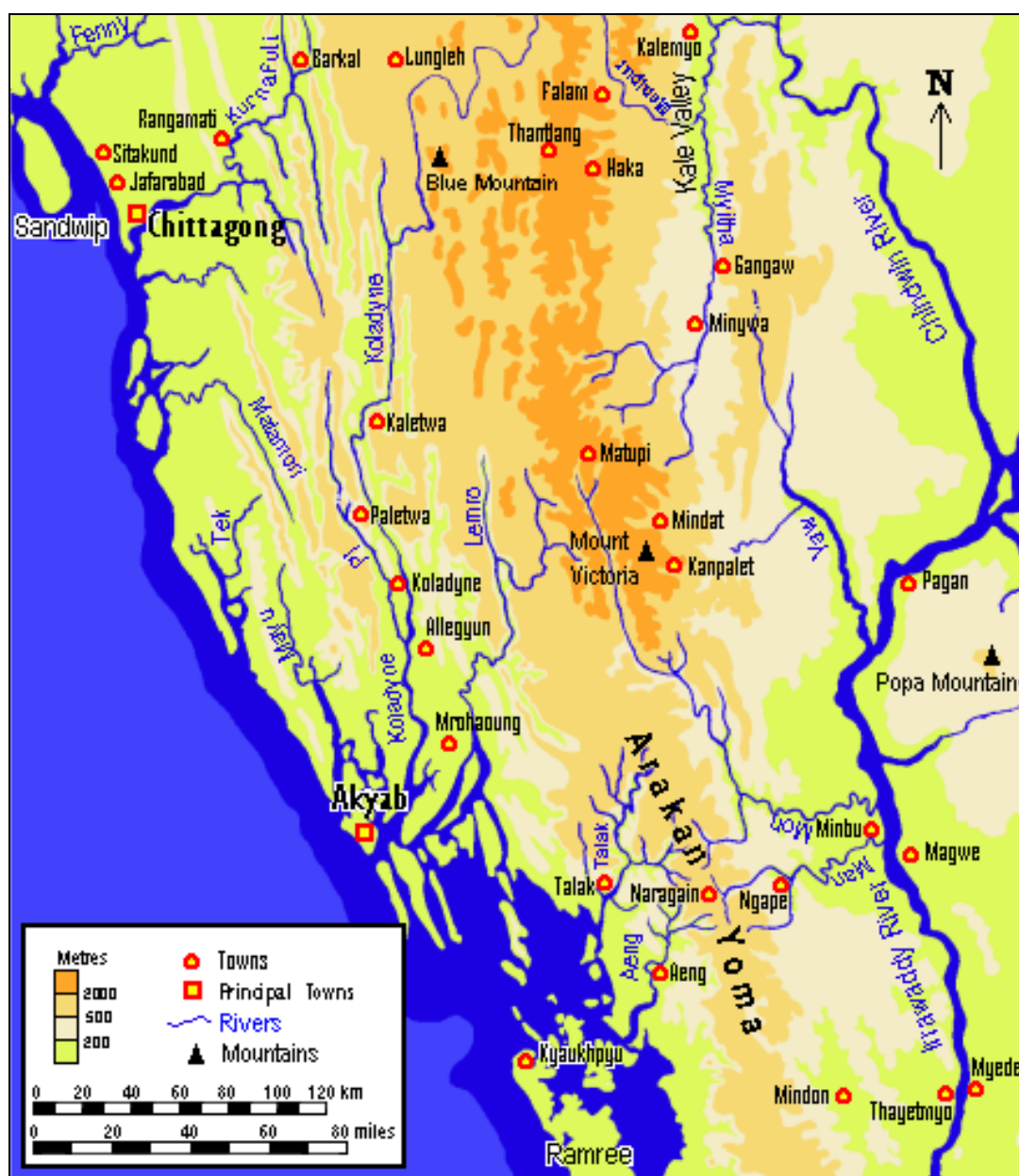
Map 2. British Territorial Possessions around the Kuki-Chin Land (1765-1860)

*Note:* The Boundaries are taken from R. B. Pemberton's *Map of the Eastern Frontier of British India with the Adjacent Countries* (1838), and H. Yule's *New Map of Burma* (1857) accompanying his *Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855*. Most of the boundaries towards the Kuki-Chin land were not surveyed and therefore this map represents British perception rather than reality. (see Chapter 4, pp.149-50 and Chapter 5, pp.202-10 below for further discussions.)



Map 3. Northern Kuki-Chin Frontier Area





#### Map 4. Southern Kuki-Chin Frontier Area

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. The Ethnic Categories of the Kuki-Chin People

##### a) Identities of the Kuki-Chin People

The history of the Kuki-Chin people during the last half a century has been dominated by the political issues surrounding their positions within the states to which they belong. In the early 1960s, Geertz observed similar issues in other ‘new states’ and explained them in terms of the tensions between ‘civil sentiments’, or attachment to the state, and ‘primordial attachments’, which stem from ‘givens’ such as blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, his analysis focused on the problems caused to the national integration of various countries by the ‘primordial attachments’ of minorities, but he also pointed out that for the peoples of new states, it was ‘a search for an identity and a demand that the identity be publicly acknowledged as having import’.<sup>2</sup>

The political struggles of the Kuki-Chin people both in India and Burma still have not finished, but they have brought some noticeable effects on the identities of the Kuki-Chin people. To describe the situation, it is convenient to conceive Kuki-Chin identities

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States’, in *the Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 259. (Originally published under the same title in Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States*, 105-57, London: Collier-MacMillan, 1963.)

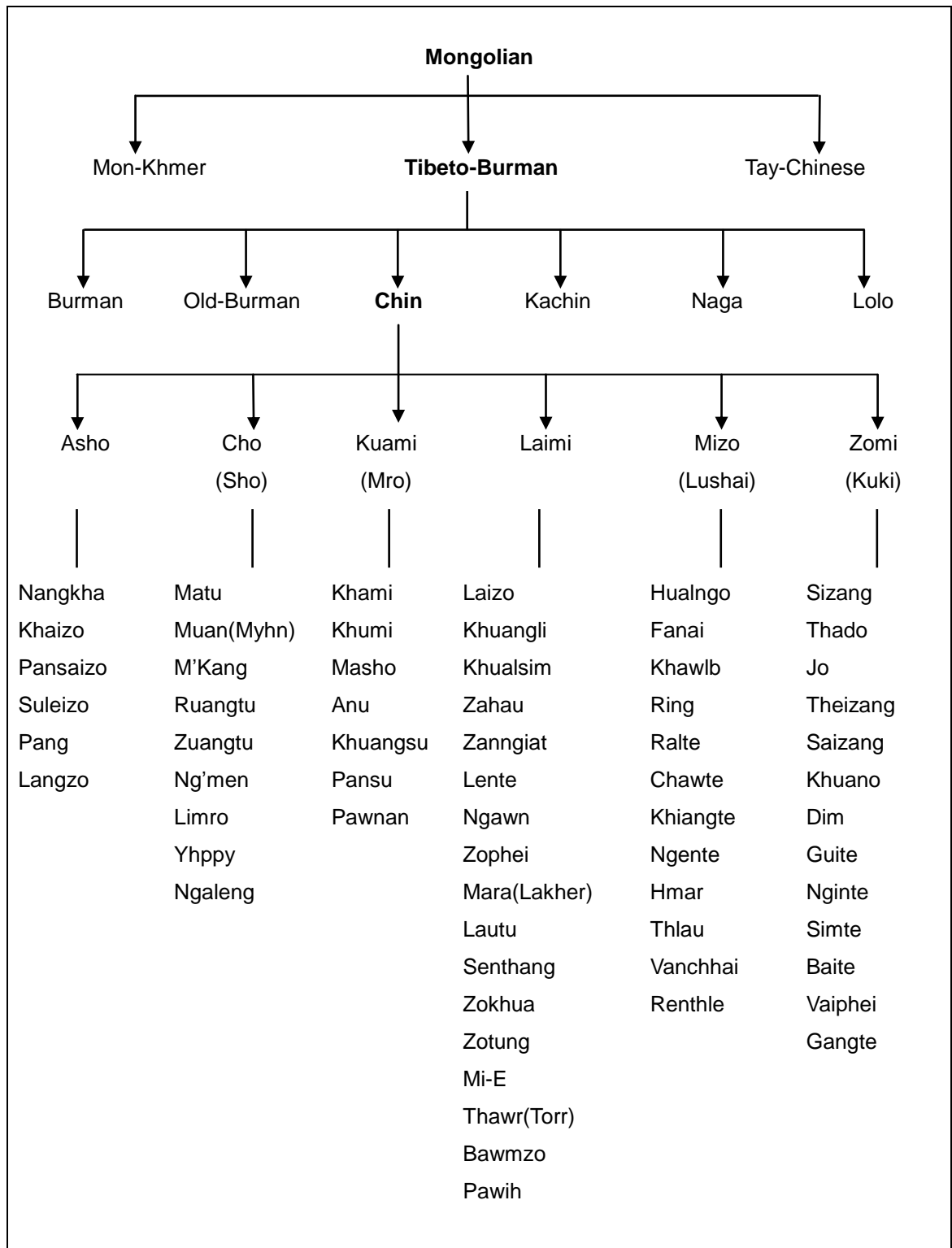
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 258.

as having three layers: first, the clan identity; second, separated identities of Kuki, Chin and Mizo; and third, the united identity of the whole of the 'Kuki-Chin' people. I hastily add that such division of 'layers' is only adopted for the sake of convenience of arranging the discussion: there are no natural and clearly separable 'layers', or agreed ways of classifying different identities among the Kuki-Chin people.

In the first layer are the clan identities, such as, Haka, Sizang (Siyin), Thantlang (Tlangtlang) and Matu of Chin State; Haokip, Kipgens, and Vaipheis of Manipur; Hualngo, Sailu, and Mara of Mizoram, and so on. Sometimes called 'tribes', 'clans' or 'villages', these constitute the lowest rung of the group identities of the Kuki-Chin people. Yet these are the largest units through which lineages are traced into the past and the description 'primordial attachment' fits these categories the best, with common history, similarity in language and culture, and assumed blood ties with experience of being under one political system at a certain point of time in the past. As in the case of the Nagas, these were probably the primary identities of the Kuki-Chin people before the colonial period.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> H. N. C. Stevenson, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes* (Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1943; reprint Farnborough Hants: Gregg Press Ltd., 1968), 12; C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996), 64; cf. Andrew West, 'Nagas in the Museum: An Anthropological Study of the Material Culture of the Hill Peoples of the Assam-Burma Border' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hull, 1992), 287.



**Fig. 1. The Division of Chin Tribal Groups (from Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 83)**

This, however, does not mean that the clan identities are natural blocks into which the Kuki-Chin people can be divided. The number as well as mode of classification varies. In a table provided by Lian Sakhong, there are 64 names mentioned as sub-groups of the Kuki-Chin people (see Fig.1 on the previous page). On the other hand, Nunthara, a Mizo author, divides the Mizo into two large groups of Lusei and non-Lusei clans and mentions ‘twelve or more major clans of the Luseis’ and ‘sixteen or more major clans belong to non-Lusei groups’.<sup>4</sup> Regarding the Kuki in Manipur, Haokip provides anecdotal history of 29 tribes of Kuki.<sup>5</sup> It is impossible to come up with an exact number of different identities at this level. What Leach observed of the Kachin Hills also applies here: ‘the assiduous ethnographer can find just as many different “tribes” as he cares to look for.’<sup>6</sup>

Among these traditional identities there are also some recognised supra-village or supra-clan identities. ‘Lai’ in the figure provided by Lian Sakhong, and the division of ‘Lusei’ and ‘non-Lusei’ among the Mizo are examples. There are also different interpretations regarding one identity. For example, Lian Sakhong regards the ‘Paite’ as the same as the ‘Poitoo’, frequently mentioned in the British documents during the nineteenth century,<sup>7</sup> but the same group has pleaded to be called ‘Zomi’,<sup>8</sup> while in the

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<sup>4</sup> Nunthara, *Mizoram Society*, 34

<sup>5</sup> P. S. Haokip, *Zale 'n-Gam: The Kuki Nation* (Manipur?: private publication by KNO, 1998), 31-60.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma : a study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1954; reprint, London: Continuum, 2001) 291 (page citations are to the reprint edition)

<sup>7</sup> Lian Hmung Sakhong, *Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma (1896-1949)* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2000), 165.

<sup>8</sup> Vumson, *Zo History*, (Aizawl: Privately published, 1986), 3; T. S. Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: a Historical Analysis*, (New Delhi; Gyan Publishing House, 2003), 226; see also Memorandum submitted

publication by the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the Paite are regarded as a conglomeration of different clans of the Kuki, who invented this identity for the purpose of receiving development funds as a separate tribe – therefore, not a genuine clan traceable through genealogy.<sup>9</sup> Circumstantial changes of their identities are also noted: Nunthara mentions that the small number of Hmar, Lakhers (Mara), and Pawis in the census report of 1961 was due to these clans returning themselves as ‘Lusei’ with which they often identity themselves according to circumstances, though they are not regarded as such by the other Luseis.<sup>10</sup>

The second level of identities, or the identities of the ‘Kuki’, ‘Chin’, and ‘Mizo’, are based on the geo-administrative interpretation of ‘Kuki-Chin’ identities during the British colonial period. Of the three terms, the words ‘Kuki’ and ‘Chin’ are definitely of foreign origin. The etymological origin of these terms has been discussed for more than a century without any clear answer<sup>11</sup>; however, it is clear that the word ‘Kuki’ was a term used widely by the Bengalis and their neighbours,<sup>12</sup> and ‘Chin’ by the Burmese with its dialectical form ‘Khyen’ by the Arakanese.<sup>13</sup> The Kuki-Chin people might have

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by the Paite National Council found in the ZORO Homepage (<http://www.zogam.org/documents>).

<sup>9</sup> Haokip, *Zale 'n-Gam*, 55-6.

<sup>10</sup> Nunthara, *Mizoram*, 31-3.

<sup>11</sup> see for example Brian H. Hodgson ‘On the Indo-Chinese Borders and Their Connexion with the Himalayans and Tibetans’, *JASB*, vol.22, no.1, (1853) 14.; C. A. Soppitt, *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier* (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1887), 1-2; Anthony Gilchrist McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London : Luzac and Co., 1949; reprint, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1977), 19-20 (page citations are to the reprint edition); G. H. Luce, *Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma: Languages and History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 80-1; Vumson, *Zo History*, 3; Sing Khaw Khai, ‘The Theological Concept of Zo in the Chin Tradition and Culture.’ (B.R.E. thesis, Burma Institute of Theology, 1984), 1-6; Gangte, *Kukis* 19-21, 226; Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 58-64

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Lewin, *Wild Races of the Eastern Frontier of India* (London: W.H. Allen & Co, 1870; reprint, New Delhi: Mittal, 2004), 247 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Gangte, *Kukis*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 61-2.

answered to these names but it was largely because those who had frequent contact with the lowlanders recognised these terms.

The word 'Mizo' has a slightly different background: it was known to have been used by the people themselves<sup>14</sup> and immediately after independence the leaders of the Lushai Hills changed their name from the former colonial designation 'Lushai' to 'Mizo'. On this, Gangte, a Kuki author, quotes a widespread interpretation that this word means 'hill-man' (from 'mi' meaning people and 'zo', meaning high or cold places) and argues that the word 'Mizo' is no less derogatory and foreign than Kuki, for this word means 'man that looks like a hill' rather than 'the hill-man'. The latter should be either 'Zomi' or 'Tlangmi'.<sup>15</sup> Thanga rejects this view, saying that the interpretation of 'Mizo' as meaning 'hillman' is an 'absolute misconception', but he does not give an alternative interpretation except for an allusion to the fact that it is customary with all the groups of Tibeto-Burman origin in the hills of Burma and India, to name their clans after one of their forefathers.<sup>16</sup>

In any case, a more important point is that current usages of these terms derived from colonial practice. For example, the preamble to the *Fourth Initial Draft of the Future Chinland Constitution*, drafted by the exiled Chin political leaders, defines the term Chin 'as the same as it was in 1896', which was 'also codified under the Chin

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<sup>14</sup> E. B. Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country* (Simla: Government Central Print Office, 1893), 6

<sup>15</sup> 'Tlang' means hill: see Gangte, *Kukis*, 227; cf. Nunthara, *Mizoram*, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Lal Biak Thanga, 'Traditional Self-Governing Institutions Among the Tuhul Groups of Mizoram,' in *Traditional Self-Governing Institutions Among the Hill Tribes of North-East India*, ed. Atul Goswami (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2002), 115.

Special Division Act of 1948, by the Chin representatives to the Union of Burma'.<sup>17</sup> The 1896 Chin Hills Regulations had defined Chin as to include '(a) Lushais, (b) Kukis, (c) Nagas, (d) Burmans domiciled in the Chin Hills, (e) any persons who have adopted the customs and language of the Chins and are habitually resident in the Chin Hills'.<sup>18</sup> Here it has to be noted that the 'Chin' in this context was equated to the residents of the geo-administrative unit of the Chin Hills. Likewise, in the case of the Mizo, though the name itself was used among the people before the colonial period, the current ethnic boundary is framed from the geo-administrative unit of Mizoram, which had been known as the Lushai Hills during the colonial period.

Above these two levels of identity, there is another that represents the ideal unity of the whole of the 'Kuki-Chin people'. Whether this identity had ever been active among the Kuki-Chin people before the colonial period cannot be satisfactorily answered, but the lack of an agreed name for this ideological unit seems to suggest that even if a sense of common identity existed among the Kuki-Chin people, it must have been very vague and different from what it is understood to be nowadays.

Many attempts have been made to promote one or another name. Of these, 'Zo' has been most successful so far, but the Haka Chin people shun this word because it was a derogatory term they adopted for those conquered by them.<sup>19</sup> The Paite people of

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<sup>17</sup> Chinland Constitution Initial Draft Committee, *The Fourth Initial Draft of the Future Chinland Constitution*, ed. Chao-Tzang Yawngnaw and Lian H. Sakhong, Peaceful Co-Existence towards Federal Union of Burma no.6. (Chiang Mai: United Nationalities League for Democracy, 2003), 41, 71

<sup>18</sup> Chin Hills Regulation 1896, I, Section 2(3); printed in *the Chin Hills Manual 1915* (OIOC v/27/244/7)

<sup>19</sup> Vumson, *Zo History*, 6; A. Bareigts, *Les Lautu: Contribution à l'Étude de l'Organisation Sociale d'une Ethnie Chin de Haute-Birmanie* (Contribution to the Study of Social Organization of an Ethnic Chin of Highland Burma) (Paris: Selaf, 1981), 34; c.f. F. K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society: a Tribal People of Burma Adapted to a Non-Western Civilisation* (Urbana: the University of Illinois Press,



Manipur advocated the term ‘Zomi’ by linking the suffix ‘-mi’ meaning people to the word ‘zo’, but this also failed to receive any recognition from others and ended up being recognised as the name for the people who advocated this view.<sup>20</sup> Still others coined a totally new word by taking ‘Ch’ from ‘Chin’, ‘ki’ from ‘Kuki’, and ‘m’ from ‘Mizo’ to conjure up ‘Chikim’, but it is doubtful that this word would be even as successful as the others.<sup>21</sup> Recently there is a tendency among the writers to adopt Kuki, Mizo or Chin to mean the whole nation of the Kuki-Chin people. Lian Sakhong’s usage of Chin exemplifies this tendency clearly,<sup>22</sup> but there is no reason to believe that others would regard such practise as anything more than being whimsical.

Of these three ‘layers’, it was the last layer of identity that was most active politically in the years immediately after independence. When the Mizo Union Council was formed in 1947, one of its most important aims was ‘secession from India’ and joining with the Chin people. The same aim was held by a contending party called ‘The United Mizo Freedom Organisation’.<sup>23</sup> Outside Mizoram, the Paite of Lamka district in Manipur formed the Paite National Council in 1963 and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India requesting that ‘Chin people be unified into one territory.’<sup>24</sup> Obviously, in this context, ‘Chin’ meant all the Kuki-Chin people. As in these examples, unification-oriented political ideas were mixed with secessionist aims. The Mizo

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1963), 54-5.

<sup>20</sup> Gangte, *Kukis* 226; see also Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 165; Haokip, *Zale ’n-Gam*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> Gangte, *Kukis*, 226.

<sup>22</sup> Lian Sakhong, *Religion*; see related discussion in Gangte, *Kukis* 226-34.

<sup>23</sup> Nunthara, *Mizoram*, 129-30

<sup>24</sup> Vumson, *Zo History*, 3; see also ‘Memorandum submitted by the Paite National Council’ found in the ZORO Internet Homepage (<http://www.zogam.org/documnets>)

National Front (MNF) that carried out underground activities against the Indian government during the 1970s was also an example of this.<sup>25</sup> In Geertz's terms, these were attempts to assert the identity of a people in the modern world, even against the international divisions that had been imposed on that people.

The situation changed when the 'Mizo Accord' was signed between the Indian Government and the MNF. With this, Mizoram became an autonomous state in 1986 and the MNF abandoned its secessionist aims.<sup>26</sup> Barua commented that this was a partial fulfilment of the 'pan-Zo' identity,<sup>27</sup> but in reality, its imperfect fulfilment made the achievement of the ideal even harder. In the same year, a Zo Re-unification Organisation (ZORO) was formed to promote pan-Zo identity. Yet as Vumson, the coordinator for the ZORO, stated recently, there was not much the ZORO could do to promote its political aims and therefore public support died down.<sup>28</sup> Since then, the main momentum for political movement has shifted to the political parties formed on the basis of the separated identities of Kuki, Chin and Mizo.

In recent years, despite frequently raised questions regarding who is exactly Chin, Kuki, or Mizo, the Kuki-Chin people increasingly accept the separate identities of Kuki, Chin and Mizo as the primary means of identification. This is also evident in the academic works on the Kuki-Chin people. Until the 1980s there were authors like

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<sup>25</sup> Nunthara, *Mizoram*, 152, 196.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 151, 290-3 (Appendix XI, 'Mizo Accord').

<sup>27</sup> Sanjib Barua, *India against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999; reprint, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) 108 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>28</sup> Chinland Guardian, 16 March 2005, 'The Living Dream of Re-Unification: Interview with Dr. Vumson Suantak' (<http://www.chinlandguardian.net/index.php/interviews/28>)

Vumson and Sing Khaw Khai writing the history of the whole of the ‘Kuki-Chin people’ or ‘Zo’.<sup>29</sup> Yet, in more recent years, the trend has changed and Lian Sakhong, a Chin author, writes exclusively of the events in the Chin Hills: in doing so, he describes events in the Chin Hills (or the current Chin State) in comparison, in contrast, or in relation to the events in Burma, while those in the neighbouring Lushai Hills (Mizoram) or Manipur are seldom noted.<sup>30</sup> The same tendency can also be found among the authors from within India who write either on the Mizo or the Kuki.<sup>31</sup>

Ironically, the political struggles of the Kuki-Chin people in independent Burma and India have resulted in strengthening the identities based on the colonial epithet, which in turn was based on the names given by the outsiders. The exact process by which the external epithets became the identities of the people needs further study. For this purpose, the whole process of identification of the Kuki-Chin people can be divided into three phases: first, when the terms used by the outsiders became known to the British; second, when this knowledge was applied to the Kuki-Chin people in their administration, leading to the internalisation of that identity; and third, the politicisation of the identity. Chronologically, the first phase can be equated to the period of the East India Company when the British first made contact with the Kuki-Chin people and their neighbours, on taking over the administration in Bengal; then, after an interim period of wars in the 1870s and the 1890s, the second period starts from the annexation of the

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<sup>29</sup> Vumson, *Zo History*; Sing Khaw Khai, ‘Theological Concept’; idem, *Zo People and Their Culture: a Historical, Cultural Study and Critical Analysis of Zo and its Ethnic Tribes* (Manipur: Khampu Hatzaw, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> Lian Sakhong, *Religion*.

<sup>31</sup> R.N. Prasad, and A. K. Agarwal, *Political and Economic Development of Mizoram* (New Delhi: Mittal, 1991); Animesh Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change* (Calcutta: Pearl Publishers, 1992); Nunthara, *Mizoram Society*; Haokip, P. S., *Zale’n-Gam.*; Haokip, S., ‘The Kuki Rising, 1917-1919’. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University Kuki Student’s Organisation, 2003 (paper presented at the Annual Parting Social Cum Seminar on ‘Kuki Rising 1917-1919’); Gangte, *Kukis*.

Kuki-Chin Land and the establishment of the administrative districts of the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills in the 1890s; the third phase starts from the independence of Burma and India. Internalisation of the external definitions could have happened to a limited extent among those Kuki-Chin people who lived nearer to the plains of Burma, Bengal and Assam during the first phase; however, it could have been fully effective, amounting to ethnic division, only after the establishment of the British administration in the hills; then, through subsequent political struggles, these internalised identities have been consolidated.

Of these phases, this thesis focuses on the first phase, when the names used by other natives around the Kuki-Chin land became a standard term for the British to call the people. It is only a part of the whole change that the identities Kuki-Chin people went through, but an important part, when the usages of local ‘others’ were accepted as the standard terminology by the British administrators, and in turn became a standard division when the Kuki-Chin hills came under the British administration.

Before continuing, it is important to think what ‘Kuki’, ‘Chin’, and ‘Lushai’ meant at this period. As stated earlier, the British administrators in the early nineteenth century acquired these terms from the people in Bengal, Burma and Assam. They were not the terms used by the people themselves at this time. Therefore, when the words ‘Kuki’, ‘Chin’ and ‘Lushai’ appear in the British documents of this period, these do not designate thus named ‘groups’ of people who identify themselves as belonging to one group and act as a unit. In fact, the mere existence of these terms does not guarantee the existence of actual groups that can be equated to the terms. It does not even guarantee that different people used this term to mean the same group of people. Rather, what was

actually meant by these labels itself should be the main subject of investigation. To be able to describe the situation better, it is necessary to clarify the concept of 'ethnic category'.

## b) The Concept of Ethnic Category

Since Geertz's essay in 1963, his choice of 'primordial' has drawn severe criticism and many have accused him of misconceiving ethnicity as a static 'given', pre-determined out of social context, imposed on individuals, something that is ineffable, overpowering and coercive.<sup>32</sup> Some even regarded him as the most representative member of the 'primordialist school' of thought on ethnicity, or even its progenitor.<sup>33</sup> Such criticisms were in line with the growing number of anthropological studies that argued for the flexible, changing, unfixed, fuzzy, and vague nature of ethnicity.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the sound basis of the critics of primordialism, whether Geertz can be accused of such misinterpretation is another matter. As Tilly (1997) and Jenkins (1997) pointed out in separate works, Geertz used 'primordial attachment' to describe far wider

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<sup>32</sup> Jack D. Eller and Reed M. Coughlan, 'The Poverty of Primordialism: the Demystification of Ethnic Attachments', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.16, no.2 (April 1993), quoted in Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 45: see also Virginia Tilly, 'The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language about Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.20, no.3, (July 1997): 500-3.

<sup>33</sup> Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 37-8.

<sup>34</sup> See for example: Leach, *Political Systems*; Judith A. Nagata, 'What is a Malay?: Situational Selection of Ethnic Identity in a Plural Society', *American Ethnologist*, vol.1, no.2 (1974): 331-50; Idem, ed. *Pluralism in Malaysia: Myth and Reality*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1975); Victor T. King, 'What's in a Name?: Ethnicity and the Problems it Poses for Anthropologists', *Sarawak Museum Journal*, vol.15, no.61 (1989): 235-45; Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 186; *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Routledge 1996), s.v. 'Ethnicity'; Jenkins, *Rethinking*, 13, 44.

phenomena than those immediately identifiable as 'ethnic' issues. He used the word 'primordial' as a contrast to the attachments to the newer construction of the collective identity based on the state. The 'givens' are justified in the sense that individuals did not weave the whole web of meanings themselves. Moreover, in contrasting 'primordial' ties to 'civil sentiments', he clearly emphasised that these ties were *assumed* by individuals as primordial givens, and wrote that the strength of such ties and the types of them that are important, 'differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time'.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, it is true that the dominant view in the western literature regarding mankind has been similar to what critics accuse primordialism of: that people are divided into natural groups of culturally homogenous units, living in geographically definable clusters.<sup>36</sup> Lehman pointed to this attitude, held by the government officials as well as social scientists, as the most serious obstacle in solving the problems in Burma. From this point of view, ethnic or national groups were regarded as inherently irreconcilable units, which hindered the process of nation-building in Burma. The practical solution, Lehman continued, was unlikely to be discovered until the exact definition of the problems had become understood.<sup>37</sup> Then he proposed an alternative attitude to 'ethnic categories' by regarding them as 'role systems':

I suggest that when people identify themselves as members of some 'ethnic' category, e.g. Jinghpaw, Kayah, Chin, Sgaw Karen, they are taking positions in culturally defined systems of inter-group relations. . . . These systems of inter-group relations comprise, at least in the case of Burma,

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<sup>35</sup> Geertz, 'Integrative Revolution', 259-63; Jenkins, *Rethinking*, 45-8; Tilly, 'Untangling', 500-3.

<sup>36</sup> Frederik, K. Lehman, 'Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems'. In *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, vol.1, ed. Peter Kunstadter, 93-124, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 101.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-4.

complexly interdependent complementary categories. I claim in particular that, in reality, *ethnic categories are formally like roles* and are, in that sense, only very indirectly descriptive of the empirical characteristics of substantive groups of people.<sup>38</sup>

In this definition, ethnic categories were not entities but a reference system or cognitive models at varying levels of awareness. Actual groups of people make selective use of these models, and the models generate meaningful interpretations to situations and things and a range of possible behaviour in these contexts. In such conceptualisation, individuals do not derive identity from the naturally existing categories but identify themselves with different models according to the situation.<sup>39</sup>

For the next forty years, the notions of ‘ethnicity’ used by the social scientists have moved in the direction Lehman had suggested and came to accommodate the multiplicity of ethnic identities in different contexts as well as fluid and ambiguous ethnic relations. Yet this also brought a tremendous increase in different usages of the same term related to ‘ethnicity’ by different authors, which made it both challenging and dangerous for anyone only partly interested in the topic to use these terms without incurring the danger of contradicting one or more established usages.

The term ‘ethnic category’ is one such term. Different authors use this term focusing on different aspects. For example, McKay and Lewins, arguing for the need to distinguish the terms such as ethnic group, ethnic category and ethnicity, define ethnic group as ‘a certain number of people who meaningfully interact on the basis of similar ethnic traits’ and distinguish it from ethnic category which is ‘a certain number of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 106-7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 105-6.

people sharing ethnic traits without sense of belonging among them and the common attribute being not regarded as the basis for any sort of meaningful social interaction'. The key to their distinction is the existence of interaction, as they summarise: 'if there is no interaction there is no group.'<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Jenkins focuses on the 'transactional nature' of ethnicity and for him, the distinction between ethnic group and category is based on the two 'basic kinds of the transaction': the internal definition and the external definition. Here, the ethnic group or 'groupness' is related to the internal definition of 'us' while ethnic category is viewed as a product of external definition of 'them.'<sup>41</sup>

Both of these definitions still regard ethnic group and ethnic category as two different types of demographic conglomeration, or human collectives. McKay and Lewins, starting from the division between the individual level and group level of analysis, placed both 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic category' into the 'group level' phenomenon and discussed them as two types of collectives.<sup>42</sup> This attitude was less pronounced in Jenkins's work but he also accepts the view that the two can be 'understood as different kinds of collectivities *in the actual social world*' (emphasis in the original).<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the distinction between 'group' and 'category' becomes a matter of degree – the degree of cohesion among the members of the identified collectivity; and if the distinction is about the degree of cohesion, then there is no reason why there should be only two types. Indeed many others came up with more than

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<sup>40</sup> James McKay and Frank Lewins, 'Ethnicity and the Ethnic Group: a Conceptual Analysis and Reformation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, no.4 (October 1978) 418.

<sup>41</sup> Jenkins, *Rethinking*, 54-5.

<sup>42</sup> McKay and Lewins, 'Ethnicity'.

<sup>43</sup> Jenkins, *Rethinking*, 55.



two typologies for human groupings, distinguishable on the basis of the degree of integration, such as Handelman's four-way distinction of 'category', 'network', 'association' and 'community'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, such definitions cannot be applied to the categories of Kuki-Chin people in the nineteenth century, when the 'group' that was defined by a 'category' might not have existed at all.

Lehman's previous definition, in this sense, makes a clearer distinction between 'group' and 'category'. He pointed to the fact that individuals 'identify' themselves with 'categories', which are cognitive models. In this concept, the category exists as a cognitive model in the minds of the identifier. In other words, the role model, and the system woven into the categories must already be in the cognition of the 'identifier'. A little modification, or clarification, is needed to apply this concept to the Kuki-Chin categories in the early nineteenth century, because the categories were used by others only, and therefore, the role models or categories were not in the minds of the 'oneself' who identified with them, but in the minds of others.

Each of these definitions highlights slightly different aspects of ethnic category and ethnic group. To accommodate these, I suggest regarding categories purely as words. Thus, what matters is its application, not the group of individuals or the entity it designates. It could be used both in identifying oneself (the internal identification of Jenkins) or others (the external categorisation of Jenkins) and does not even have to be known to those designated by the category.

Any usage of an ethnic category, however, entails a sense of distinction between

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<sup>44</sup> T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993) 42-4.

those who are within the category and who are not. This can be called the ‘extension’ of the category, which is comparable to the ‘boundary’ of an ‘ethnic group’. As the boundary of an ‘ethnic group’ can be fuzzy and vague, the extension of one ethnic category can also be vague and not clearly defined. In fact, this is not a typical trait for ethnic category, but many words have no clear-cut boundaries of application – what linguists call ‘fuzzy concepts’. For example, as one individual can change his identity from, say ‘Pawi’ to ‘Lusei’, or ‘Peranakan’ to ‘Malay’ according to circumstances,<sup>45</sup> what can be called ‘beautiful’ or ‘ugly’, ‘rich’ or ‘poor’ can change according to the situation. Another useful concept of the linguists regarding the extension of a word is the ‘graded membership’: the membership of a concept can be graded in terms of typicality.<sup>46</sup> Thus, a thrush is a more typical bird than, say, an ostrich, and a Hakha Chin person is more typical Chin than, say, an A sho person.

‘Intension’, or the inherent traits of a word, also applies to ethnic categories as traits that are supposed, recognised, or imposed by the users of the categories. The ‘role model’ as mentioned by Lehman is one such trait. Stereotypes attached to the ethnic categories are a typical example of the ‘role model’ held by others and are another example of the intension of ethnic categories. The ‘cultural stuffs’, as Barth called them, are in fact related to the intension of an ethnic category and therefore, as Barth rightly pointed out, do not define the boundary of ethnic category. Rather, it is the ‘extension’ that is directly related to the boundary.

Different individuals may use one and the same word with different extension and

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<sup>45</sup> Nagata, ‘What is a Malay?’.

<sup>46</sup> William O’Grady, Michael Dobrovolsky, Francis Katamba, *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 276-7.

intension. The same is true of ethnic category. The category ‘Asian’ used in British local newspapers is quite different from the same word used in, say, the ‘Asian value’ debates, both in intension and extension. Nevertheless, a word is a social product, and despite the variation, there is a certain consensus of usage within a certain range of people in close interaction and the same can be said of the ethnic categories.

Also, a category does not stand on its own, but in relation to the other categories used within a certain context. ‘Chin’ used in Burma is used as against other categories such as Kachin, Shan, Karen, Burma, and so on, and ‘Kuki’ is used in Manipur vis-à-vis Naga, Meithei, and so on. The relationship of different categories can be systematised into hierarchy. One example of such understanding is shown in the figure provided by Lian Sakhong (see Fig. 1 on page 3 above), in which all the sub-categories of the Kuki-Chin people are arranged under 6 mid-level categories, which are then subsumed to the category ‘Chin’ which is attached to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Mongolian. This fine system of global human categories was a construction of the past two centuries of western literature on mankind and the real beginning for such a compilation came with the rise of ethnology in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, if not on the global scale, there were also local systems, or taxonomies of categories in various parts of India and Burma in different periods.

All these – *extension*, *intension*, and the system of ethnic categories – go through changes in time and this is the main focus in the following chapters: whether and how the standardisation of categories in these three aspects took place during the developing period of British administration. Yet, a historical study is necessarily limited by the sources available for research. The specific aspect a researcher wants to focus on may

not be researchable due to the lack of adequate evidence. Moreover, as Elton warns us, when a researcher begins to ask complex questions, the origins of which are independent of his immediate subject of study, he incurs the danger of misrepresenting the events of the past to back his own hypothesis. A focus is necessary because no one can transcribe the whole universality of life onto paper, but once a focus is chosen, a researcher has to become a servant of the sources and concentrate on the establishment of the facts.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it is important to know the characteristics of the available sources, and a good understanding of sources also enables a researcher to recognise and avoid possible prejudice inscribed in them through the way in which the evidence was produced and preserved.

## 2. The History of the Kuki-Chin People in the Nineteenth Century

### a) Sources of history

The Kuki-Chin people did not have a written language until the early twentieth century, so the best source to show the internal situation of the Kuki-Chin land from the people's own perspective, is the oral tradition passed down in the hills. There is still a slim chance that more information might be revealed through the verses of ancestors or genealogy passed down to current generations.<sup>48</sup> Some of the published works have also incorporated the oral traditions, and genealogies. Carey and Tuck, Vum Ko Hau, Vanlawma, Vumson and Haokip are among them.<sup>49</sup> Of these, only Carey and Tuck, and

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<sup>47</sup> G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Fontana: Collins, 1969), 31, 53, 66, 78-108.

<sup>48</sup> Vum Ko Hau, *Profile of a Frontier Man* (Bandung: privately printed, 1963); Vumson, *Zo History*, iii (Dedication); see also Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 82.

<sup>49</sup> Bertram S. Carey and Henry N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our Dealings with*

Vanlawma deal with early nineteenth century history in any detail; but otherwise the interest did not stretch so far back in time.

Therefore the most important source for Kuki-Chin history in the nineteenth century is the documents. It should be noted that the British were not the only ones who left records along this frontier. Before the British entered the scene, the Kuki-Chin people had complicated relationships with the people surrounding them: to the north there was the kingdom of the Manipuris; west of the Manipuris were the Cacharis; to the west was the great Mughal empire which had three provinces that bordered the Kuki-Chin hills, namely Sylhet, Tripura and Chittagong; to the south of Chittagong was the Kingdom of Arakan which was annexed by the expanding Burmese in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century; then, lastly, to the east of Arakan and stretching along the eastern outskirts of the hills up to Manipur was the Kingdom of Burma (see Map 2. on page xiv above). This is only a broad outline as there were numerous other smaller chiefs distinct from the Kuki-Chin people in the Chittagong Hills.

Many of these kingdoms had writing systems and left records that contain information on the Kuki-Chin people.<sup>50</sup> These sources are, however, totally ignored by anyone writing on the Kuki-Chin people. In fact, not only is the history of the relationships between these peoples and the Kuki-Chin people still unexplored, but also

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*Them, Their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, vol.1 (Rangoon : Superintendent of Government Printing, 1894; reprint: Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1976), 118-63 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Vum Ko Hau, *Profile*; Vumson, *Zo History*; R. Vanlawma, *My Country and I* (Aizawl: Zoram Printing Press, 1972); quoted in Nunthara, *Mizoram*, 39-5; Haokip, *Zale'n-Gam*.

<sup>50</sup> see Tarakchandra Das, *The Purums: An Old Kuki Tribe of Manipur*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1945) 6; see also Edward T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1872); John Shakespear, *The Lushai Kuki Clans* (London: Macmillan and Co. 1912), 373; Lehman, *Structure*, 25; Arthur Phayre, 'On the History of Arakan', *JASB*, vol. 13 (1844), 23-52; Than Tun, trans., *Royal Orders of Burma A.D. 1598-1885*, 10 vols. (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1990).

the histories of these kingdoms themselves have not received enough academic attention. It will take someone with great linguistic abilities, to go through these sources and compile the history of the Kuki-Chin people's relationship with the neighbours. I have only included a very general sketch of the relationships as can be found in the secondary literatures on these kingdoms in the following chapter.

Thus, the most approachable source for the Kuki-Chin history for the time being is that left by the British. A historical study of the 19th century 'Kuki-Chin' people through the documentary sources has long been overdue. Except for Alexander Mackenzie, who published a book on the Eastern Frontier of Bengal in 1884,<sup>51</sup> the original British documents have been long neglected by historians writing on the Kuki-Chin people. Those who included a part of the nineteenth century history have done so by quoting what British colonial authors had written, and in their turn, most of the British colonial authors relied on Mackenzie for the part before the 1870s. So much so that some of the misquotations from Mackenzie are being circulated as facts.<sup>52</sup>

This is one of the most important aims of this thesis, i.e. to construct history from the documentary sources left by the British. The British encroachment into the outskirts of the Kuki-Chin hills began in the late eighteenth century when they annexed Bengal, which included Chittagong, Tripura, and Sylhet, all of which were adjacent to the hills where the Kuki-Chin people lived. As these territorial rights gradually morphed into an administrative structure, official correspondence between various levels of the

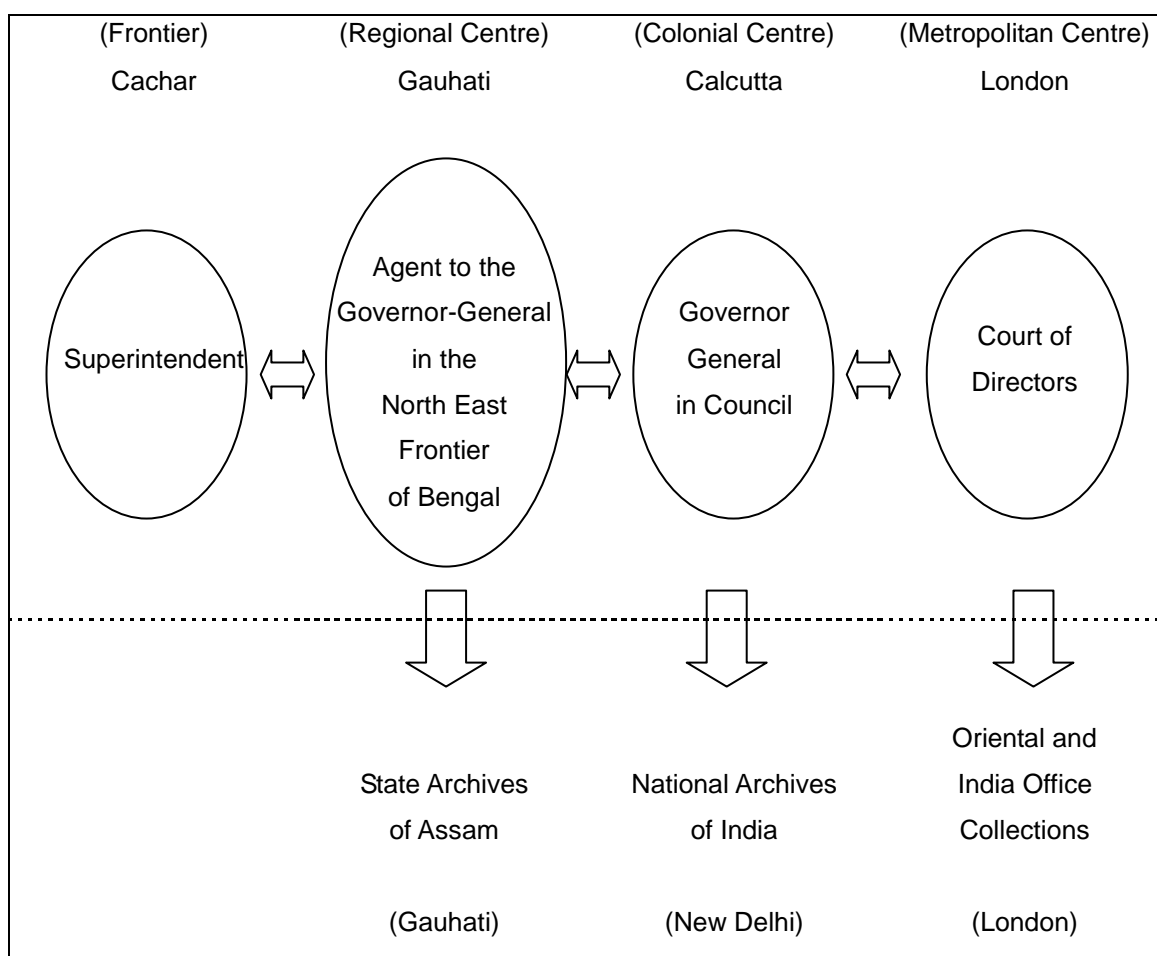
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<sup>51</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, (Calcutta: Home Department Press, 1884; reprint, New Delhi: Mittal, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> See for example narratives regarding the massacre of British subjects in 1826 in Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 164-5; cf., Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 14; cf., Mackenzie, *History*, 277, 279.

Company's employees increased. This official correspondence provides the main source for the investigation of the past.

To understand the documents, it is helpful to reflect on the process by which a document is created and preserved. This can be illustrated by considering a typical line of communication, for example, in the case of a raid in Cachar committed by the Kuki people in the 1830s. In such a case, the Superintendent of Cachar, within whose charge the incident happened, would investigate the case and then report the circumstances with the recommended course of action to his immediate superior, the Agent to the Governor General in the North East Frontier of Bengal, stationed at the regional centre, Gauhati. The Agent would then review the situation and send recommendations to the Government of India in Calcutta, usually together with the original letter written by the Superintendent of Cachar. In the colonial centre, Calcutta, a Secretary to the Government would analyse the situation or, if necessary, request more information from those regional officers, and bring the matter to the notice of the Governor General in Council with suggestions; who would then either make the final decision or refer it to the Directors in London.



**Fig. 2. The Line of Communication from Cachar to London in the 1830s and the Locations of the Archival Sources**

If the matter under consideration needed an urgent reply and the season was favourable, the whole process from the frontier to the Government of India and back to the frontier could take about three weeks thanks to the *dak* runners and river communications. The amount of time the Superintendent of Cachar had to wait for a reply could be lengthened if the matter had to be addressed to Leadenhall Street in London. The Governor-General also sent copies of letters, and any other attachments



such as maps, drawings, and photographs to London for consideration. Yet the return of such items was not always guaranteed, and he usually ordered copies of the important ones to be made and kept in India. This was the same with the lower administration of the provincial centres. Remnants of these are what we now see in the archives and fig. 2 above summarises the process and shows the location where the documents are found nowadays.

Throughout British rule in India, the details of lines of correspondence went through various changes, and during the earlier period of the Company's rule, such a refined process only emerged gradually. Some general points, however, can be made regarding the characteristics of the sources, and the limitations they impose on historical research.

First, the authors of the documents, even the officers at the very frontier, were outsiders and often ignorant of the internal situation of the Kuki-Chin. Therefore, the only events that can be traced through the British documents are those concerning the relationship between the Kuki-Chin people and the British territories in India, seen from the British point of view.

Second, and related to the above, the only aspects of the life in the frontier area that can be researched are those that came to the notice of frontier officers. Therefore, those events that disturbed or threatened the peaceful working of the administration were more likely to be reported than peaceful or ordinary situations. Besides, most of the individual officers had praise and promotion in mind, and those cases that illustrated the reporting administrators' able management would be highlighted while the opposite

would even be intentionally hidden.

Third, as the sources for the thesis are those from the colonial and metropolitan centres, the documents are top heavy: there are more records of how the top authorities reached certain decisions than the details of the activities of the frontier officers. They are also opinion-heavy: as the original report by a frontier officer moved through the administrative hierarchy, more opinions were added and naturally the opinion part grew larger than the details of the observed event. Because of this, the sources illustrate better the formation of ideas and their relationship to the workings of the British Indian administration than the events on the frontier themselves.

Fourth, until an administrative unit was established that exclusively dealt with the Kuki-Chin people, there could not be a constant source of information that regularly made reports on the people. Thus documents regarding the people outside the normal working of the administration, which was the case of the Kuki-Chin people for the most part of the nineteenth century, appear rarely and at irregular intervals. The number of documents is at its lowest during a period of prolonged peace but suddenly soars when an aggressive event takes place. This causes a practical problem in keeping a consistent narrative over a period. One way of coping with this problem is to narrow the focus to one well-documented event. Another way is broadening the range of time and place to arrange seemingly isolated events under a theme that develops gradually. I have taken this latter strategy for this thesis. This strategy is also necessary to be able to draw a meaningful interpretation of historical events as they relate to the development of categories.

## b) Issues of Kuki-Chin History

Nevertheless, both the lack of accounts on Kuki-Chin history in the nineteenth century, and the necessity of historical research to concentrate on the establishment of facts, make it imperative to focus on the broad relationship between the British and the Kuki-Chin people in order that a proper study of the development of Kuki-Chin categories can be made. Therefore, in the following chapters, I will take a two-stage approach: first reconstruct narratives regarding the British relationship with the Kuki-Chin people, and then, based on the reconstruction, analyse the transfer and changes of the Kuki-Chin categories from the local usages into British usages.

Several points need to be highlighted regarding the development of the British relationship with the Kuki-Chin people. The few events of the nineteenth century that have appeared so far in the publications on the Kuki-Chin people are seldom more than disconnected lists of raids by the Kuki-Chin people and retaliatory expeditions by the British Indian Government.<sup>53</sup> In this respect, the authors of the post-independence period do not differ from the colonial authors. The only difference is the tone of the narratives: while colonial authors highlighted the savage and unprovoked nature of the Kuki-Chin raids that ‘earned’ British retaliation, the post-colonial works focused on the illegitimacy of British colonial encroachment and the legitimate defence of territorial rights by the Kuki-Chin people. This encouraged a tendency to interpret all the events as if they were exclusively between the British and the Kuki-Chin people.

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<sup>53</sup> See for example, Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 12-20; Vumson, *Zo People*, 106-11; Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 163-4; Ray, *Mizoram*, 4-6.

It has to be made clear, firstly, that neither the British, nor the Kuki-Chin people, were one uniform entity. British India was just emerging as an administrative structure during the period of the Company with varying degrees of cohesion between centre and periphery. Within the administration of British India were various different individuals including not only the natives of Britain but also the natives of India – such as clerks, police, soldiers, interpreters and guides. As Fisher warns, ‘we must avoid the tendency to regard either the Company or the British as a whole to have been unified or acting in perfect harmony.’<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, the boundary of British India had not been demarcated clearly during the Company’s rule. In relation to the provinces adjacent to the Kuki-Chin hills, the boundary was mostly vague and British influence gradually disappeared in the hills. Thus rather than a well-defined boundary, British India had a broad frontier area through which they interacted with the Kuki-Chin people. Besides, there were other parties on the frontier than British India and the Kuki-Chin people. During the Company’s period, Manipur and Tripura kept nominal independence, though under British influence, and other than these better known entities, there were also smaller lords of the Chittagong Hills such as Marma and Chakma who had friendly relationships with the Company, paying nominal tribute but largely left untouched by the British.

Before the coming of the British all of these had had long relationships with the Kuki-Chin people through trade, military alliance or wars. This continued through the

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<sup>54</sup> Michael H. Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India: 1757-1857* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993) 8.

Company's period and was an important factor in the development of the relationship between the British and the Kuki-Chin people. Thus, understanding the intricate network of relationships between these various parties is vital to the understanding of the relationship between the Kuki-Chin people and the British Indian administration.

All the above points can be summed up under one heading: the British management of the frontier. One important factor for British management of the frontier was information about the area. It was all the more important for the British administration, as they were alien to the country and to the people under their rule. The Kuki-Chin frontier was no exception. Particularly after the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war, the sudden increase in territory made it necessary for the British Indian Government to conduct thorough surveys of it, and this newly kindled interest produced a sudden influx of information regarding the Kuki-Chin people. This is also the issue most closely related to the British categorisation of the Kuki-Chin people.

The relationship between knowledge and colonial administration, in a general sense, has been subjected to interesting debates. Various authors have pointed out the close relationship between the development of knowledge or 'sciences' and the colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup> There is no denying that the development of ethnology in Britain during the Victorian period had much to do with colonial expansion. For instance, wherever the British colonial rule extended there followed an army of administrators, soldiers, missionaries, and travellers collecting information, specimens

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<sup>55</sup> Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, (London: Ithaca, 1973); George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Zaheer Baber, 'Colonising nature: scientific knowledge, colonial power and the incorporation of India into the modern world-system', *British Journal of Sociology* 52, no.1 (March 2001), 37-58; Mark Brown, 'Ethnology and Colonial Administration in Nineteenth century British India: the Question of Native Crime and Criminality', *The British journal for the History of Science* 36, no. 2 (June 2003): 201-19.

and data – geographic, botanical, zoological, religious, linguistic, and ethnological – which eventually found their way back to the home country where they nourished the fledgling modern science of Britain and Europe.<sup>56</sup>

Not surprisingly, in a post-colonial world, many have criticised the morality of a science that grew under the immorality of imperialism. Anthropology, and its predecessor, ethnology, faced the harshest criticism as a study of colonised ‘others’. For instance, Feuchtwang maintains that anthropology could not have been unaffected by its sponsors, the colonial institutions and the government, that reaped benefits from colonial practice. Therefore, he argues, anthropological researches were bound to produce knowledge supportive of the colonial policy.<sup>57</sup>

In more recent researches, those views that regard the development of science at this period as a by-product of the colonial activities, or even as a result of strategic calculation by the colonial administration and therefore intrinsically subjected to the interest of colonial manipulation, have been criticised as too narrow and misleading.<sup>58</sup> For example, Brown argues that the administrator-scholars who collected the data in India were actually engaged in the ‘pan-European scientific debates of the day’; therefore, were concerned with more than simply colonial organisation.<sup>59</sup> For another example, Vicziany criticises the works of Francis Buchanan, the author of a vast range of survey works in India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, not because of his linkage to the

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<sup>56</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*; Baber, ‘Colonising’; Brown, ‘Ethnology’.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Feuchtwang, ‘The Colonial Formation of British Social Anthropology’, in *Anthropology and Colonial Encounter*, ed. Talal Asad, 71-100, (London: Ithaca, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Brown, ‘Ethnology’; Barber, ‘Colonising’.

<sup>59</sup> Brown ‘Ethnology’, 204.

colonial administration, but because of his excessive personal ambition to enter the academic world.<sup>60</sup>

The key issue here is whether the agents of science, the administrator-scholars in the nineteenth century and the anthropologists of the twentieth century, had independence from the colonial institutions in their scientific activities – including the collection, interpretation and transmission of knowledge. Two contrasting conclusions have been drawn, partly due to the difference in the period under investigation: whereas Feuchtwang and most of the other critics of colonial anthropology consider the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Brown and Vicziany focus on the earlier, more developmental period of science when amateurism dominated.

Zaheer Baber has included the whole period from the eighteenth century to the independence of India in his analysis of the relationship between science, technology, and colonialism.<sup>61</sup> He asserts that, in the context of British India, scientific knowledge, technology, institutions, colonialism and (even) the world-system influenced and shaped one another in a ‘co-productive’ way,<sup>62</sup> and particular processes were influenced both by the long-term structural changes and by the agencies of amateur scientists in India.<sup>63</sup>

The relevance of this inclusionist view to the current topic is that, in analysing the relationship between knowledge and colonial administration, no part should be reduced

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<sup>60</sup> Marika Vicziany, ‘Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in Early Nineteenth Century India: the Surveys of Francis Buchanan 1762-1829’, *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no.4 (1986): 625-60.

<sup>61</sup> Baber, ‘Colonising’, 37-42

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

to be a subjective part of the other; though their close, or ‘co-producing’ relationship should be noted in the particular historical circumstances. The influence of theoretical developments at home and of scientific institutions should also form part of the analysis of the knowledge acquired by the British administrators of the Kuki-Chin frontier.

### 3. Scope and Structure of the Thesis

I have used the term ‘Kuki-Chin’ for the whole of the Kuki, Chin and Mizo people, in a similar *extension* as ‘Zo’. I do not, however, intend to make any clear definition of the Kuki-Chin people, nor even the individual Kuki, Chin or Lushai, as a starting point for the work. As the study itself deals with the development of the categories and their definitions, the adequate starting point is the unknown state of the Kuki-Chin people to the British.

In terms of period, the starting point is set at the time when the first mention of the people was made by the British, i.e. in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. To describe this process in relation to the British administration of India and scientific developments in Europe, many pages have been allocated to describe what would have otherwise been regarded as background information: the characteristics of the administrators, their purposes, their relationship with the central administration and with the home country, the development of the colonial administrative structure, the development of scientific trends at home, and so on.

Geographically, the areas under consideration are, first, the districts of Sylhet, Tripura, Cachar, and Manipur in the north, and Chittagong and Arakan in the South. Of



these, Sylhet, Tripura and Chittagong came under British control in the 1760s, and Cachar, Manipur and Arakan were incorporated after the termination of the First Anglo-Burmese war in 1826.

The next chapter starts with an overview of the relationships among different polities in the frontier area before the coming of the British in the plains of Bengal as the background for the whole thesis. I have then included the establishment of the British presence in Bengal until the 1780s, the period of Hastings as Governor-General. Even at this early period of British rule in Bengal, when all the machinery of government was yet to take shape, there were British administrators in the far outposts through whom some hearsay information on the Kuki-Chin people was acquired.

Chapter 3 deals with the period of reform in the administrative structure of the Indian Government under Cornwallis up to the 1820s. Most of the narratives, however, are focused on the early administrator-scholars who wrote the first publications on the Kuki-Chin people through the Asiatic Society of Bengal. One of the most distinctive figures in Kuki-Chin ethnography, and perhaps the whole ethnography of the Chittagong and Burma frontier, was Francis Buchanan, who travelled in this period and left manuscript journals. I have paid particular attention to his works as they reveal more of the situation of the ethnic categories before the British than any other sources.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the First Anglo-Burmese War and the surveys during and after the war. In terms of period it is from 1824 to the mid 1830s. More attention is paid to the administrative changes caused by the war than to the actual course of the war itself. The surveys during this period had increased information regarding the frontier

area more than any other events during the period of the Company, and these are dealt with in detail. Not all the changes that were brought in around this period were related to events on the frontier, and the changes in the attitudes of the British in general also had some important repercussions on the relationship between the British and the Kuki-Chin people during this period, and are therefore discussed in the chapter.

In Chapter 5, I deal with the administrative measures taken for the defence of the newly acquired territories. Period-wise, it overlaps with the surveys mentioned in the previous chapter, so there is no more to mention in terms of British knowledge of the Kuki-Chin; but one of the important issues of this time was the question of the boundary, and I have brought together all the items relative to this question in this chapter, even from outside that period.

Around the 1840s, British troops in both the northern and southern districts of the Kuki-Chin frontier attempted several expeditions against the Kuki-Chin people. Chapter 6 deals with these expeditions, but, again, this chapter is not restricted to this particular decade and other events relating to the expeditions are discussed here. These expeditions resulted in more knowledge of the Kuki-Chin people, including the first mention of the so-called ‘northward movement’ of the people, which is discussed in detail in this chapter.

After this series of expeditions in the 1840s, the British readopted their former defensive policy in both the northern and southern frontiers. In the meantime, the Kuki-Chin people initiated peaceful intercourse with the British. These diplomatic exchanges are the main focus of Chapter 7. Around this time Brian Hodgson wrote a series of

articles relating to the ethnic groups in India. The influence of ethnology was apparent by this time in the literature on the Kuki-Chin people. This is also included in this chapter.

Lastly, it has to be mentioned that a purist approach to the spellings has been abandoned in this account of a complicated frontier. Rather, I have adopted what seems to be the most widely accepted form in the British documents to allow easy comparison with other works and documents. The resulting choice is necessarily arbitrary, as there are numerous different ways in which one word has been spelt by different administrators and scholars. Some of these confusions have important implications in the development of ethnic categories. A simple difference in spellings could also mean a wide difference in the extension and intension of the category. In quotations, my principle was to preserve the original spelling of names of people as they appear in the original text, but in my own narrative I use the most commonly used terms of the period – Kuki, Chin and Lushai.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BEGINNING OF THE BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE KUKI-CHIN FRONTIER AREA: 1760s-1780s

#### 1. Pre-Colonial Polities on the Kuki-Chin Frontier

##### a) The Mughal Empire: Sylhet, Tripura and Chittagong

The Mughal Empire was the largest among the polities around the Kuki-Chin land before the coming of the British. In general, different regions of the Mughal Empire had been loosely connected to the centre. Apart from regular tributes and the supply of soldiers to the Emperor, local administrations were left in the hands of their regional authorities with minimal interference from the state.<sup>1</sup> The tendency for localisation grew stronger after the death of Aurangzeb in the early eighteenth century: as central authority declined, the relatively strengthened local rulers began to rule their provinces as if they were independent.<sup>2</sup> Bengal was the first province to slip out of the Mughal emperor's authority; soon, the *nawab* of Oudh followed the example of Bengal; Nizam-ul-Mulk, a minister (*vesir*) of the Mughal Empire, left Delhi and established a dynasty of his own in Hyderabad; the Marathas dominated Western India; and petty rulers prevailed in the Southern parts. The great Mughal Emperor continued to reside in Delhi

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<sup>1</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, vol. 2-1, The New Cambridge History of India (New York: Cambridge, 1988), 26-7; R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: MacMillan, 1988), 551.

<sup>2</sup> P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*. (London: Pelican Books, 1965; reprint, London: Penguin, 1990), 81 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 224; Allen, E. A. Gait, C. G. H. Allen and H. F. Howard, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India*, (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1908, reprint New Delhi: Mittal, 2001), 215 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

as a supreme but nominal head.<sup>3</sup>

Under such circumstances, the relationship between the Kuki-Chin people and their neighbouring Mughal subjects depended on the local circumstances. Among the vast territories under the Mughal Empire, the districts that formed the frontier with the Kuki-Chin people were Sylhet, Tripura and Chittagong all of which were under the *Nawab* of Bengal in the eighteenth century.

Sylhet (Srihatta) consisted of a fertile valley created by the Surma River, which ran from Cachar in the east and continued into the Meghna River in the west. To the north, Sylhet was bounded by the Khasi and Jaintia hills, and to the south, by the hilly domain of the Tripura Rajah and the Kuki-Chin people. The valley, or the Sylhet Proper, had been divided between kingdoms called Gor and Laur, both of which were added to Bengal during the time of Akbar in the sixteenth century. A substantial portion of the plains, however, was ruled by two independent kings based on the hills: the Jaintia kings of the northern hills governed the northern plains of the Surma River, and the rajahs of Tripura often claimed rights over the plains adjacent to the hills.<sup>4</sup>

According to Robert Lindsay, the first British Collector at Sylhet, the Mughals regarded the defence of Sylhet as important and stationed a considerable military force there commanded by a close relation of the *Nawab* of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, local

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<sup>3</sup> Kulke and Rothermund, *History*, 224-5.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1905; reprint, Calcutta: Thacker Spink and Co. 1963), 326-7 (page citations are to the reprint edition); Allen, et al. *Gazetteer*, 420.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies; Comprising Anecdotes of an Indian Life by the Honorable Robert Lindsay*, vol. 4 of *Lives of the Lindsays* (Wigan: C. S. Simms, 1840), 21.

*zemindars* of Sylhet had been paying yearly presents to the Kuki chiefs as a kind of protection money for those who entered the southern hills to cut wood. These gifts, according to Mackenzie, also served as inducements for the Kuki-Chin people to bring down their forest products to the markets for trade and barter.<sup>6</sup>

Tripura (or Tipperah) was located in the hills between the Surma Valley in the north and Chittagong in the south. To the east, the limit of the Tripura Rajah's authority had never been definite but gradually merged into a part of the Kuki-Chin land now called Mizoram. The Rajah's territory included a substantial portion of the plains that stretched west from the Tripura Hills to the Meghna River. In 1733, the *Nawab* of Bengal, Shuja-ud-din annexed this portion and made it a *pergunnah* called 'Roushanabad'. Nevertheless, as his main interest was the supply of elephants and horses for war purposes, he retained the Rajah of Tripura in charge of the plains, rendering him a *zemindar* of the *pergunnah*. From this time on, the Rajah of Tripura had the dual position as a *zemindar* under the Mughals and the independent rajah of the remaining part of his kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

Of the relationship between the Tripura and Kuki-Chin people Dalton wrote:

That the Kúkis were known of old in Tripura is apparent from the Ráj Mála, as it represents Shiva falling in love with a Kúki girl who was in consequence put to death by his shrew of a wife. In another place the Kúkis are represented as allies of the Rájá of Udaipur who invaded Tripura, but was defeated, and Udaipur became the capital of Tripura. Again, the Kúkis are brought forward as accusing the Tripura general Raja Chachag of a design to make Tamul, which he had subjugated in the name of his master, an independent state. This general flourished in A.D. 1512.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 279.

<sup>7</sup> Allen et al., *Gazetteer*, 373, 606-7; Mackenzie, *History*, 272.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Tuite Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of

From the above quotation, it can be gathered that the Kuki had been regarded as an important factor in the politics of Tripura for a long time. This is also supported by Mackenzie who noted that the Kuki people were often implicated in the feuds among the contenders for the Tripuri throne; in his own words: ‘every rebellious member of the Rajah’s family sought refuge among the Kukis and incited them to outrage.’<sup>9</sup> Thus, whenever possible, the Tripura Rajah tried to put the Kuki people under control by imposing allegiance, or by appointing officers over the Kuki, as the following quotation from the reports of an Assamese delegation to Tripura in the early eighteenth century suggests:

The hills on both sides of the Barak River are inhabited by a tribe called the Kukis who are like the Daflas and Nagas here [in Assam]. There will be about three hundred men at the place; their weapons are arrows, bows and shields and Naga spears. The Tripura Raja appoints a governor over this place, and he is called Halamcha, who is like the Naga *Khunbaos* in our country. He has under him one Galim, one Gabar, one Chapia and one Doloi. They eat and dress like the Nagas, but they do not eat beef.<sup>10</sup>

What exactly was meant by the names ‘Halamcha’, ‘Galim’, ‘Gabar’, ‘Chapia’ and ‘Doloi’ needs further research, but when a British officer visited the Tripura Hills in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, he reported that the names of the chiefs among the Kuki were ‘Roys, Ghalims, Chuppiahs, and Govoors’<sup>11</sup> which, correspond with ‘Doloi’, ‘Galim’, ‘Chapia’ and ‘Gabar’. Without further knowledge about the political and demographic constitution of the Tripura at this period, it is difficult to conclude anything about these

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Government Printing, 1872), 111.

<sup>9</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 270, 280; see also Allen *et al. Gazetteer*, 607.

<sup>10</sup> S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations: 1771-1826* (Gauhati :Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, 1949), 46.

<sup>11</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 281- 2.

names or the supposed 'governor' called 'Halamcha'. It has to be added, however, that the boundary of Tripura could not have been delimited clearly, as the distinction between the subjects of Tripura Rajah and those independent of his authority was also obscure. The control any one Rajah had over the outlying villages depended on the strength of that particular Rajah.<sup>12</sup>

South of Tripura, across the Fenny River, was Chittagong. It consisted of coastal plains that stretched down to Arakan and a succession of chains of mountains that ran parallel to the coastline. Located between the kingdoms of Tripura, Arakan and the Mughal territories, Chittagong frequently changed its rulers. In addition, Portuguese freebooters overran the country in the sixteenth century. They were at first hired by the King of Arakan to assist him in controlling the province, but in 1605 the King of Arakan drove them into an island called Sandwip. The Portuguese, however, continued to raid the coasts of Chittagong and Bengal from this island, which induced the *Nawab* of Bengal to make a determined attack on the island in 1664, wipe out the pirates, and re-annex Chittagong.<sup>13</sup>

Further east into the mountain ranges of the Chittagong Hills were the Kuki-Chin people. In between the Mughal lands of Chittagong and the Kuki-Chin were the transitory hill powers of Chakma and Marma. These were organised in larger political units than the Kuki-Chin people and shared the religions, customs and languages of the Bengalis and the Arakanese.<sup>14</sup> In the relationships between the Kuki-Chin and the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>13</sup> Allen *et al.*, *Gazetteer*, 395-6; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: McMillan, 1968), 246-7.

<sup>14</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*; Pierre Bessagnet, *Tribesmen of the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (Dacca: Asiatic



dwellers of the plains in Chittagong, they worked as intermediaries in both trading and raids. This topic, however, still calls for further research, as Bessaignet observed fifty years ago.<sup>15</sup>

#### b) Assam, Cachar and Manipur

Another important kingdom of the region was Assam, established by the Ahoms, a group of Tai, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It occupied the Brahmaputra valley and, except to the west, Assam was encircled by the hills and was constantly under threat from the various groups of hill people such as Bor, Singphos or Kachins, Garos, Daflas, Mishmis, Mikirs and Nagas. The management of the hills, therefore, was vital for the success of the Assamese dynasty, and authorities were appointed in each tract for the protection of the people.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, protection thus provided was only reliable when the Assamese government was strong enough. As Bhuyan wrote:

[W]hen the government was weak the hill men swept down the plains in marauding excursions, and carried off property and men from the Duars [the belt of land at the foot of the hills]; and they did not even hesitate to claim ownership over this zone. Most of the tribesmen were deficit in labourers and certain necessities of life, and the Duar people were forced into compulsory servitude in the hills and their crops, cattle and other property were constantly at the mercy of the needy and rapacious hill men.<sup>17</sup>

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Assamese Government

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Society of Pakistan, 1958), 3-11; Lucien Bernot, *Les Paysans Arakanais du Pakistan Oriental: l'Histoire, le Monde Végétal et l'Organisation Sociale des Réfugiés Marma(Mog)* (The Arakanese Farmers of East Pakistan: History, Botany and Social Organisation of the Marma Refugees) (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), 25-30.

<sup>15</sup> Bessaignet, *Tribesmen*, 36 footnote.

<sup>16</sup> Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 23-46.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

continued to decline: central authority imploded with a series of succession struggles; rebels and bandits rampaged throughout the country; and the loosely held polities of the hills broke off, turning hostile. In such circumstances, normal working of the government in the frontier area was not possible and people deserted the fertile but unprotected tracts under the hills, which crippled the capabilities of the state further.<sup>18</sup> Assam was not in direct contact with the Kuki-Chin people, but the example of Assam illustrates the situation that could happen to other polities in the frontier that were in closer contact with the Kuki-Chin while these were under similar political instability.

South of Assam, across the Barail Range and hills inhabited by the Nagas, were the Kingdoms of Manipur and Cachar. Manipur was totally surrounded by hills on every side and its history had been closely knitted with that of the surrounding hill people; namely, the Nagas and the Kukis.<sup>19</sup> The dominant population of Manipur, the Meithei, were also closely related to the Kukis in ethnic terms. The Meithei emerged from seven different groups all of which traced their origins to the hills.<sup>20</sup> Lehman regarded the language of the Meithei as the Kuki-Chin language of 'long-Hinduised people' in the plains of Manipur, and the *Linguistic Survey of India* also classified Meithei under the Kuki-Chin group, while Hodson argued that before the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Meitheis were the same as the hill people in internal organisation, in religion, in habits and manners.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826-58* (Gauhati: Spectrum Publications, 1980), 4-5; Edward Gait, *History of Assam* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & co. 1933), 192-206.

<sup>19</sup> T. C. Hodson, *The Nagas of Tribes of Manipur* (London: Macmillan, 1911; reprint, New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1996), 1-2 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9-10; idem, *The Meitheis* (London: David Nutt, 1908; reprint, New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1997), 5-6 (page citations are to the reprint edition); N. N. Acharyya, 'Evolution of Meitei Polity in Ancient and Mediaeval Manipur', in *Studies in the History of North-East India*, ed. J. B. Bhattacharjee (Shillong: North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1986), 75-6.

<sup>21</sup> Lehman, *Structure*, 5; Grierson, *Linguistic Survey*, vol. 1 'Introduction', 72; Hodson, *Meitheis*, 11; see also Frank M. Lebar, Gerald Cannon Hickey, and John K. Musgrave, *Ethnic Groups of Mainland*

According to Gait, it was from 1714 that the history of Manipur became reliable. In this year a Naga named Pamheiba became rajah, taking a Hindu name of Gharib Nawaz. During his rule, Hinduism became the major religion of the people of Manipur, distancing the Meithei further from the hill people; he then waged series of successful wars against the Burmese and captured many important towns, but after he was murdered by his own son in 1754, the country degenerated into a civil war among his many sons.<sup>22</sup>

To the west of Manipur was Cachar, located in the Surma Valley. When the Mughals conquered Sylhet in the sixteenth century, the remaining portion of the Surma Valley to the east was ruled by petty tributaries to Tripura. In the later half of the sixteenth century, the Dimasa rulers of Maibong, having been chased out of their former lands in the Brahmaputra Valley by the Ahoms, expanded towards the plains of Cachar and pushed their boundary to Sylhet with Badarpur as the boundary. The population of the plains of Cachar was predominantly Bengali, with a particular dialect they shared with the people of Sylhet. The Dimasa rulers of Cachar preserved the Bengali system of administration and even patronised Bengali and Sanskrit education.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the Kukis in the southern hills, there were a number of Kuki villages in the northern hills, in central Cachar. These are known to have been settled by the Cachar kings in the early nineteenth century. There is no direct evidence available to show the relationship

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*Southeast Asia*, (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Print, 1964), 50.

<sup>22</sup> Gait, *History of Assam*, 321; Mackenzie, *History*, 149.; S. T. Das, *Tribal Life of North-Eastern India: Habitat, Economy, Customs, Traditions* (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1986), 289.

<sup>23</sup> J.B. Bhattacharjee, 'Glimpses of the Pre-colonial History of Cachar,' in *Studies in the History of North-East India*, ed. J. B. Bhattacharjee, 81-7, (Shillong: North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1986), 81, 84-5.

between the Cacharis or Manipuri and the Kuki-Chin before the British annexation, but from the later evidence it seems that the rulers of these countries also maintained similar relationships of hostilities and alliances with the Kuki-Chin chiefs as the Rajahs of Tripura.<sup>24</sup>

### c) Arakan and Burma

To the south and east of the Kuki-Chin land were the kingdoms of Arakan and Burma. Both of these kingdoms had Buddhism as their religion and had a common written script though there were substantial dialectal differences in the pronunciation of words.<sup>25</sup> Yet towards the middle of the eighteenth century, these two kingdoms were undergoing opposite fates.

In the eighteenth century Burma, the newly risen Konbaung dynasty held tighter control over its territory than the rulers of any of the other polities of the region. After the short rule of the Mon had been overthrown and the territories of the restored Toungoo dynasty regained, the kings of the Konbaung dynasty marched their army into the neighbouring countries: first, they subdued the Shan people in the north; then devastated Manipur many times over (in the years 1755, 1758-9, 1764-5, 1770) annexing part of it; waged war with Siam (1760, 1764-7, 1785-6, 1809-11); twice laid

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<sup>24</sup> Robert B. Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*. (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1835; reprint, New Delhi: Mittal, 2000), 197, 200; Meckenzie, *History*, 145.; Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology*, 45; Robert Stewart, 'Notes on Cachar', *JASB*, vol.24 (1855): 582-701.

<sup>25</sup> H. R. Spearman, ed., *Gazetteer of Burma* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1880; reprint Delhi: Cultural Publishing House, 1983), 150. (page citations are to the reprint edition).

siege to Ayuthia; and defended Burma against a Chinese invasion (1765-9).<sup>26</sup>

The Arakanese court, on the other hand, suffered endless rounds of bloody intrigues from the early eighteenth century, which saw a new king on the throne every few years.<sup>27</sup> Some discontented nobles of Arakan, according to Phayre, ‘flocked to Ava, beseeching aid to restore order’ for years<sup>28</sup>; then, in 1784, Burmese King Bodawhpaya marched his troops to Arakan to ‘help the local people to get good rulers’ and ‘to clear the place of all bad characters so that the Religion might prosper’.<sup>29</sup> The conclusion of this expedition was different from all the other successful campaigns that the kings of Burma waged with their neighbours. The Burmese invasion of Manipur and Siam had ended with extensive slave raiding (and the installation of a friendly pretender on the throne in the case of Manipur), but they annexed the territories of Arakan and reorganised the administration after the Burmese style: scattering outposts throughout the country and appointing Burmese governors.<sup>30</sup>

Various groups of Kuki-Chin people had been known in Arakan. The chronicles of the kingdom of Arakan have records of legendary history that associate the early kings of Arakan with the Kuki-Chin. For example, according to Paton, there are occasions when the ‘Jumah caste’ of people came to the aid of Arakan against Burmese incursions.

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<sup>26</sup> G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824 the Beginning of the English Conquest* (London: Longman, 1925, reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. 1967), 238-82.

<sup>27</sup> Victor B. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 226.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim and Arakan* (London: Trübner, 1883, reprint, London: Susil Gupta, 1967), 212 (page citations are from the reprint edition).

<sup>29</sup> *ROB*, vol.4, xvii, 83(16 October 1784), 182(4 October 1787).

<sup>30</sup> Harvey, *History*, 280; Thant Myint, *The Making of Modern Burma*. (Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 14.

In another instance a man of 'Jumah caste, inhabitants of the Koladyne hills' married the princess of Arakan and became king.<sup>31</sup> The word 'Jumah caste' came from *Jhoom*, which is the Bengali equivalent of Burmese *Toungya*, meaning slash and burn cultivation, or land cultivated by such methods. Thus, 'Jumah caste' can be equated to hill people in contrast to the sedentary cultivators of the plains, and the upper part of the Koladyne River was known to have been inhabited by the Kuki-Chin people as it is nowadays. Therefore, the 'Jumah caste' of the 'Koladyne Hills' can safely be equated to the Kuki-Chin. Phayre also mentions an episode from the chronicles, which traces the ancestry of the kings of Arakan to a son of a hill chief of the 'Toung-mru.'<sup>32</sup> 'Toung' (\_\_\_\_\_) in Burmese means 'mountain'. It was used in contrast to 'Chaung' (\_\_\_\_\_: river) to designate the people living in the higher and remoter hills as in Toung-tha(\_\_\_\_\_: sons of mountains) and Chaung-tha(\_\_\_\_\_: sons of rivers). Therefore 'Toung-mru' designates the Mru people, with an emphasis on their remoteness.

Judging from the political chaos Arakan was in during the eighteenth century, it can be assumed that government control over relationships between the Arakanese and the Kuki-Chin people would not have existed. This, however, was not the case with Burma, which, unlike any other polities mentioned thus far, was still expanding towards the zenith of its power. A closer look into the situation in Burma, and the Burmese relationship with the Kuki-Chin people can provide an idea of the sort of relationship that existed between the Kuki-Chin people and those in the plains.

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<sup>31</sup> Charles Paton, 'Historical and Statistical Sketch of Araccan', *Asiatick Researches*, vol. 16, (1828): 353-81.

<sup>32</sup> A. Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', *JASB*, vol.10-2, no. 117 (1841): 686.

In general the central authority of the Burmese kingdom tended to devolve towards lower levels of administrative hierarchy located further away from the centre geographically.<sup>33</sup> Local administration was dominated by various types of headman, or the gentry class who derived their authority from their hereditary position in the local community despite the semblance of appointments by royal decree. Like *zemindars* of Bengal, their income came primarily from commissions on tax collections and periodic gratuities from local inhabitants rather than salaries from the government.<sup>34</sup> Thus, as in the case of Mughal India, central rule did not penetrate into this lowest rung of the administration and village life was governed by anonymous customs administered by village elders.<sup>35</sup>

Lieberman, as well as Taylor, distinguished three zones in the Burmese kingdom: the 'central' or 'nuclear' zone where the *ahmú-dàn* (specialised servicemen) population were concentrated; the 'dependent' or 'secondary' zone which was dominated by *athi* (free non-service taxpayers) population; and the 'tributary zone', often composed of ethnic non-Burman populations with their own rulers, but under the obligation to provide the king with tribute and military service at his request.<sup>36</sup> Burmese control over the diverse area of the 'tributary zone' was military in character: it was done by manipulating existing local cleavages and supporting the rule of those friendly to Burma.<sup>37</sup> Taylor described the tributary zone in general as follows:

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<sup>33</sup> Lieberman, *Burmese*, 137.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>35</sup> Harvey, *History*, 329-30, 351-2.

<sup>36</sup> Lieberman, *Burmese*, 65; Robert Taylor, *The State in Burma* (London: C. Hurst & Co. 1987) 21-3.

<sup>37</sup> Lieberman, *Burmese*, 33, 133.

[The rulers of the tributary zone] paid allegiance to the central court through tribute, missions, marriage alliances, military forces and similar non-permanent, non-bureaucratic displays of obligation. When these tributaries posed no serious threat to the central state, kings allowed them to conduct their affairs undisturbed. Their economic surplus was so marginal that until their minerals and timber became valuable in the nineteenth century security was the king's only concern.<sup>38</sup>

The Burmese relationship with the Chin people also fell into the category of the 'tributary zone'. Apart from this general description, we also have a few other sources that show some actual instances of relationships. Harvey and Hall mention the inclusion of a Chin levy in the army of Alaung-hpaya.<sup>39</sup> Both of these authors do not make clear whether the Chin levy mentioned were men recruited as a result of a tributary relationship between a Chin chief and the king of Burma, or a duty imposed on Chin *ahmú-dàn* settlers. Yet, a record found in the *Royal Orders of Burma* suggests that it was a form of tributary relationship mediated by the Mogaung *Sawbwa* or the Shan ruler of Mogaung. In March 1788, the Mogaung *Sawbwa* reported that:

Many Chins, Kayins(Karens) and Khanti Shans had been recruited from his area to serve in the fighting forces during 1785 and 1786 when 'the King needed most their services' but unfortunately many of them deserted and some officers like *Kyi Wun* (officer of granaries) had been helping these absconders.<sup>40</sup>

Even within the tributary zone there were varying degrees of integration to the Burmese court. The above quote shows that the Burmese kings controlled those people further away from them through the Shans. In fact, the most important tributaries of all in Burma were the Shans, who were, unlike the others, sedentary farmers, had written characters, professed Buddhism and were organised in large political units united,

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<sup>38</sup> Taylor, *State*, 22-3.

<sup>39</sup> Harvey, *History*, 228; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, (London: Mcmillan, 1968), 407.

<sup>40</sup> *ROB*, vol.5, 418 (26 March 1788).



though loosely, under *Sawbwas*.<sup>41</sup>

A more detailed account of this tributary relationship between the Chin and Burma was made available after the annexation of the Upper Burma a century after the above quotation. Despite the intervention of a hundred years, the observations made by the British officers of the frontier between the Chin people and the Burmese in the Kale and the Yaw Valley are worth mentioning here as a general illustration.

In 1887, Major Raikes, the Deputy Commissioner of Chindwin, who was responsible for negotiations with and subjugation of the Chin people west of Kale, made various intelligence reports regarding the Chins. In one of his early reports he mentions tributes formerly paid to the Kale *Sawbwa* by the Minledaung and Tawyan Chins<sup>42</sup> who lived in the hills nearer to Kale:

Until the present *Sawbwa* was declared Governor of the Kale State the Minledaung and Tawyan Chins used to pay tribute to the *Sawbwa*. This tribute consisted of four cotton sheets, two baskets of tobacco, and two baskets of chilies given annually, and one Chin slave (not exceeding two cubits and one span in height) given triennially. No tribute has been paid by Minledaung or Tawyan Chins since deposition of the ex-*Sawbwa*.<sup>43</sup>

It is worth noting that this tributary relationship was not between the Chin people and the Burmese government but between the Chin people and the *Sawbwa* of Kale; therefore, not only did the Shan *Sawbwas* act as intermediaries between the King of

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<sup>41</sup> Liberman, *Burmese*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> Both Minledaung and Tawyan are names of mountain ranges and the Burmese seem to have adopted these names for a section of Tlaisun Chins (or Tashon Chins) settled there. These, in turn, were adopted by the British soldiers. See Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 147-8.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Major F. D. Raikes, C.I.E., on special duty with the Chin Field Force, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, dated 17 June 1889, appendix no. 3 'Route from Tashôn Ywama to Sihaung and general information about Minledaung and Tawyan Chins' (NAI Foreign, External B. nos. 139-140 'Report by Major Raikes on the Operation in the Chin Hills').

Burma and the Chin, but they also exacted tribute on their own account. Raikes indicates that the reason why the Minledaung and Tawyan Chins paid such tribute was in order to be allowed to trade in the markets of Kale, from which they acquired goods which were then traded to the other Chins further west. Moreover, both Minledaung and Tawyan Chins were subordinate to a Tlaisun chief and were bound to pay him certain tributes as well as free service to carry salt from Kale to his village.<sup>44</sup> Thus, there was a network of tributary relationships surrounding the trade between the hills and the plains; and whoever was in power seems to have attempted to benefit by controlling that trade or imposing taxes on it.

One factor that complicated the relationship between the Chins and other dwellers in the lowlands such as the Burmese or the Shans was the existence of enmities among the Chin people themselves. In this matter, a report by Captain Eyre reveals an interesting situation. Captain Eyre was the Deputy Commissioner of Pagan. As in the case of Major Raikes in the Kale Valley, Captain Eyre was assigned to the duties of controlling the Chins in the Myittha Valley. He observed that most of the Chin chiefs maintained a friendly relationship with one or more Burmese villages at the same time as raiding other adjoining villages. Interestingly, according to his report, rival Chin villages of the Yokwas and the Hakas systematically raided each others' trading partners: the Yokwas were enemies of the people of the Gangaw circle, but friends with those in Minywa, while the Hakas were friends with those in Gangaw and raided the Minywa circle.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Letter from Raikes dated 17 June 1889; see also Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* 148.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Captain Eyre, Officiating Deputy Commissioner of Pagan, 'a report on the Chin Tribes bordering on the Yaw country', dated March 1888, annexed to Letter from J. LaTouche, Esq. Commissioner of the Southern Division, Upper Burma, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, dated 29 March 1888 (NAI Home Public no.64-89, dated July 1888, 'Report on the Yaw

Hostilities, in fact, dominated the relationship between the Chin and the Burmese and the paramount interest of the Burmese government regarding the Chin was to subjugate them. In January 1788 the Mogaung *Sawbwa* was ordered to ‘use force wherever necessary’ to keep the Chins and Kachins in his territory under close control, and to keep the road from the Amber Mines to Mong Long open by ‘attacking, capturing, and killing’ Chins and Kachins on that route ‘whenever necessary’.<sup>46</sup> Similarly in July 1795, the *Myo-thugyi* (Town Headman) of Mindon, a town on the eastern slope of Arakan Yoma, west of Thayetmyo, requested guns to defend against ‘Chin Ayain’ or the independent Chins.<sup>47</sup> After this request, 50 guns were ordered to be retained at Mindon out of the 90 that had been seized there by the same *Myo-thugyi*.

So far, two types of relationship have been mentioned: Chin as tributaries to the Burmese, and as raiders on Burmese territories. These two, however, are similar in that the Chins in these relationships were seen as independent neighbours by the Burmese government, the only difference being the ability of the Burmese government to impose their authority over the particular Chin group in question. If the word ‘wild Chins’ (Chin Yain \_\_\_\_\_, or Chin Ayain \_\_\_\_\_)<sup>48</sup> in the above quotation was used to designate collectively those Chins independent of Burma, then it is probable that there would have been a counterpart to the ‘Chin-Yain’: that is, subjugated or ‘tamed’

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Country and the Chins’)

<sup>46</sup> *ROB*, vol. 5, 7, 347 (21 January 1788).

<sup>47</sup> *ROB*, vol. 5, 100, 596 (24 July 1795).

<sup>48</sup> The Burmese word Yain (\_\_\_\_\_) or Ayain (\_\_\_\_\_) both mean ‘wild’ as ‘undomesticated or untamed’; therefore, ‘uncivilised’.

Chins. Buchanan, who travelled with Symes in the first embassy to the court of Ava,<sup>49</sup> does indeed refer to such 'subjected Chins' as 'Kiayn Yeen'. The Burmese word that Buchanan transliterated as 'Yeen' presumably was '\_\_\_\_\_' meaning 'cultured or gentle'. Later in the 1840s, Lieutenant Hopkins used 'Aroeng' and 'Ayeng' as the two different categories of the Chin.<sup>50</sup> These could only be Arakanese pronunciations of the same words 'Ayain' and 'Ayeen' since 'y' (spelt \_\_\_\_ in Burmese script) in 'Ayain' would be pronounced 'r' in Arakanese, while the 'y' (spelt \_\_\_\_ ) in 'Yeen' is not affected by this dialectal difference in pronunciation.

There seems, therefore, to have been varying degrees of 'subjection' of the Chins in Burma. The 'Chin Yeen' Buchanan met during his trip were those settled within the administered area by the Burmese government, presumably after being conquered and moved to the plains, paying taxes to a Burmese headman.<sup>51</sup> In the aftermath of the war with Arakan, there seem to have been Chin settlements newly established around the Arakan Yoma through forced resettlement and the Chins lived like the Mon *Athi*, paying taxes of cash and produce without duties for service. The same term, however, was also applied to those independent Chins with whom the Burmese had friendly intercourse, especially those nearer to the plains of Arakan, who, in the later British colonial period, were classified as the 'Southern Chins'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For a detailed discussion of the first British embassy to Ava and the works by Buchanan see chapter 3, pp. 95-108 below.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Hopkinson, 'Journal of an Expedition up the Koladyne, December 1847 to January 1848' in Mackenzie, *History*, 523-30 (appendix G).

<sup>51</sup> Francis Buchanan, *Manuscript Burma Journal*, 10 November 1795. (OIOC IOR H/687)

<sup>52</sup> James George Scott, *Burma: A handbook of Practical, Commercial and Political Information*, (London: Alexander Moring, 1911) 107.

In a short article published in 1914, Furnivall discusses a close connection between the Chin and Myingyan.<sup>53</sup> There were relics of the Chin which he argued were signs of the ‘aboriginal’ Chin settlements before the Burmese conquest of the territory during the Pagan dynasty. There was also a Chin population in Myingyan that came from the hills either through voluntary migrations or through forced resettlements by Burmese kings, notably king Narathu(1167-1170) who appointed his brother to manage the Chins. Furthermore, there were people termed ‘half cast Chins’ living east of Popa<sup>54</sup> who integrated with the Burmese. Furnivall wrote:

. . . it is said that within the last two generations they still spoke Chin. The old people of the present day still wore Chin ornaments and Chin attire when they were young. At present however they all call themselves Burman, although 13 people in the district returned themselves as Chin at the last census.<sup>55</sup>

#### d) Overview of the Kuki-Chin Frontier

There are great dangers of simplification in making general observations from such fragmented observations over such a wide and varied area as that of the Kuki-Chin frontier. Nevertheless it is helpful, before moving towards the British engagement in this frontier, to summarise the pieces of information narrated above to form a general view of relationships within the frontier area.

First, the Kuki-Chin people as well as their neighbours in this frontier area were organised in political units of widely varying sizes and forms. Their neighbours

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<sup>53</sup> John Sydenham Furnivall, ‘The Chins of Myingyan’, *JBRS*, vol.3, pt.2 (December 1913): 186-7.

<sup>54</sup> An extinct volcano situated towards the south of Myingyan District renowned as a dwelling place of *nats* : see *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1907-9), s.v. ‘Poppa’.

<sup>55</sup> Furnivall, ‘Chins’, 187.

included the super-states of the Mughals and Burma, as well as the smaller kingdoms of Manipur and Tripura, and even smaller entities such as Chakma and Marma. Neither the Kuki-Chin nor any of these neighbours lived as unified political units: they were all divisible into smaller parts. In other words, even though we recognise the kingdoms and name them as units, in reality the central authorities of each kingdom did not have full control over their frontier relationships. Due to this, the relationships in this frontier tended to become fragmented into village-to-village relationships, especially when the powers of the central governments were undermined by an internal crisis.

Second, though they did not have total control, the supra-village authorities did project their influence over the centre-periphery relationship, as in the case of the Burmese Kings; also, even among the Kuki-Chin, the existence of supra-village authorities, however feeble and volatile, could not be ignored. The tributary relationships and alliances among different villages of the Kuki-Chin could have developed into a more institutionalised form if they had continued over a long period; and, indeed, the northern Chin groups were known to have accomplished a state of federation when the British found them. The examples in Burma show that tributary relationships were imposed both by the King and by district officers – such as the Kale *Sawbwa* – adjacent to the Kuki-Chin people. Therefore, supra-village authority was often an added factor in village-to-village relationships rather than having full control over these frontier relationships. This made the situation more complicated, as the actual relationships were mediated both by the central, or higher, political elements and the provincial, or lower, elements.

Third, the Kuki-Chin lived in varying degrees of independence from their

neighbours, and the boundaries between different polities were blurred. The Kuki-Chin people were generally regarded as politically separate from the dwellers of the plain, but there were also cases in which Kuki-Chin settlements were found within the boundaries of another kingdom, even as subjects and taxpayers of the King, or with a degree of acculturation to the host community. Regarding the Kuki-Chin who were generally independent of their neighbours, the balance of power between the Kuki-Chin people and their neighbouring cultivators differed from situation to situation and from period to period. In Burma we find Chin people paying tribute to a ruler in the plains but in Sylhet we find them exacting tribute from a *zemindar*. In Tripura we hear of Kuki people being mobilised in a *coup d'état* as well as being subservient to the Rajah. Headmen were appointed to control the Kuki-Chin people by Tripuri as well as Burmese rulers while, at the same time, raids by the Kuki-Chin people were the main security threat to the rulers of the plains.

Fourthly, despite the diversity there was one central element in these relationships: the 'economic intercourse' to borrow Lehman's term. He proposed using this term since 'trade and raid were often combined in the expeditions into Burma'<sup>56</sup> and both of these were the same means of gaining outside goods:

The Chin had no particular source of income for purchasing outside goods, and still have none. They simply sold what goods or services they could from time to time and raided and looted when payment was not possible.<sup>57</sup>

This was true not only between the Chin and Burma but also of the Kuki-Chin relationship with other societies in the plains. Tributary relationships between the Kuki-Chin people and the cultivators in the plains were largely for access to the markets and

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<sup>56</sup> Lehman, *Structure*, 73.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 167.

resources, as in the case of Sylhet and Kale. It was not always that the Kuki-Chin were the poorer: in the case of Sylhet it was the Kuki-Chin people who received tribute from the *zemindars* to bring down forest products as well as to allow the people to cut wood in the forest that were under their influence. Relative power was obviously the factor that dominated the actual direction of the imposition of tributes and the multiple political layers among the Kuki-Chins as well as the societies in the plains complicated the actual pattern of relationships, since whoever had the power tried to tap into such economic interactions.

Yet not all the political relationships were reducible to ‘economic intercourse’: there were certain specifically political characteristics of the polities of the frontier that shaped the relationship between the Kuki-Chin and their neighbours. This leads to the fifth point: political interdependence among the polities within the frontier. The most striking feature of this frontier, especially in the eighteenth century was the chronic instability of the polities in the plains. Assam, Manipur, and Cachar in the north of the Kuki-Chin land as well as Arakan in the south, not to mention the ailing Mughals in the west, were all on the decline, losing control over their territories. Despite individual differences, there was one key reason for the prolonged instability: the implosion of the central authorities through unsettled power struggles among the contenders for their thrones. The existence of other independent or semi-independent polities and the rising power of Burma exacerbated the trouble. A closer look at the example of Manipur shows the political interdependence these polities were experiencing in these times of crisis.

Manipur was the first in this frontier to face the expanding Burmese in the second



half of the eighteenth century. In the 1760s the Rajah of Manipur, Jai Singh, frequently lost his throne due to Burmese invasions but as often regained it when the Burmese withdrew from the country. In 1768 when he was forced again to flee to Cachar, he succeeded in obtaining assistance from the king of Assam, Rajesvar Singh, and regained the throne. In 1770 he was driven out again to Cachar where he made four attempts to regain the throne between 1775 and 1782. Only in 1782 did he manage to make peace with the Burmese and peace returned to Manipur until his death in 1799.<sup>58</sup>

In this example, the destabilisation of Manipur did not stop when it came under the Burmese influence. With help from the neighbouring countries of Cachar and Assam, Jai Singh was able to retain the throne after some twenty years of struggle. From the Burmese point of view, they could not eliminate Jai Singh and had to negotiate peace with him in the end. This pattern continued in Manipur after Jai Singh's death and was also the case in Arakan, where discontented nobles involved the Burmese in their internal struggle. Therefore, one reason for the prolonged instability was that those who had lost the internal struggle were often not totally eliminated, but found refuge in neighbouring polities, where they raised support and returned to make another attempt for power.

In sum, the last two points, economic and political interdependency, brought the polities in the frontier into a closely knit web of relationships, but the first three points, the diversities within and among the polities in the frontier made the web of relationships a very intricate, subtle and volatile one. Kuki-Chin involvement in this

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<sup>58</sup> Gait, *History*, 323; Harvey, *History*, 261; E. W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1886; reprint, New Delhi: Vivek Publishing, 1981), 41 (page citations are to the reprint edition.)

web before the arrival of the British calls for further research, but in all probability they were important participants in this network of relationships. Further evidence for this emerged through the observations made by the British after they had entered this complicated political scene at the end of the eighteenth century.

## 2. The Advent of the British

### a) The Fledgling Administration of Bengal

British involvement in this frontier started with the territorial acquisitions of the East India Company in Bengal in the mid-eighteenth century. Following the Battle of Plassey, in 1757, between the Company and the *Nawab* of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, the Company became the *zemindar* of the ‘Twenty-four *Pergunas*’, nearly nine hundred square miles of territory south of Calcutta yielding substantial rents. Then in 1760, Mir Kasim gave Midnapur, Burdawan and Chittagong to the Company in return for the support to become the new *Nawab* of Bengal. Finally, after the defeat of the joint forces of the *Nawab* of Bengal and the *Nawab* of Oudh, who had taken arms in protest against the Company’s ‘reckless plunder’ of their country, the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, granted the Company the *diwani*, or the right to collect revenue with judicial power in civil and financial cases, over the whole of Bengal in 1765.<sup>59</sup>

From this time on, the English East India Company ceased to be merely a company of merchants. The territorial revenues from Bengal combined with British military

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Edwardes, *British India 1772-1947: a Survey of the Nature and Effect of Alien Rule* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1967) 21; Lawrence James, *Raj: the Making of British India* (London: Abacus, 1997) 40; Bernot, *Paysans*, 55; Spear, *History*, 81-92.

power made the Company a formidable political power that dwarfed other Indian rulers.<sup>60</sup> This fusion also enabled the British authorities in the later days to execute military campaigns without burdening the British taxpayers.<sup>61</sup> The land revenues of thirty million rupees were deployed throughout the later part of the century to support the poorer Presidencies and were also used to support the Company's trade profits by investing in Bengal goods destined for the London markets, while the surplus rice of Bengal was shipped to support British inland garrisons.<sup>62</sup> It was a prize that fuelled British empire-building in India.

The growth of the British presence in India was not done 'in a fit of absence of mind'<sup>63</sup>: at every moment of decision there were people who seriously considered the situation and deliberately took action with firm determination. These individual actions, however, were not aimed at building the empire that resulted. It was rather the cumulative result of a series of actions taken by different individuals in India to cope with the problems at hand. None of the British who were involved foresaw the Empire that British India came to be in the heyday of Queen Victoria, nor were they prepared for the administrative duties that fell into their hands.

In fact, when news of the annexation of Bengal reached London, the Directors of the Company were taken by surprise. In a letter to Clive dated April 1865, the directors reprimanded him for using 'the authority of the Company to obtain, by a treaty exacted

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<sup>60</sup> Edwardes, *British India*, 22; Bayly, *Indian Society*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Kulke and Rothermund, *History*, 238.

<sup>62</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Mcmillan, 1886) quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, (London: Penguin, 2004), 2, 248.

by violence, a sanction for a trade to enrich themselves, without the least regard or advantage to the Company'.<sup>64</sup> They were especially shocked at the unprecedented treaty that conferred privilege of free inland trade of the country's own commodities 'to the detriment of the country's revenues and the ruin of the country's own merchants', which was 'unpractised and unthought of by the English' until the Company's own servants 'invented it and afterwards supported it by violence.' Moreover, the Directors had no idea on how to manage the newly acquired territory in such an unknown country. Hence, the only course of action they could take was to rely on Clive's own 'zeal and abilities' to remedy the 'evils' he had created.<sup>65</sup>

Robert Clive already knew that the Company did not have the capacity to administer such a large territory as Bengal. This was one reason he hesitated to accept the Mughal Emperor's offer of the *diwani* of Bengal earlier in 1758. As he stated in his letter to the Prime Minister, William Pitt, in 1759, 'so large a sovereignty may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile Company and . . . they are not of themselves able, without the nation's assistance to maintain so wide a dominion.'<sup>66</sup> When he accepted the same offer in 1765, his answer was to place the actual administration in the hands of the natives, while the employees of the Company remained in the background. Thus the Company appointed a deputy-*Nawab* to oversee the collection of revenue, but in reality, the Company was the virtual ruler of Bengal since it already had military supremacy, and control of the judicial administration was also handed over.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from the Directors to Lord Clive, dated 26 April 1765. (A. Berriedale Keith, ed., *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922): 19-20) 19.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Colonel Clive to the Right Hon. William Pitt, dated 7 January 1759. (Keith, ed., *Speeches and Documents*, vol.1,13-18) 16.

<sup>67</sup> Edwardes, *British India*, 47; Spear, *History*, 86

Yet, the lack of any administrative mechanism also meant a lack of central checks on the individual pursuit of private fortunes by the Company's own employees, who were widely regarded as 'a pack of brutal bloodsuckers', guilty of 'rapine and oppression' in Bengal.<sup>68</sup> This relentless pursuit of individual fortunes and the consequent corruption added to the financial devastation of the Company after the great Bengal famine of 1769 to 1770. In 1772 the Company, failing to extract a loan from the Bank of England, approached the government for a loan of a million pounds. This caused a government-led reform of the Company in the *Regulating Act* of 1773.

The administrative bodies of the Company's rule in India were redefined and the supremacy of Parliament over the Company was established. Under the provisions of this act, a Governor-General and a Council of four counsellors were appointed as the ruling body, vested with the whole civil and military administration of the Presidency of Fort William and the kingdoms of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. They were also to superintend and control the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay, and Bencoolen. A Supreme Court was established consisting of a Chief Justice and three judges and all these authorities were strictly forbidden from taking bribes. As a measure to put the management of India under parliamentary control, the Directors in England were to supply Parliament with copies of all their correspondence and half-yearly accounts.<sup>69</sup>

The first Governor-General, appointed in 1774, was Warren Hastings, who had been the Governor of Bengal from 1771. The change of British attitude had been

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<sup>68</sup> James, *Raj*, 51.

<sup>69</sup> East India Company Act, 1773. (Keith, *Speeches and Documents*, vol.1, 45-59); Edwardes, *British India*, 24.

revealed on his appointment to Bengal when he was instructed to ‘stand forth as *diwan*’, i.e. to take direct control of the administration, abolishing the dual system of Clive.<sup>70</sup> It was during his time as Governor-General that the outlines of British India were formed. He was the first to suggest that the Company’s territories in India were not just a place of investment for shareholders, but a responsibility, an obligation requiring sympathy, understanding and good government.<sup>71</sup> Seeing the corruption and inadequacy of the administration as the main target for reform, he argued for a powerful and consistent hierarchy of authorities centred on the Governor-General, with a clear division of power between him and his subordinates.<sup>72</sup>

Despite all these ambitious provisions, the actual working of the administration was far from orderly or smooth. The four counsellors sent from London could easily outvote Hastings, which made the Governor-General effectively subordinate to the Council, and this in turn led to vacillation in the decisions of central government. Besides, the supervision over subordinate presidencies proved extremely difficult and the Supreme Court he established led to endless complications, since its jurisdiction was not properly defined and came into conflict with the existing courts of law.<sup>73</sup> The provincial administration could not have been any better.

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<sup>70</sup> Edwardes, *British India*, 23; Kulke and Rothermund, *History*, 223.

<sup>71</sup> Edwardes, *British India*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Warren Hastings to the Court of Directors, 11 November 1773. (Keith, *Speeches and Documents*, vol. 1: 34-45), 34-5.

<sup>73</sup> Majumdar et al., *Advanced History of India*, 778.

## b) The Frontier Districts of Bengal and the Early Information on the Kuki

### 1) Sylhet

Thanks to a memoir by Robert Lindsay, we have a closer view of the life of a collector and the working of the administration in Sylhet, a remote district of Bengal adjacent to the Kuki-Chin frontier.<sup>74</sup> Lindsay was in India from 1772 to 1789 and was the Collector of Sylhet from 1778. His memoir was written by his daughters, who wrote down what Robert Lindsay dictated when he was aged sixty-five, or some thirty years after he had left India; therefore, some details are necessarily vague, but the candid manner in which the story was told makes this memoir a valuable source describing the life of a Company's administrator in a frontier district.

Robert Lindsay was a youth of eighteen when he arrived at Calcutta in 1772. It was also the year when the Hastings abolished the Dual System of Clive, together with the native *naib-diwans* (deputy collectors), and established a Board of Revenue to deal with the revenue directly.<sup>75</sup> Lindsay, on arrival, was appointed to this office as an assistant to the 'accomptant-general', but he had only casual interest in learning the works at the office. All the drudgery of the office could be easily left to the native scribes, and he followed the tide with his colleagues in entertaining themselves.<sup>76</sup>

After four years in Calcutta he was posted to the Dacca Council – one of the three

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<sup>74</sup> Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*; see also Gait, *History*, 330-1.

<sup>75</sup> Majumdar, *Advanced History*, 784; Reginald Henry Phillimore, *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, vol.1, (Dehra Dun: The Surveyor General of India, 1950), 136.

<sup>76</sup> Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*, 14-5.

councils that controlled the revenue, internal policing and civil justice of the inland provinces of Bengal – with the help of his patron in Calcutta. The public business, as observed by Lindsay, was managed by few able hands, and young officers like Lindsay had full leisure to amuse themselves.<sup>77</sup> Yet he was also quick to spot an opportunity to increase his personal wealth. He used his official position to win a public sale of salt on behalf of a wealthy Indian merchant in exchange for an advance, and this left him with enough money to clear all the debts he had accumulated and a few thousand more rupees to pocket.<sup>78</sup>

Such was his life as a district collector: personal pursuit of wealth, manipulating his position and the loopholes of the fledgling system, and the politics of patronage. This continued when he was posted to Sylhet as the first British Collector in 1778. His appointment was in line with the central government's attempt to centralise the revenue collection by appointing European collectors in each district as figureheads.<sup>79</sup> Lindsay was also content with his new post, because such a post guaranteed him sure credit, which he gladly manipulated and borrowed a large sum of money. His debt in later years amounted to 6,000 pounds and gave him a good reason to fight a decision to transfer him back to the Dacca Council: he preferred Sylhet where there was no other Englishman, and therefore, no one else to check his activities.<sup>80</sup>

The only thing he needed to do to keep his superiors satisfied was the dutiful

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 23-4.

<sup>79</sup> Majumdar et al, *Advanced History*, 785.

<sup>80</sup> Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*, 28.



collection of revenue. So he endeavoured to fulfil the revenue assessment – assessed at 250,000 rupees by Mr. Holland, Lindsay’s patron at the Dacca Council<sup>81</sup> – and on many occasions he resorted to the military force under his disposal for this purpose, which even caused a partial revolt in the area below the hills.<sup>82</sup> Apart from this, his activities were seldom checked by the central authorities in such an *ad hoc* administration, the early relationship between the districts of British India and the hill people also relied on the personal character of the officer in charge. In the case of Lindsay, it was the lime trade that brought him in contact with a hill chief. Lime was taken from the mountains inhabited by the Khasi. As soon as he saw an opportunity for his personal trade in limestone, he fixed a meeting with a Khasi chief and this led to a personal friendship between the two.

Lindsay wrote of lowland Sylhet as a miserable place with coarse rice as the only produce; on the other hand, the hills and the lands adjacent to the hills were rich in various products of commercial potential such as spices, wood, cotton, sugar, minerals and *mugha* silk.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the lands below the mountains furnished an abundance of the best elephants. Yet it was this rich land near the hills that was particularly vulnerable to raids by the hill people. There were about one hundred sepoy stationed for the defence of Sylhet, but he found them unfit for service in the hills, as their constitution was inadequate for the climate and terrain. Instead, he locally raised a militia corps, or *burkundazee*, which he personally commanded and accompanied in excursions into the interior of the country. These excursions, he wrote, were his chief amusement apart

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 22; see also Allen et al., *Gazetteer*, 428; Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 137-9.

<sup>82</sup> Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*, 33.

<sup>83</sup> Typical Assamese silk with golden hue. Lindsay thought it came from China (see Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*, 30).

from hunting in the territory of the Khasi chief whom he befriended.<sup>84</sup>

These 'excursions' does not seem to have had much defensive value in them. Lindsay mentioned one particularly serious invasion by a Jaintia chief, serious enough to report to Calcutta. It was occasioned when one of the sepoy's guarding the Collector's office abused a chief of this tribe. Despite the fact that Lindsay had been warned of the attack and was prepared with a regiment of sepoy's garrisoned for the defence, he could not prevent serious harm being caused to the defenceless inhabitants of the plain who were looted and murdered. Retaliation was impossible. He wrote: 'you might as well attack the inhabitants of the moon as those on the mountain above.'<sup>85</sup> All he could do was to cut off all communication and passage of provisions by closing bazaars against all the hill people. Amity returned after a while but he was no longer eager to visit his favourite haunts on the hill.

Towards the end of his appointment in Sylhet, he came upon a 'small tribe of hill people well known by the name of Cookies [Kuki]' while visiting a country where the greater part of his elephants were caught. This is the only mention of Kuki in his memoir. Apparently, he was not as well acquainted with the hills to the south of Sylhet as with the Khasi-Jaintia hills in the north where his entrepreneurial interests lay. Yet he was equally curious about the people of the southern hills and on this occasion he 'procured one child of the tribe' and tried to educate him to speak Bengali. In this he failed and found the boy's 'capacity too little' as he could not learn even a single word

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 56.

of the language of the country before he fled back into the hills.<sup>86</sup>

## 2) Chittagong

If Lindsay represented those officers who were more interested in personal wealth, derisively called *Nabobs*, because they tended to become gentrified when they returned home with the wealth they had acquired in India, Chittagong had another type of officer, more ambitious in his political career in India and also having some consideration for the future of the British in India. When Chittagong was ceded to the Company in 1760, an English Chief with a council was appointed for the administration.<sup>87</sup> The first was Harry Verelst, a member of the Fort William Council, and who, according to Lewin, had a passionate belief that inland trade routes to China might be found through the hills of Chittagong.<sup>88</sup>

In 1762 a chance came for him to make an investigation in that direction. In that year, Jai Singh, the Rajah of Manipur, sent an envoy to the Chittagong Factory asking for British support against the Burmese. Verelst regarded this as an opportunity to open up the eastern trade as well as to 'contract an anti-Burmese alliance with Manipur so advantageous to the Company'.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 113-4.

<sup>87</sup> Allen et al., *Gazetteer of Bengal*, 396.

<sup>88</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*, 14-15.

<sup>89</sup> Hira Lal Gupta, 'Eastern Trade, Negrais Affair and First British Contact with Manipur,' in *Studies in the History of North-East India*, ed. J. B. Bhattacharjee (Shillong: North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1986) 94-5.

The Company had never developed a close relationship with Burma: several efforts had been made to open and maintain a factory in Syriam from 1647 on, but interest declined, and after repeated closure and re-opening, the establishment was destroyed in 1743 during the Mon rebellion. Then in 1753, another factory was established in the remote, flooded and sickly island of Negrais off Bassein, primarily to check alleged French activities in Pegu, but it was destroyed by Alaung-hpaya, who suspected British involvement with the Mons. In 1760, the Company sent Captain Alves to protest about this event but no further talks resulted from this mission despite the Burmese king's wish to reopen the English factory.<sup>90</sup>

In the aftermath of the Negrais Affair and the failure of Captain Alves's mission, British sentiments stiffened against Burma. Thus, when the envoys from Jai Singh came to Verelst for help, a treaty was signed immediately between the two and under the terms of this treaty, British troops marched towards Manipur to assist Jai Singh in recovering the territories annexed by the Burmese.<sup>91</sup> In January 1763, six companies of sepoy under three European commanders were despatched. They crossed the Fenny River into Tripura, proceeded to Sylhet and reached Khaspur, then capital of Cachar, in April, but could not penetrate the hills due to 'violent rains, inclement weather, pestilential climate, swampy land and difficult terrain.' On the commencement of hostilities with Mir Kasim, the *Nawab* of Bengal, in the same year, these troops were recalled to Bengal, in effect withdrawing from the treaty with Jai Singh.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> D. G. E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma: 1587-1743* (London: Cass, 1968), 281-354.

<sup>91</sup> Gait, *History*, 323.

<sup>92</sup> K. K. Dutta, ed., *Fort William India House Correspondence*, vol. III (1760-63), 484-5 (Letter from Court, 22 February, 1764) in Gupta, 'Eastern Trade', 95; Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 82.; Pemberton, *Report*, 40-2.

Although this mission failed, it was the first British attempt to cross the hills to the East of Bengal. As this affair shows, once they acquired territorial possessions, the British were beginning to be drawn further inland from the plains by the local political situation of other polities. On this particular occasion, nothing of importance resulted in relation to the Kuki-Chin people, but another dispute between the British and a chief of Chakma in the Chittagong Hills resulted in the first record of the Kukis in Chittagong.

The British occupation of Chittagong in itself did not change the relationship between the people of Chittagong proper and the hill population. The hills were practically independent, while those in the nearer hills paid a yearly tribute in cotton as a way of ensuring trade in the bazaars in the plains, which was a continuation of the Mughal arrangements.<sup>93</sup> Two of the notable hill chiefs were recognised by the Company as tributaries: one was a Chakma and the other a Marma called 'Bohmong'.<sup>94</sup> These two chiefs enjoyed supremacy in their own territories, collectively called 'Kapas Mehal', which literally means 'Cotton District', presumably owing to the fact that they paid a tribute of cotton. Their territories divided the eastern frontier of Chittagong along the Kurnafuli, the north of which was under the Chakmas while the south was under the Phru.<sup>95</sup>

The event usually cited as the earliest record of the Kuki by the British is that

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<sup>93</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 331-2; Lewin, *Wild Tribes*, 22.

<sup>94</sup> 'Bohmong', from Burmese word Poh-Min (\_\_\_\_\_, meaning prince), was the title of the chiefs whose family name was Phru. Throughout the colonial period 'Bohmong' was used as a name for the whole people (van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 87-9).

<sup>95</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*, 21, 94; Mackenzie, *History*, 331-3.

associated with a Chakma chief known as Ramu Khan. In the year 1777 this person alarmed the Company's authorities with a 'great violence' committed on the Company's landholders, 'by exacting various taxes and imposing several claims on them with no grounds of authority or legal demands'. When he met the opposition of the Company, Ramu Khan fled into the hills where he gathered a 'large bodies of Kookie men, who have not the use of fire-arms, and whose bodies go unclothed'.<sup>96</sup>

The beginning of this affair is known to have been Ramu Khan's aspiration to expand his authority over the landholders of the Company. In any case, Ramu Khan obtained the help of the Kuki people, in a similar manner as the Tripuri princes had done in their disputes. The Company could not deal with this 'rebellion' of Ramu Khan by a punitive expedition; instead, as Lindsay did in the case of the raid by the Jaintia, they temporarily closed markets to hill tribes in order to starve out the rebellion. This measure does not seem to have been effective as the Kukis kept raiding the inhabitants of Chittagong and, in November 1777, the Chief of Chittagong had to ask for some men to be sent 'for the protection of the inhabitants against some Kookies.'<sup>97</sup>

### 3) Tripura

Tripura was another place in the proximity of Kuki-Chin land that came under British influence with the grant of the *diwani* of Bengal. The Mughal division between Hill Tripura and the plains continued into the British administration as well as the dual

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

position of the Rajah of Tripura. British administrative efforts in Tripura were concentrated exclusively on the plains or the *zemindari* called Roushanabad: two native officers of the Jalalpur Division administered Tripura and Noakhali Districts until 1769. From 1769 to 1772 three English supervisors were appointed. Then, in 1772 a Collector was appointed and in 1781, these two districts came under one revenue charge called Bhulua but separated again in 1822.<sup>98</sup>

On the other hand, the Rajah kept his exclusive authority within the hills, though his power was often dependent on British support. In this manner the Hill Tripura was regarded as an independent 'Native State' throughout the colonial period. This arrangement worked as a screen against the Kuki-Chin people and until the 1860s, when a serious raid by Kuki people disturbed 'the peaceful monotony of British rule', virtually no contact was made from Tripura with the Kuki-Chin people.<sup>99</sup>

### c) Early British Knowledge of the Kuki-Chin people

During this early period of British rule in Bengal, the Kuki-Chin people were hardly known to the British. Only a very few interactions took place between the Kuki-Chin and the British – individually or administratively – and even fewer records were made in which a description of the people can be found. It is surprising that no mention is made of the Kuki-Chin people from Chittagong other than that they went naked and did not know the use of firearms. Verelst's failed venture towards Manipur in 1763 had

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<sup>98</sup> Allen et al., *Gazetteer*, 375.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.; Mackenzie, *History*, 272.

crossed into the Tripura Hills and some observations at least from hearsay could have been made regarding the Kuki during the march. In fact, this occasion was also taken as an opportunity to survey hitherto unknown territories in the hills, and a surveyor named Bartholemew Plaisted accompanied the British troops. Plaisted surveyed the road with a perambulator and recorded routes from Cachar through Manipur into Burma from the words of a guide while the mission was held up in Khaspur. The data thus collected were then sent to James Rennell, the first Surveyor-General of India, to be incorporated into the maps he compiled.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> James Rennell, *Map of Hindoostan* 1782 (Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, i-ii); see also idem, *Map of Bengal and Behar*, 1779 (BL Maps 53570(2)); idem, *Bengal Atlas*, 1780 (BL Maps 57.c.26).





Map 5. Part of Map of Hindoostan by J. Rennell 1782 (Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol1, ii)

As the surveys done on this occasion were the only source for Rennell regarding Tripura, Cachar and Manipur, the information on Rennell's *Map of Hindoostan* regarding this area can be said to have been what Plaisted found out during the mission.<sup>101</sup> (see Map 5 on the previous page) Yet, there is no mention of the Kuki-Chin on the map: the only names of people are 'Reang' and 'Roshaan': the former appears as a name of a place in Tripura and the latter – apparently the same as 'Rohinga', a name given to the Muslim in Arakan, also spelt 'Rossan' or 'Roshan'<sup>102</sup> – as a people in the Chittagong hill tracts.

In Sylhet, it was due to Lindsay and his memoir that we have a glimpse of what people understood of the Kuki-Chin people. His very short account of the Kuki (spelt 'Cookies') tells us that they are 'more like brute creatures than any other tribes in the hills': and that they made their habitations on spreading trees to defend themselves from wild animals, and lived on honey and fruits. This information, however, was apparently what he had heard from the local people, as he himself never had visited their villages.

The description of the Kuki as 'brutes' resembles closely the following description provided by a traveller in the eighteenth century:

Notwithstanding the extreme antiquity of most Indian nations, I am told that in India beyond the Ganges, on the confines of Aracan and Pegu, there is a people (if solitary savages roaming through woods in quest of prey, deserve the name of people) that appear to be in the very first stage of society. They are the only people in the known world that go absolutely naked, without the smallest covering on any part of their bodies . . . they live on fruit . . . and on

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<sup>101</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 82-3.

<sup>102</sup> see 'Extracts and Observations Respecting the Dominions of Ava Chiefly from a Journal Kept by Dr. Francis Buchanan (Now Hamilton) Accompanying Capt. Symes in His Embassy to the Court of Amara-pura in 1795' (OIOC Mss Eur. D 106).

the flesh of animals . . . which they tear alive and devour raw . . . at the approach of men they fly into their woods.<sup>103</sup>

The author specified the source of the above information as ‘several people’ who had seen them. It seems, however, that such hearsay stories of fictitious ‘savages’ was widespread among the British during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. Rennell, the earliest surveyor in India, also wrote about the forests east of Tripura as uninhabited except for the ‘Cookies, who are a kind of wild men and build their huts on trees for the greater security against wild Beasts,’ and he too was relying on the information from ‘the Raja’s people who had been to the place’.<sup>104</sup>

Commenting on the rumours of the ‘tree-living and fleshy-eating Kukis’, Arthur Phayre suggested later that this belief originated from the practice of the Kuki-Chin people to sleep in temporary shelters up in trees to keep an eye on their *jhoom* fields while working in the forest far away from their own houses. Nevertheless, this description of Kuki-Chin people as ‘half human and half brute’ was widely circulated among the population of Bengal even during Phayre’s times. Here, he concluded that they are fables ‘received from Bengalee narrators incautiously received as correct.’<sup>105</sup>

In the early days of the Company’s administration, the British district collectors posted at the remote frontier relied heavily on their native clerks to do most of the administrative chores. In the case of Lindsay, he was accompanied by two native clerks,

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<sup>103</sup> William McIntosh, *Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa*: 2 vols. (London, 1782); see also excerpt in Hugh David Sandeman, ed., *Selections from Calcutta Gazette*, vol. 5 1816-1823, (Calcutta: O.T.Cutter, 1869) Appendix. ‘Extracts from Macintosh’s travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa Letter XXXI,’ dated Calcutta 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1799.

<sup>104</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 83.

<sup>105</sup> Phayre, ‘Account’, 702-3, note; see also Lewin, *Wild Races*, 222-3.

who had been confidential agents to his predecessor Mr. Holland, and these were the ones that conducted the business of the different offices under his charge.<sup>106</sup> Naturally, the British officers also relied on these native clerks for local information. In addition to this, in the early days of the administration, British officers did not as yet have an accurate knowledge regarding the people within their own administrative charges. The revenue assessment, done through auction rather than measurement, made it unnecessary for British collectors to actually visit and investigate the circumstances of villages at the fringe of their charge as all they needed to do was collect the amount specified through the auctions; if necessary, as Lindsay said, by force. Thus, it is only natural that the popular beliefs held by the Bengalis were received as truth by the British. Also, for the same reason, it was the name used by Bengalis for the Kuki-Chin people, or 'Kuki', which first came to the notice of the British.

Changes were inevitable. As soon as the Company took up the management of the revenue directly, there were forces that inevitably dragged them closer into the local situation. As seen in the case of Chittagong, the political mechanism of the frontier, the interrelationships of polities in times of crisis, began to pull the Company into the interior. Moreover, with the assumption of administration, the British also incurred the duty to protect the people, and stable revenue collection and trade depended on it. Trade was what brought the British into this area, but once their rule began, the Company was changing, though slowly, into a government.

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<sup>106</sup> Lindsay, *Oriental Miscellanies*, 28.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND EARLY SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES: 1780s-1820s

##### 1. Administrative Reforms and Information on the Kuki-Chin

###### a) Central Reforms in the Mid-Eighteenth Century

According to Spear, starting from a series of parliamentary enquiries in 1772 there had been ongoing controversy surrounding the position of the Company in India. The result was increasing awareness among the politicians in Britain of some sort of governmental duties towards India.<sup>1</sup> When Edmund Burke impeached Hastings in Parliament it was based on the understanding that the Company had incurred governmental duties with the assumption of *diwani*. His main attacks were focused on the arbitrary use of power, corruption, and lawlessness on the part of the Company's servants in India; or the 'letting loose' unqualified 'school boys', encouraged with the powers of despots, to prey upon the people of India.<sup>2</sup> Hastings was acquitted of the charges after nine years of trial, but similar concern regarding the Company's rule in India were embodied in the *East India Company Act* of 1784.

The new Act addressed the problem by strengthening central control: the Parliament over the Company, London over Calcutta, and the Governor-General over the Council and the Presidencies. In London, a new department of state called the Board

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<sup>1</sup> Spear, *History of India*, vol.2, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke, 'On the Impeachment of Warren Hastings', 15-19 February 1788 (Keith, *Speeches and Documents*, 114-55) 130-2.

of Control was formed with its members appointed by the Crown to supervise the affairs of the Company and the management of British territorial possessions in India. The President of this Board became the minister responsible to Parliament for the conduct of British relations with India. The Secret Committee was formed, with three members of the Board of Control and three from the Directors of the Company, and their decisions were to be binding on the Governor-General. In the meanwhile, the Governor-General was strengthened in India, as he was able to overrule the decisions of the Council or his subordinate Presidencies of Madras and Bombay.<sup>3</sup> Thus, British India came to have a governmental structure founded on the authority and the control of British Parliament, and the Company became less of a mercantile institution and more of an instrument of British rule in India.

Cornwallis, who became Governor-General in 1786, further imbued the administration of India with discipline and order. His principle was clearly that of the impersonal rule of law. First of all, he rationalised the administration by demarcating the roles of different branches of administration: he created a Supreme Court which administered English Law, produced a criminal code by adjusting the pre-existing Muslim and Hindu code, and separated judicial and executive powers in the district courts. Then he divided the Company's servants into two groups: one pursuing trade, and the other employed in administrative duties. The latter were strictly forbidden from engaging in private trade but were to be content with the salaries, which had been substantially increased in an attempt to stamp out corruption.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 'East India Company Act, 1784' (Keith., *Speeches and Documents*, vol.1, 95-114 ); Keith, 'Introduction', *Speeches and Documents*, xiii-xiv; Edwardes, *British India*, 24; Kulke and Rothermund, *History*, 242; Spear, *History of India*, 93-4.

<sup>4</sup> Edwardes, *British India*, 25; Kulke and Rothermund, *History*, 247.; Ferguson, *Empire*, 50; Spear, *History of India*, 95-9.

Reforms were made in the provincial administration as well. He introduced a new, more rationalised system in the administration of revenue. In 1786, he reorganised districts into regular fiscal units, and the collector in each district was made responsible for settling the revenue as well as collecting it. The number of districts in Bengal was reduced from 37 to 23 and the Committee of Revenue was now reconstituted as a Board of Revenue with a member of the Council as its President. New revenue settlements were made in 1790 for a period of ten years, the process of assessment lasting from 1789 until 1791. The amount to be paid, however, was not measured by the output, quantity of land, or quality of soil, but was determined by reference to what had been paid in the past.<sup>5</sup> Then in 1793 the settlements thus made were declared to be permanent. This improved the government's budget with a fixed and foreseeable land revenue income. Yet, in doing so, Cornwallis applied his 'preconceived English idea of a proprietor body', to the *zemindari* system of India, making *zemindars* hereditary owners of the lands and the cultivators, or *ryots*, mere tenants.<sup>6</sup>

Twenty years after the assumption of *diwani*, the administration of Bengal finally began to take shape. The days of the freebooting *Nabobs* were drawing to a close, and were replaced by the administrators of British India. These reforms did not change the daily lives of the Indian people yet, but, as the machineries of British rule improved, it brought the administration and the administrators closer to the people, resulting in more intervention into daily lives and more knowledge of the country and its people.

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<sup>5</sup> Majumdar et al, *Advanced History*, 784-7; Ferguson, *Empire*, 51; Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 1, 141.

<sup>6</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 1, 141; Keith, 'Introduction', *Speeches and Documents*, xv; Spear, *History of India*, 97.

## b) The Effects of Reforms on Sylhet, Chittagong and Tripura

### 1) Sylhet

When Cornwallis ordered new assessments throughout Bengal, the Collector at Sylhet, who had replaced Lindsay, found the existing assessments at odds with reality and attempted to make new assessments based on proper measurements. It was a unique example, as most of the other collectors satisfied themselves with confirming what had been paid previously. Between 1789 and 1790, he travelled throughout the district and made settlements. *Zemindars* and other native officers who had benefited from the previous arrangements opposed him whenever possible. At the end of 1790, he reported himself to be fortunate to have 'effected the measure, at a small expense to Government, with a considerable increase of revenue' against such opposition.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, more control was introduced regarding the relationship with the hill chiefs, notably the Khasis to the north. In November 1790, a public notice appeared in the *Calcutta Gazette* declaring it compulsory for any European, including Armenians and Greeks, to procure written permission from the Government before proceeding to Sylhet for trade in lime, or other articles of merchandise, such as wax, ivory, and iron, which were the typical hill products. At the same time, the lime trade was declared free to all natives of Sylhet.<sup>8</sup> The most important reason for this declaration, to judge from

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<sup>7</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 4 November 1790, 'Extracts from the Proceedings of the Governor General in Council, in the Revenue Department under date 8th October 1790' (Seton Karr, *Selections*, vol. 2).



the context, was to prevent complications with the Khasi. Emphasis was placed on the control of firearms and ammunition: supplying arms, ammunition, or other articles for military purposes to ‘the Cossyahs [Khasis] or other hill tribes’ was strictly forbidden. These items were not to pass the *chowkies* (or guard-posts) where all boats were to be searched for contraband. Armed escorts of *sepoys* and *burkundazees*, or anyone with arms, were also forbidden, except with the permission of the Collector.<sup>9</sup>

As Lindsay shows us, the relationship with the Jaintia or Khasi was not always amicable. Therefore, European merchants, who had monopolised the lime trade till this proclamation, needed armed escorts when proceeding into the hills. In all probability, the arms carried by these merchants and their followers fell into the hands of the hill people – either through trade or plunder – to be used against the people of the plains. Private arms trading was a widespread phenomenon at this time. A similar declaration appeared again in 1793, publicly notifying that the sale of firearms or other warlike stores without express authority was strictly forbidden. Even though such a prohibition had been in force for a long time, the Government needed to publicise it again as these orders ‘may not be generally known’.<sup>10</sup>

The survey and the strengthened control over trade were instances in which the new administrative spirit, instilled by the reforms of the period, brought an administrator closer to the people and country. Yet until the 1820s, the administrative interest in Sylhet was too limited to allow any development of interaction with the Kuki-Chin. Unlike the northern hills from which they procured lime, the British had no

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 25th July 1793 (Seton-Karr, *Selections*, vol.2).

interest in the southern hills where the Kuki-Chin people lived. In fact, even the plains to the south of Sylhet had not come under administrative oversight as yet. The survey of 1789 did not even cover half of the total area of Sylhet, and the areas towards the south of the district were left out as uncultivated lands. It was not until 1823 that these areas were re-surveyed and the boundary to the south demarcated through the work of Thomas Fisher.<sup>11</sup>

## 2) Chittagong

In Chittagong as well, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 did not reach the hills in Chittagong and another survey was needed to assess the remaining cultivated lands. In 1814, John Cheape was appointed to survey the eastern frontier of Chittagong. This survey lasted three years but it was still restricted to the cultivated parts of the lands and no attempt was made to penetrate the hills to the east of the plains.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the situation in the Chittagong Hills was only vaguely known and no more development took place in the relationship between the Company and the people of the Chittagong Hills, except that between the Company and the chiefs of the Chakma and the Marma.

The Company's relationship with the Chakma and Marma chiefs was rationalised to a degree in 1789 when the cotton tribute paid by the Chakma and Phru was replaced by cash payment which was fixed at 3 or 4 rupees for each married man, with exemption for bachelors and priests. A *mooktear*, or an agent, was appointed for the

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<sup>11</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 140; *ibid.*, vol. 3, 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.3, 19, 178.

arrangement and he derived his own profit from it. Even this form of collection was not strictly applied till later, and the Chakma and Marma chiefs continued to pay a fluctuating amount as a tribute or yearly gift in exchange for the privilege of trade between the hills and the plain.<sup>13</sup>

### 3) Tripura

Apart from the Permanent Settlement, Cornwallis also abolished the internal transit duty (*sayer*), which had been a fruitful source of income for *zemindars*; but he gave them compensation.<sup>14</sup> In view of this, a Mr. Buller was sent to assess the amount and nature of income the Rajah of Tripura drew from this custom as a *zemindar* of the plains of Tripura in 1788. The resulting report contained a description of the trade between the dwellers of the plain and the hills, with some information on the Kuki-Chin people.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Buller introduced the inhabitants of the interior part of Tripura as ‘uncivilised tribes of people called Tipperee, Kookie, Lushia, Ruang, & c.’ or the Tripuri, Kuki, Lushai and Riang. It is the earliest known notice of the Lushai by the British, but only names appear and no other information is given regarding each group other than that they were all ‘subjects to Tripura Raja and entirely independent of the English Government’. The main focus of the report was trade, and, in this sense, all the hill people mentioned above were treated the same: they all brought ‘cotton, rice, pepper,

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<sup>13</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 332.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 281; see also Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jonson*, s.v. ‘Sayer’.

<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 281- 2, see also ‘Orders of 1838 on Hill Tipperah transit dues’, appendix D (Mackenzie, *History*, 405-14).

and different kinds of *turkarry* [vegetable]’ to the lowland markets and bartered these for other necessities of life such as ‘salt, tobacco, dried-fish, earthen pots, and spirituous liquors’.

The Rajah charged duty both for the goods brought down and those taken up. There were a number of agents who lived near the markets for the collection of this duty. They were obliged to raise a fixed amount of duty every year regardless of the amount of cotton brought down but were allowed to exact arbitrary fines on anyone found smuggling. This customs duty fell heaviest on the hill people who were paid less for their cotton but paid more for the goods they bought in the markets. To remove this custom, the Government resolved to abolish this duty, and the Tripura Rajah was paid 28,000 rupees as a remission on this account. Yet because of the Tripura Rajah’s dual position as a *zemindar* as well as an Independent Prince of Hill Tripura, he continued to levy export duty on the products produced within his territory on the basis of his position as an independent Rajah.<sup>16</sup>

Another investigation was made in 1808 by Mr. Melvill, Second Judge of the Dacca Provincial Court.<sup>17</sup> In this report, the inhabitants of Tripura are distinguished into two classes: one which followed the Hindu religion but ‘doubtless came from China,’ i.e. the Tripuris, and the other, a people called ‘Kookies or Coocis’. The Hindu population dominated Tripura’s government positions but the Kuki section of population had their own chiefs, named ‘Roys, Ghalims, Chuppiahs, and Govoors’. The Kukis were called to fight for the Tripura Rajah, but they were still under the commands of their own

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 275, 411.

chiefs.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime, the *sayer* duty charged by the Rajah of Tripura was left under dispute until 1838 when the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, made a final declaration that any duty levied by the Rajah of Tripura in his hill territory could not be interfered with by the British Indian Government.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the reform took more than forty years to take effect and even then, it did not bring any change for the Kukis within Tripura, who were regarded as being under the independent sovereignty of the Rajah of Tripura.

As the case of Tripura shows, one of the main factors that blocked the development of relationship between the hill people and the British administration was that rather than having a delimited boundary, British administrative influence gradually disappeared into the hills through the friendly semi-independent polities: Tripura Rajah, the Chakma and Phru chiefs, and perhaps, the *zemindars* in Sylhet. Thus, the frontier relationship between the British and the Kuki-Chin people relied on the British relationship with these powers in the hills friendly to the Company. Yet, for the time being, the only concern of the British administrators regarding these latter were taxes and tributes: as in the abolition of *sayer* duties charged by the Tripura Rajah, and the imposition of cash tributes on the chiefs of Chittagong Hills. Other than this, the Company left the management of the frontier to these friendly powers and did not interfere with the intercourse between them and the people from further inland.

The only occasions of actual interactions between the British administration and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 405-14.

the Kuki-Chin would be when there were raids into the plains by the Kuki people. Even on these occasions, British responses remained passive: all they did was to close the markets from the whole of the Kuki people, regardless of who actually committed the raid. It was the same measure that Lindsay had taken against the Jaintia, and the same was the case with those Kuki who opposed the Company in alliance with a Chakma chief called 'Ramu Khan'. The effect of such measures could not have been positive, by any criteria. As Buller's inquest shows, the Kuki-Chin people had vigorous trade relationships with the plains and through this acquired many of the vital supplies and luxury items. Blocking this trade would only have resulted in their resorting to another method of acquisition, which meant more raids.

Apart from the administrative effects, the investigations of Tripura at least produced some information on the Kuki-Chin people. Nevertheless, in terms of British knowledge of the Kuki-Chin people, these reports rendered only a minimal contribution, if at all. First, the main interests of the administrators were the trade and internal politics of Tripura: information on the Kuki-Chin people was a by-product rather than the main focus. Second, due to this, there was no continuity in the information on the Kuki between these two reports; therefore, no effort was made to confirm the information on the Kuki in Mr. Buller's report by the latter, which reduced the credibility and relevance of both of the papers in terms of Kuki ethnography. This contrasts with the continuing discussions on the transit duties and compensation to the Rajah of Tripura, with particular attention to what had been reported and done before. Third, the administrative reports had a limited range of circulation. Until someone who had access to these documents unearthed them and brought the facts buried in these documents under a new light, the information in these reports regarding the Kuki-Chin people could have easily

been forgotten in the cabinets of the offices of collectors and secretaries.

There were, however, other channels beside the administrative hierarchy where an administrator could publish his general knowledge beyond particular administrative concerns. An administrator, as an individual, knew more than what he wrote in official correspondences. This was especially the case with those who came out to India and came into contact with an environment, people and culture so different from what his contemporaries in Britain were accustomed to. Some of these frontier officers developed deeper interest than just curiosity, and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was established as a hub for the transmission of knowledge on India and further east.

## 2. Scholarly Activities of Early Administrators on the Kuki-Chin

### a) The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and First Publications on the Kuki

The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in 1784 by William Jones under the patronage of Warren Hastings. Both Hastings and Jones shared a keen interest on Indian culture and literature. There was an administrative undertone to this: Hastings believed that the translation of Sanskrit texts would provide the British administration with the ancient laws of India, which were interwoven with the religion of the people, and would therefore make it easier to exact their obedience and would therefore be preferable to any laws which could be substituted.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the first major work of William Jones was the translation of the ancient Law of Manu. Nevertheless, their

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<sup>20</sup> Letter from Hastings to Lord Mansfield, dated 21 March 1774 (Keith, *Speeches and Documents*, 60-6) 63-5.

interest cannot be wholly reduced to administrative utility: it was also for the sake of the knowledge itself. Hastings himself understood this very well when he foresaw that such studies ‘*independent of utility* would outlast the British Empire in India itself’.<sup>21</sup>

Soon after the establishment of the society, it became a clearing house for budding scholarship on ‘the East’.<sup>22</sup> The publications of the society, *Asiatic Researches* from 1788, and *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* from 1832, put together contributions from the administrators and other Europeans in India, and made them available to a wider audience back in Europe. The demand for *Asiatic Researches* was such that a pirated edition of the first volume came into circulation in England in 1798, and some of the volumes of *Asiatic Researches* were translated into German and French. The publications of the Asiatic Society provided a channel for those administrators who had the privilege of direct contact with an unknown country and people to circulate their knowledge among the intellectuals in Europe. It was also through these that the first publications on the Kuki-Chin people were made.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1799) and 7<sup>th</sup> (1803) volumes of the *Asiatic Researches* there were articles on the Kuki.<sup>23</sup> The first of these has an uncertain origin. The title of the article specifies the place of origin as Tripura, but there are disagreements on the identity of the actual author of the article. The name of the author appears as John Rawlins in *Asiatic Researches*, but with an additional note that he had communicated the original text in

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<sup>21</sup> William Dalrymple, *White Mughals* (London: Flamingo, 2003) 41-2 (italics mine).

<sup>22</sup> John Keay, *Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 422.

<sup>23</sup> John Rawlins, ‘On the Manners, Religion and Laws of the Cucis, or Mountaineers of Tipra,’ *Asiatic Researches*, vol.2 (1799) 187-93; John Macrae, ‘Account of the Kookies or Lunctas’, *Asiatic Researches*, vol.7. (1803): 184-98.



Persian. Further explanation of this article is found in the second article published in 1803. In this latter, the editors to *Asiatic Researches* wrote that it was William Jones who translated the Persian article of John Rawlins into English.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Lewin, who included the whole of the same article in his book,<sup>25</sup> wrote that he had translated it from what M. Boucheseiche had published in French in Leipsic in 1800. M. Boucheseiche, according to Lewin, had translated the article from the English of James Rennell: neither the name 'John Rawlins' nor *Asiatic Researches* is mentioned as the source. The exact words of the article in Lewin's work differ from those in *Asiatic Researches*; but there can be no doubt that these two had one and the same original text, as the information given in the articles matches, sentence by sentence, without exception.

From the fact that it was originally written in Persian, we can take it that the article was originally written by an anonymous native officer or a legal adviser (*pundit*), and John Rawlins had merely transmitted the original to the society. Most of the description is devoted to legal matters such as ownership of property, inheritance and divorce, punishments for criminals, and this makes it even more likely that it was written by someone who dealt with the law as a profession. Regarding the text Lewin had consulted, it could have been either from another copy that John Rawlins had given to James Rennell, which was translated by M. Boucheseiche, or from an unauthorised publication by M. Boucheseiche who translated the article from *Asiatic Researches* but merely added the authority of James Rennell to his publication.

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<sup>24</sup> Macrae, 'Account of the Kookies', 184.

<sup>25</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*, 274-281.

Another curious circumstance in the article is a note inserted at the end of it that the Kukis had visited Charles Croftes at Jafarabad in the spring of 1776 and had entertained him with a dance. There were two places named Jafarabad at this period. One was a *pergunnah* in Tripura, also called ‘Lohaghar’<sup>26</sup> and another was a place in Chittagong north of Islamabad, where there was a government bungalow and a *dak* station. Francis Buchanan, who visited the latter place in 1798, wrote that there was ‘an excellent house in a most elegant situation, with some grounds round it cleared and planted like an English park’.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that the place mentioned here was the one in Chittagong, as Charles Croftes, in Lewin’s version, is said to have been the Commandant for the English East India Company in that place. Unfortunately, there is no more information on this visit by the Kukis, which could have been the first recorded peaceful encounter.

The article does not provide any definition of the term ‘Kuki’ (or ‘Cuci’ as it is spelt in the article) but starts with a statement that ‘the inhabitants of the mountainous districts to the east of Bengal give the name of Paityan to the Being who created the universe’. Thereafter, the word ‘Cuci’ is used as the name of the people being described. Therefore, the definition of the term ‘Cuci’ used in this article seems to be ‘all the inhabitants to the east of Bengal’. Assuming the local origin of the text, it can also be said that this was the general notion held by the Bengalis or Tripuri.

In contrast to the first article, the second article has a definite origin. The author

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<sup>26</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal* (London: Trübner, 1876), 444.

<sup>27</sup> Willem van Schendel, ed., *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798): His Journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla* (Dhaka: the University Press Limited, 1992) 124 (9 May 1798).

was John Macrae, a surgeon at Chittagong, and the main source of information was ‘a native of Runganeeah (Rungania), who had been captured as a boy and lived among the Kukis for twenty years before he managed to return to his family’.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the article contains detailed descriptions of implements and ornaments, social institutions and external relationships. Kuki words are used in many places together with Bengali terms and a list of Kuki words – eleven words for kinship and ten numbers – is also attached at the end.

As in the former article, the term ‘Kookie’ is broadly applied to the ‘race of people that live among the mountains to the north east of Chittagong province’, but, in this article, two different categories of Kuki-Chin people (‘Kookie’ and ‘Banjoogee’) and two other hill people (‘Choomea’ and ‘Mug’) are mentioned.

The ‘Kookies’, or ‘Lunctas’ as they were also called, are described as the ‘least civilised of any of the people among the mountains’. They are said to have been divided into a number of distinct tribes, which were totally independent of each other but acknowledged three paramount ‘*Rajahs*’ named Th’andon, Mankene, and Halcha. Other than these prominent chiefs, Macrae also mentions other chiefs subordinate to them. Each ‘Rajah’ had authority over several tribes from whom he received tribute in kind. In case of danger, they could summon all the warriors to arms but each tribe was under the direct command of its own chief. In fact a chief’s power was only absolute in his own village, and control over the tributaries was only nominal, since the so-called subordinate villages were under the authority of their own chiefs.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Macrae, ‘Account of the Kookies’, 184.

<sup>29</sup> Macrae, ‘Account of the Kookies’, 186.

Macrae mentions the ‘Banjoogees’ (or more properly Bawm-zo) as a people living further inland from the Kukis. The Bawm-zo are in fact a section of the Lai group of the Kuki-Chin people currently in Mizoram, but throughout the British colonial period they were known by the Bengali corruption ‘Banjoogee’ or ‘Bonjugi’, and were regarded as a separate group in the Chittagong Hills.<sup>30</sup> Macrae wrote that the Bonjugi were more powerful than the Kuki and exacted an annual tribute of salt from the two Kuki ‘rajas’, Thandon and Mankene. In a sense, these latter Kuki chiefs were intermediaries in the trade of salt from the plains to the Bawm-zo, though the flow of goods was mediated through this tributary relationship.

The ‘Choomeas’ (or more properly Jumma) occupied the nearest ranges of hills from the plains of Chittagong and were tributary to the Company. It is not clear what Macrae meant by ‘Choomea’; in fact, the category ‘Jumma’ itself was a vague one containing several different groups, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Nonetheless, since Macrae wrote they paid tributes to the Company, it is likely that he meant ‘Chakma’ by this, rather than the Marma who were called the ‘Mug’ in the same article.

The ‘Mug’ were another people between the Kuki and the plains. According to the Kuki myth introduced in this article, the Mug and the Kuki had been descendents of two half-brothers, the Kuki being the younger. While the progenitor of the Kuki was but an infant, his mother died and his stepmother neglected him, allowing him to go naked; hence, he was known as ‘Lunctas’ – meaning ‘naked’ – which was another word for the

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<sup>30</sup> See for example, Allen et al, *Gazetteer*; Lewin, *Wild Races*.

Kuki. This close relationship between the Kuki and the Mug was, according to Macrae, backed by a linguistic similarity that allowed them to understand each other. Besides, the Kukis frequently visited a Mug chief, known as ‘*Comlahpore Raja*’. This makes it clear that the ‘Mug’ of Macrae was in fact the Phru family of Marma: *Comlahpore* (or Kaung-la-phru) was the chief of this people during the same period.<sup>31</sup>

The Kuki maintained communication with the plains mostly through these two groups and they were rarely known to have had any intercourse directly with the Bengalis. The exceptions were when they occasionally visited the markets to purchase salt, dried fish, and tobacco. They were also a ‘great terror’ to the Bengalis who had settled down on the borders of the jungles in Rungania and Aurangabad and particularly to the woodcutters. Yet since the Kuki did not know the use of fire-arms, the ‘raja of the Choomea’ kept in his service a number of men with fire-arms to protect against them.

The categorisation of the people of the Chittagong Hills to be found in Macrae’s article – Kuki, Bonjugi, Jumma or Chakma, and Mug – was in fact the Bengali system of categorisation of the people in the Chittagong Hills.<sup>32</sup> In this sense it is comparable to the former article, which was also based on the knowledge of a local person, presumably in the context of Tripura in that particular case. Therefore, these two articles are credible as long as they are regarded as the knowledge held by the Tripuri or the Bengali in Chittagong at the end of the eighteenth century. As such, it is significant to note the difference from the hearsay accounts discussed in the former chapter. As the

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<sup>31</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 34, 86-91.

<sup>32</sup> C.f. Willem van Schendel, ‘The Invention of the “Jummas”: State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh’, in *Indigenous People of Asia*, ed. R. H. Barnes, Andrew Gray and Benedict Kingsbury (Michigan: The Association for Asian Studies, 1995) 125-6.

British approached nearer to the Kuki-Chin land, they were able to gather a more detailed description of the people, though still from others than the Kuki-Chin themselves. It is also important to note that, in both of the articles, the term 'Kuki' was defined as a people living *towards* a certain direction from the point where the authors lived: 'East of Bengal' and 'North East of Chittagong' as it appeared in the texts. Thus, the people in the plains employed the term 'Kuki' to designate those others that came from or lived towards certain directions, without any particular interest in the extent of the people thus called; in other words, the category was adopted without clear limits of *extension*.

The situation of the ethnic categories, however, was far more complicated within the hills of Tripura or Chittagong. Thanks to a journal left by Francis Buchanan,<sup>33</sup> who travelled the Chittagong Hills in 1798, we can have a glimpse of the situation at this period. Before this survey of the south-eastern frontier of Bengal, Buchanan had followed a diplomatic mission to Ava in 1795, which resulted in the first detailed description of the ethnic groups of Burma by a British person. These two journeys place Buchanan in an important position in the history of British categorisation of the Kuki-Chin people, as well as the other ethnic groups of Burma and the Chittagong Hills.

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<sup>33</sup> He later changed his name to Francis Hamilton, taking his mother's name, and is therefore often named as Francis Buchanan-Hamilton.

## b) An Administrator-Scholar: Francis Buchanan on the Kuki-Chin People

### 1) Embassy to Ava, 1795

Following the Burmese annexation of Arakan in 1784, a large number of Arakanese refugees migrated into Chittagong and were settled there by the British authorities. Based as they were in Chittagong, some of these refugees invaded Arakan with explicit object of re-conquest. In 1794 a particularly large-scale rebellion took place in Arakan, assisted by armed bands from Chittagong. King Bodaw-hpaya of Burma sent a force of 5,000 men to crush the rebellion and chased them into Chittagong. Calcutta replied to this by dispatching a battalion of European troops, sepoy and artillery under General Erskine. In the end, the matter was settled without skirmishes as the British handed over three culprits requested by the Burmese.<sup>34</sup>

This event, however, alerted the British to the possible threat posed by their long-neglected neighbour in the east. Some even viewed this under the heading of Anglo-French rivalry. When the situation was reported in the *Times* in London some six months later, the number of the Burmese involved was doubled to ten thousand, some of whom were said to have been armed with 'European arms, ordnance and firelocks' and behind them were 'some Frenchmen, who directed their operations and were instrumental in prompting them to adopt their unwarrantable measure.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Harvey, *History*, 130; Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: Cresset Press, 1962) 45-6; Daniel George Edward Hall, *Burma*, British Empire History, ed. Reginald Coupland (London: Hutchinson, 1960) 96; idem, *History*, 505.

<sup>35</sup> *Times* (London), 12 September 1794.

Though French intrigues in the Burmese court were unfounded rumours, British fear of French influence in their neighbouring country was real. This situation necessitated a diplomatic mission to Ava to assess the truth and the extent of French influence, to prevent any further eruption of border troubles, and to conclude a treaty of commerce that would also promote mutual friendship.<sup>36</sup> Besides, the British needed more knowledge of Burma in general and, more specifically, of the internal politics of the Burmese court, so as to increase British influence over the court by exploiting internal differences.

With these objectives in mind, Captain Michael Symes was ordered to lead a diplomatic mission to the court of Ava. The Company was determined to make the most of this occasion, and provided a liberal number of assistants to perform various tasks other than the official mission. Apart from Symes, the mission included Thomas Wood as Symes's assistant and surveyor, Francis Buchanan as a surgeon, a Hindu *pundit* (scholar), a *munshee* (language teacher), a band of attendants and guards composed of a *havildar* (native sergeant), a *naik* (native corporal), 14 sepoy, and Indian painters who provided the original drawings included in his journal.<sup>37</sup>

Symes and his group arrived in Rangoon in March 1795 and spent a total of eight months in Burma. It failed in achieving its political objectives. There was no treaty to guarantee friendship or commerce. The only tangible result Symes acquired was permission for a British Resident to be stationed in Rangoon, and Hiram Cox was sent

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava Sent by the Governor-General of India in the Year 1795* (London: W. Bulmer and Co. 1800; reprint, Farnborough (Hants.): Gregg, 1969), xxxvii; Harvey, *History*, 284; Hall, *History of Southeast Asia*, 589; John Frank Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 71; Frank N. Trager, *Burma From Kingdom to Republic: A Historical and Political Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 22.

<sup>37</sup> Symes, *An Account*, 125-6.



to take up this post in 1796; but he was withdrawn two years later due to his provocation of the Burmese court, which almost brought the two powers into collision.<sup>38</sup>

The mission, however, produced many interesting accounts of Burma. Symes published *An Account of the Embassy* in 1800<sup>39</sup>: an impressive volume full of information of various kinds, with maps and illustrations, calculated to provoke public interest. Francis Buchanan also published what he had learned of Burmese religion, language, botany and geography in a number of journals.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Wood charted the Irrawaddy River and made astronomical observations in major cities to establish their longitude and latitude, which provided vital information during the first Anglo Burmese war of 1824-6. According to Phillimore, Wood's map of the Irrawaddy River was more relied on than others even during the second war in 1852.<sup>41</sup>

Among these, the works by Francis Buchanan were the richest in their account of the different peoples living in Burma. In fact, most of the ethnographic information in Symes's published journal was Buchanan's contribution. Buchanan's journal itself has never been published. Two manuscript copies of this journal can be found among the India Office Records of the British Library.<sup>42</sup> These are extracts made by Buchanan

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<sup>38</sup> Hall, *Burma*, 98-9.

<sup>39</sup> Symes, *An Account*.

<sup>40</sup> Francis Buchanan, 'A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire,' *Asiatic Researches*, vol.5 (1798) 219-40; idem, 'On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas', *Asiatic Researches*, vol.6 (1799) 163-308., see also *Edinburgh Journal of Science* (between 1825 and 1826) and *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* (between 1820 and 1826).

<sup>41</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Buchanan, *Manuscript Journal of His Mission in Burma* (OIOC IOR Mss. Eur. K 156.1; another copy: H / 687)

himself and, presumably, copied by Indian clerks – hence different handwritings and numerous errors – while he was at Lakkhipur (Lakshmipur) from 1796, where he learned the Burmese script to provide as a basis for the correct orthography of Burmese words.<sup>43</sup>

According to the note that he submitted to the Company with his journal, Buchanan's original intention was:

To have taken as a basis, Mr. Wood's survey of the Rivers Irrawady and Burampooter, Mr. Rennell's survey of Bengal, Mr. D'Anville's Atlas de la Chine and the Sea Charts, and with the Assistance of these, to have formed a map of all the countries east from Bengal and south from China.<sup>44</sup>

During his journey he often compared European works on the geography of the region such as those of 'Du Halde', 'Loubère', and the '*Modern Universal History*'<sup>45</sup> with what the people of Burma told him. He also carried a copy of the *Map of Hindustan* by Rennell and asked those he met on his journey to confirm the information on the map.

As it turned out, however, accompanying the mission along the Irrawaddy River up to Amarapura and back was not enough to fill the gap in European geographic knowledge of the region. He kept his interest in geography, but this was soon subordinated to studying different groups of people. When he submitted his journal, he regarded it as the 'most complete in the accounts of many different people of Burma of

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<sup>43</sup> Buchanan, *Manuscript Burma Journal*, 25th September 1795.

<sup>44</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Jean Baptist Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise enrichie des cartes generales et particulieres de ces pays, de la carte générale & des cartes particulieres du Thibet, et de la Corée, et ornée d'un grand nombre de figures & de vignettes gravées en taille-douce* (Paris: P.G. Le Mercier, 1735); Simon de la Loubère, *Du Royaume de Siam* (Amsterdam: Adam Wolfgang, 1691); George Sale et al., *The Modern Part of an Universal History, from the Earliest Account of Time* (London: S. Richardson, 1759-1766).

whom Europeans had scarcely ever heard'.<sup>46</sup>

The most frequently used method in his enquiry on the people of Burma was interviews. It was the only method possible considering the limited time he spent in Burma and limited area covered. Despite this, his method of interviewing was different from the collection of hearsays that his contemporaries were satisfied with: he made careful judgements on the informants' reliability, endeavoured to confirm the truth of one piece of information by checking it with others, and, if possible, asked them to write the names down and draw sketch maps.

In the early stages of the journey, his informants were Europeans or European descendants who were familiar with Burma. These include Panchoo, a Portuguese descendant who was attached to the mission as a translator and guide, and one Mr. Imbert, a former Lieutenant of the Dutch navy who had been enslaved by the King of Burma to serve on a ship of the *Myo-wun* (Governor) of Tenasserim. More important was Vincentius Sangermano, an Italian missionary who worked in Burma from 1787 to 1808 and was the author of the earliest publication on Burma, which remained a valuable source till the end of nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Sangermano also gave Buchanan three treatises on Burmese culture – works on cosmology, Buddhism and a Book of Ordination. Buchanan published these in the *Asiatic Researches* without change.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.1, 84.

<sup>47</sup> Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire*, tr. William Tandy, ed. with introduction and notes by John Jardine (Rome: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1833; reprint New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969).

<sup>48</sup> Buchanan, 'On the Religion'; also found in Sangermano, *Description*.

Later on in the journey, as Buchanan went further inland, he had more chances to interview the local people. The Rangoon *Myo-tsa* (township officer) who accompanied the mission was the first one to provide a complete view of the different categories of people in Burma.<sup>49</sup> A slave of the heir apparent, who became a close friend of Buchanan while he was at Amarapura, provided Buchanan with many draft maps of the parts of Burma he had travelled.<sup>50</sup> Also, a son of ‘Kyeewuns’ (*Kyi Wun*: officer of granaries) visited Buchanan frequently.<sup>51</sup> Other than these, a Siamese painter,<sup>52</sup> the Sawbwa of Bhamo,<sup>53</sup> a Cachari man captured by the Manipuris then by the Burmese,<sup>54</sup> and two traders from Arakan<sup>55</sup> also contributed to his enquiry.

While at Amarapura, Buchanan asked for peoples from different regions of Burma to be sent to him so that he could obtain geographic information about those remote parts of Burma and record their customs and languages. In this manner, he interviewed three ‘Kathee Shan’, two Thanayntharee (people of Tenasserim), and three Arakanese. From these he collected samples of their vocabularies as he did whenever he met a people with a different language from Burmese or Indian. On the return journey he even visited two Karen villages ‘to see Karyan (Karen) manner of living.’<sup>56</sup> The categories that appear in this journal as a result are arranged in table 1.

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<sup>49</sup> Buchanan, *Manuscript Burma Journal*, 6th June 1795.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 12 September, 25 September, 26 September, 9 October, 17 October 1795.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 14 September, 6 October, 15 October 1795.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 20 September 1795.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 28 September 1795.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1795.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 22 September, 2 October 1795.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 23 November, 25 November 1795.

**Table 1. Ethnic Categories in Buchanan's Journal of His Journey to Ava, 1795**

Categories <sup>a</sup>	Other Appellations	Modern English Equivalent	
Myanmau	Pumma,	Burman	
Yo		(Yaw)	
Kadu		Kadu	
Rakain	Yakain	Arakanese/Rakhine	
Roshaan	Rooinga	Bengalis in Arakan (Rohinga)	
Davoy		(People of) Tavoy	
Tanayntharee		(People of)Tenasserim	
Moan	Talain	Mon	
Myelap Shan Kathee Shan Taroup Shan	Tai Yai Tai Long, Moitay Kabo	Shan	
Yun Shan	Jangomai	(Chiangmai)	
Lowa	Northern Lao, Shan Wa, Lowa Shan	Wa	
Palaung		Palaung	
Kakiayn		Kachin	
Burma Karayn		Sgaw	Karen (Kayin)
Talain Karayn		Pao	
Kiayn Yeen	Koloun	Chin	
Kiayn Yain	Ayngieen		
Kathee/Cussay		Manipuri or Meithei	
Akobat		Cachari	
Laynzayn	Lantchang, Laiyans, Laos, Lanjams	Lao	
Lo		Lo-lo (?)	

<sup>a</sup> These are the spellings Buchanan preferred throughout his journal.

Buchanan spelt the Chin as 'Kiayn'. Other spellings such as 'Kyan' or 'Kayn' were

used at the beginning, but such terms were gradually standardised into ‘Kiayn’ towards the later half of his journal. The first time he heard of them was when the party first approached Myede, on their journey up the Irrawaddy River: a Chin village was said to be located on the western bank of the Myede about half a league from the place.<sup>57</sup> Eight days later, Panchoo ran into a Chin village while he was sent away ‘in search of poultry’ and told Buchanan that the Chin ‘spoke a language totally different from either Burmans or Kareyns [Karens], but like the latter lived entirely among the woods and although they pay tribute, were never called on to fight’.<sup>58</sup> Later on, the Rangoon *Myo-tza* confirmed the tributary relationship, and told Buchanan that ‘the Kiayn (Chin) were great makers in silk’ and that some men’s waistcloths mixed with gold were highly valued in Burma and brought as presents for the royal family.<sup>59</sup>

Nothing much was heard of the Chin while he was at Amarapura. Only those merchants from Arakan gave him a piece of information on the Chin: that there was no inhabitant but ‘Kiayn’ along the road from Arakan to Amarapura, and that they built their villages in the most inaccessible places.<sup>60</sup> On the return journey, however, he met a group of Chin people brought by the Rangoon *Myo-wun*.<sup>61</sup> Symes also recorded this occasion in his journal and inserted an engraving of a Chin couple.<sup>62</sup> Buchanan used this chance to obtain more information regarding their customs, especially their religion.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 21 June 1795.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 29 June 1795.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1795.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 2 October, 12 October 1795.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 10 November 1795.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; see also Symes, *An Account*, 446-7.

Those brought on this occasion were from the villages dependent on Myede. They were collectively known as 'Kiayn Yeen' or subjected Chin by the Burmese, in contrast to the 'Kiayn Yain', the independent or 'wild' Chin. They called themselves 'Kăloūn' and the independent Chin or 'Chin Yain' as 'Taidoo'; the Burmans, 'Ngoo'; and the 'Yakain' (Burmese pronunciation of Rakhine; Arakanese), 'Lakan'. Of these, 'Taidoo' seems to be the same as Thado but there is no definite evidence, while the term 'Kăloūn' itself cannot be identified with any of the Kuki-Chin groups nowadays.

Of the 'subjected Chins', Symes noted that:

they were originally inhabitants of Arracan mountains, whom the Birmans, since their conquest of that kingdom, have prevailed on, partly by force, and partly by mild treatment, to abandon their native hills, and settle on the plain. There are several small societies of these people established near the foot of the mountains farther north.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, it seems that these Chin people had been captured from the Arakan Yoma and resettled by the Burmese between the western bank of the Irrawaddy and the Arakan Yoma. Further evidence for this, according to both Symes and Buchanan, is that these Chin people carried the ashes of their deceased into the Arakan Yoma where they buried them: they were still emotionally attached to the mountains.

Symes described the Chin as 'harmless', and Buchanan's article regarding the language mentions their 'simple honesty, industry and an inoffensive disposition',<sup>64</sup> which is the opposite of the rapine and plunder the name Kuki came to be associated with in Bengal and Assam. This difference must have originated from the different political positions the Kuki-Chin people occupied in relation to the plains-people. In

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<sup>63</sup> Symes, *An Account*, 255.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 447; Buchanan, 'A Comparative Vocabulary', 235; 'Extracts and Observations' (MSS D106.)

Bengal the Kuki were mostly independent of the Bengalis or other hill people, while the Chin people encountered by Buchanan and Symes had been disarmed and resettled by the Burmese. In fact, the Burmese also held that the independent Chins, who were numerous in the mountains further north, were a 'fierce race'. The same remark was made by the Rangoon Myo-wun regarding a nation he called 'Ayngieen' who lived on the west bank of Chindwin river inhabiting scattered villages.<sup>65</sup>

The term 'Ayngieen' cannot be identified with any of the Chin groups of today, nor with any other ethnic group in Burma. The location of the people, however, corresponds with the Kubaw Valley, since the Rangoon *Myo-wun* said that through this country was the best road to Munnypura (Manipur). Buchanan suspected the term 'Ayngieen' to be the same as Kiayn Yain or the wild Chin,<sup>66</sup> as both of these were said by the Burmese to occupy the country on the western bank of Irrawaddy River between Ava and Manipur. It can only be conjectured that 'Ayngieen' might be a reversed form of 'Kiayn Yain' or 'Ayain Kiayn' in which case the sound 'k' would be softened to 'g'.

The distinction of the Chin into two categories of 'independent' and 'subjected' was based on Burmese practices and reflected their differing political relationship from the Burmese point of view. It also carried the stereotypes attached to each category by the Burmese, such as 'peaceful', 'harmless', 'industrious' for the subjected and 'fierce', 'wild', or 'untamed' for the independent Chin. Similar influences are visible in other categories as well. For example, the Karen were divided into 'Burmese' and 'Talain' (or

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<sup>65</sup> Buchanan, *Manuscript Burma Journal*, 3 Aug 1795.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 July 1795.



Mon) Karens, which is the precedent for the division between Sgaw and Pao Karens,<sup>67</sup> and the Shan into three groups of Tayoup (Chinese), Kathee (Manipur) and Mrelap or royal Shans – meaning the territories in the Shan State not specifically under the jurisdiction of any *Sawbwa*.<sup>68</sup> Buchanan knew that these were Burmese concepts and not necessarily what the people considered themselves to be. When he visited a Karen village, he found that, as he had suspected, they did not know the Burmese distinction between the Burmese and Mon Karens, except for those who had regular interaction with the Burmese and were therefore accustomed to the names Burmese gave them. Yet, as he was confined by the official schedule of the embassy and reliant on the Burmese interpreters, he could not avoid relying on Burmese views.

To the categories he acquired from the Burmese, he added his own geographic interpretation. He had given up finding geographic details such as rivers, hills, routes, and cities for all the unknown parts of Burma, but he carried on his task by filling the geographic gap with the names of peoples. Besides, the geographic location of a group of people was often the only piece of information he could rely on when different informants mentioned similar yet different names. Thus, many of the categories that appear in the table 1 above were understood by their locations: ‘Independent Chins’ were in the north and ‘Subjected Chins’ were in the south; ‘Yun Shan’ was the name of the people living near ‘Jangomai’ (Chiangmai); the ‘Yo’ were the people in the neighbourhood of Ye-veo (Ye-bya). It was also the only information available that can be used to compare the categories with his and his contemporary Europeans’ knowledge.

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<sup>67</sup> A. Judson, *A Dictionary: Burmese English*, 2nd ed. (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1883); John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958)

<sup>68</sup> *Myanmar-English Dictionary* (Yangon: Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, 2001), s.v. ‘\_\_\_\_\_’ (Mee-lat).

Thus, judging by the similarity of sound and the similarity of location he concluded that the ‘Layn Sayn’ of the Burmese are the same as the ‘Laiyans’ of *Modern Universal History* and ‘Laos’ of Laubère.

The geographic nature of ethnic categories becomes clearer when we look at the map compiled in the Surveyor General’s office in 1824 or a similar map published in London by L. Herbert (see Map 6 on the next page).<sup>69</sup> These maps drew most of the information from Wood’s charts and Buchanan’s journal and placed the names that appear in table 1 (see page 110 above) at specific locations following Buchanan closely. There are ‘Kathee Shan’, ‘Mrelap Shan’ (Arakanese pronunciation of ‘Mee-lat Shan’), ‘Independent’ and ‘Subjected Kiayn’ neatly written within the domain of the Kingdom of Ava or ‘Mranma Pyee’ (Arakanese pronunciation of ‘Myanma country’). In this manner, the Burmese taxonomy of the categories of people around them was geographically fixed in British knowledge.

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<sup>69</sup> H. Hamilton, *Geographical Sketch of the Burmese Empire*, (16miles to an inch, Calcutta: the Surveyor Generals Office, 1824) (BL Maps 5.c.24); L. Herbert, *Burmese Empire* (London, 1825) (BL Maps 58765(6))



**Map 6, Part of *Map of the Burmese Empire*, by L. Herbert (1825) (BL Maps 58765(6))**

After this mission, five more diplomatic missions were sent, up to 1811: Hiram Cox in 1796, Symes again in 1802, and John Canning three times in 1803, 1809 and 1811. None of these, however, brought any improvement to the tension along the border,<sup>70</sup> nor any more information on the people of Burma was added. Regarding the Chin, Hiram Cox's journal merely mentioned that 'the country to the westward of them [the Burmese] is inhabited by the people called Caens', who were independent of Burma.<sup>71</sup> Vincentius Sangermano, on his return to Italy, published an account of Burma, which then was translated into English in the 1830s; but again, there was no more information on the Chin (spelt 'Chien') to be found in his book other than the custom of tattooing women's faces.<sup>72</sup> He added that this custom originated from the attempt to protect their women folk from raids by the Burmese by rendering them ugly – a much-quoted idea, though the truth of it has been doubted.<sup>73</sup>

## 2) The Survey of Southeast Bengal, 1798

Three years after his mission to Ava, Buchanan, now stationed at Lakkhipur, received an order to proceed through the provinces of Chittagong and Tripura. In a journey that lasted three months from the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1798, Buchanan passed through the coastal plains of Chittagong to the area near the Naaf River, and then returned by a more inland route through the Chittagong Hills, reaching Barkal near the current Mizoram

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<sup>70</sup> Hall, *History of Southeast Asia*, 589-64.

<sup>71</sup> Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burman Empire* (London: Whittaker, 1821) 419.

<sup>72</sup> Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 42-3.

<sup>73</sup> According to Lehman the Chin who tattoo their face regard it comely (Lehman, *Structure*, 37).

state, and visiting Comilla in Tripura before returning to his residence at Patahat.<sup>74</sup>

The main purpose of the journey was to find out if spices could be grown profitably in Southeastern Bengal: to stimulate the local economy to become more productive, and subsequently to make the Chittagong region more prosperous and safe.<sup>75</sup> Thus, wherever he went, he recorded the quality of soil, geographical peculiarities and the state of agriculture in that place. Such interests were expanded into the economic life of the people such as the local products, methods of cultivation, trade taking place in the markets, and, as during his stay in Burma, different peoples.

The methods he employed for this enquiry were the same as when he was in Burma: mainly interviews, taking verbal accounts of ethnic appellations and customs, collecting vocabularies and visiting villages if possible. The difference, however, was that this time he was travelling within the hills and was permitted a closer view of the people.

While in the Chittagong Hills, his informants included several chiefs of the hill people: three Marma chiefs – Kaung-La-Pru<sup>76</sup>, Umpry Palong, and Aung-ghio-se – and a Chakma chief – Taub-boka Mang.<sup>77</sup> All of these rendered great assistance to Buchanan's enquiry, in contrast to the Bengalis in the plains who, Buchanan suspected, tried to conceal as much truth as possible from him.<sup>78</sup> Kaung-la-pru even sent Buchanan

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<sup>74</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, xii, xvi.

<sup>76</sup> 'Comlapore' in Macrae's article (Macrae, 'Account of Kukis').

<sup>77</sup> 'Tubber Khan' in Lewin (Lewin, *Wild Races*, 163).

<sup>78</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, xvii, 24 (21 March 1798).

a number of people from different ethnic groups under his authority from whom Buchanan took samples of vocabulary and information on their customs. Thus Buchanan was able to interview a group of Kuki people sent by Kaung-la-pru and four individuals who had come to trade in a market within Kaung-la-pru's authority. As when he was in Burma, he preferred his own observations and endeavoured to visit different villages whenever possible, but other than two Mru villages, he was not able to visit any Kuki village, since the Chakmas and Marmas, who guided him in the hills, were afraid of the Kuki and refused to guide Buchanan deep into their country.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding Tripura, his interest in the ethnic situation was rather casual compared to that in Chittagong. He spent less than ten days in Tripura and only talked to a couple of individuals regarding the people of Tripura. He had hoped to see more of the interior of Tripura himself, but the early start of the rains and a fever prevented him.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, by coincidence, Jai Singh, the Rajah of Manipur, was visiting Tripura with a large group of followers numbering seven hundred. He was on a pilgrimage to 'Kishnagar'(Krishnanagar) on the Ganges, and was staying with the Rajah of Tripura, who had married one of his daughters. Buchanan took this opportunity to converse with the ministers and priests of Jai Singh.<sup>81</sup> Table 2 on the next page shows the resulting categories that appear in his journal.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 117 (2 May 1798).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 130 (16 May), 139 (19 May 1798).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 130 (16 May), 133 (18 May), 135-7(18 May 1798, second entry).

**Table 2. Ethnic Categories in Buchanan's Journal of South-Eastern Bengal**

Categories <sup>a</sup>	Other Appellations	Modern English Equivalent	
Chakma	Saksa, Moishang Sak: by themselves → Chakma: Bengali Corruption	Chakma (Sak)	
Marma	Ma-a-ma, Mrama, Marma-gre: by themselves Joomea, Joomea Mug, or Mug : by Bengalis Kiaung-sa (Chaung-tha): also widely used	Marma	
Tipperah	Mrung, Mroong, Mooung: by Marma Myoun: by Burmese Mroong, Moroong: by Bengalis	Tripuri	
Koongky	Zou: by themselves → Cho/Kio: Burmese corruption Koongky: by Bengali → Kuki/Cuci: English corruption Lang-ka, Lang-ga: by Marma → Lingta: Bengali corruption	Kuki	Kuki-Chin
Looshe	Loosai/Lushe: corruption from a name of a chief Longshe	Mizo	
Bon-zu	Bon-zu: by Arakanese and Marma → Bonjoogi : Bengali corruption and accepted by the British officers.	Bawm-zo	
Mru	Moroo/Moroosa : by themselves. Moroong : Bengali corruption Mroo : by Marma Myoo: by Burmese	Mru	
Poitoo	(Buchanan regarded this as a name of a place)	Paitu (?)	
Lang-mang		Lakhers <sup>b</sup>	
Shan-du	or Shein-du	Lakhers	
Kue-mye		Kumi	

<sup>a</sup> These are the spellings Buchanan preferred throughout the journal.

<sup>b</sup> Van Schendel postulates 'Lang-mang' as the same as 'Lakher' but there is no definite evidence for this liaison; however, 'Langga', another term for Kuki, is the Bengali corruption of the Burmese 'Langkhe' which has the same origin as the 'Lakher'.

At a glance, the broad outline of the categorisation shown above can be summarised into ‘Chakma’, ‘Marma’, ‘Tripuri’ and ‘Kuki-Chin’. In fact, when Buchanan first entered Chittagong, a Bengali person told him that the hills were inhabited by ‘three different races of people, called Joomeas, Tiperahs, and Chakmas’, who frequently changed their place of residence ‘owing chiefly to the incursions of a very savage people called Koongkies’.<sup>82</sup> In this statement, four distinctive categories can be extracted, namely, ‘Joomeas’, ‘Tiperahs’, ‘Chakmas’ and ‘Koongkies’. Except for the addition of Tripuri, this is, in fact, the same as in John Macrae’s article or the Bengali categorisation of the hill people.<sup>83</sup> There is, however, an important difference between this categorisation and the one adopted by Macrae in the article mentioned earlier: whereas the Bengali informant to Buchanan used ‘Jumma’ and ‘Chakma’ as separate races, in Macrae’s article ‘Jumma’ was used to mean ‘Chakma’ while ‘Mug’ was adopted as another race that lived nearer to the plains. Buchanan’s journal is an important work, since it reveals this kind of complicated and confused state of ethnic categories in the Chittagong Hills.

The category Jumma, spelt ‘Joomea’ by Buchanan exemplifies the complex situation very well. When Buchanan met Kaung-la-pru, the chief of the people called ‘Joomea’ by the Bengali, he told Buchanan that the proper name for the Jumma was ‘Marma’, spelt \_\_\_\_\_ in Arakanese. This, in fact, had the same origin as the term ‘Myanmar’, the name Burmese call themselves. A subject of Kaung-la-pru told Buchanan that they also called themselves ‘Ma-ra-ma-gre’ or ‘the Great Burmas’ which,

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<sup>82</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 16 (8 March 1798).

<sup>83</sup> Macrae, ‘Account of the Kookies’; Van Schendel, ‘Invention’, 125-6.



Buchanan wrote, was the name given 'by the inhabitants of Ava to the people of Arakan'.<sup>84</sup> In every respect they were descendants of the Arakanese. Their tradition told them of their immigration from Arakan, they spoke Arakanese, and had the same religion as Arakan – Buchanan recorded that they worshipped 'Ma-ha Moony or the great image of Buddha in Arakan' – and had Buddhist monks called 'Poun-gris' (\_\_\_\_\_, 'Pon-gyi' in Burmese) some of whom were invited from Arakan to teach the language to the children.<sup>85</sup>

The same link to Arakanese culture was also true of the Marma societies under other chiefs, such as Umpry Palong<sup>86</sup> and Aung-Ghio-se.<sup>87</sup> They all regarded themselves as one nation, but the Bengalis used a variety of different categories for these people. Umpry Palong's people were called 'Jummea Mugs' by the Bengalis. Mug, as Buchanan found out, was the term Bengalis in Chittagong used to designate 'all the tribes or nations east of Bengal who do not have caste'. In this sense, it included the Buddhist Arakanese and Burmese, and carried an implication of contempt. This term was normally used for the refugees from Arakan after the Burmese invasion, as they were the ones that the Bengalis most frequently came across at the period. 'Joomea Mug' therefore, can be said to have been a term used to designate the Arakanese descendants in the hills, distinguished from those in the plains by the prefix 'Joomea' – a description on their mode of cultivation called '*jhoom*' in Bengali.

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<sup>84</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 33 (25 March 1798).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-98 (18-20 April 1798).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-63 (7-8 April 1798).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-9 (11 April 1798).

Umpry Palong, on the other hand, regarded the proper name for his people as 'Kiaung-sa' (or more properly Chaung-tha), or the sons of the river. This term seems to have been more widely used among the Marma people around Ramu than the term 'Marma' itself and while Buchanan was travelling these areas he adopted 'Kiaung-sa' to mean all the Arakanese descendants in the hills. Nevertheless, as an ethnic category, this term is as ambiguous as 'Jumma'. Both Chaung-tha and its counterpart Toungha are of Burmese origin: Chaung \_\_\_\_\_ in Burmese means stream, and Toungha \_\_\_\_\_ mountain, so these terms classify the hill people into two according to their relative heights or remoteness from the plains. Such usage seems to have developed in Arakan and followed the immigrants into Chittagong where Lewin adopted it as a standard division of the inhabitants of the hills later in the 1860s.<sup>88</sup> Yet only those Marma of Umpry Palong used 'Chaung-tha' to describe themselves, while those of Kaung-la-pru knew this term but preferred Marma. When Buchanan made enquiries on this point to the people of Kaung-la-pru, they told Buchanan that those under Umpry Palong were of the 'same nation', but they described themselves as both Chaungtha and Toungha.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, the terms 'Jumma', 'Mug', 'Chaung-tha', and 'Toungha' are all very unsatisfactory as ethnic categories: they are not terms that distinguish one people from another but merely highlight certain characteristics that are not embedded in the people thus called. Jumma is a term for a mode of cultivation and theoretically anyone who practises *jhoom* cultivation could be regarded as such. Chaungtha and Toungha are terms developed in Arakan that distinguished people according to their location. Mug highlights the quality of having no caste, and was normally confined to the Arakanese in

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<sup>88</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 66 (11 April 1798).

the case of Chittagong, but the term could be enlarged to anyone east of Chittagong. It is true that the people knew these names but none of these originated from the identity of the people thus named.

The term 'Mug' needs a further mention as it shows how one name had different meanings to different people. As Buchanan found out, a section of so-called Mug who had adopted Hindu customs were called Rajbunshi (or royal descent) by the Bengalis in Chittagong, but further from Chittagong the Bengalis in Calcutta used the term Mug to designate people in the eastern hills who had adopted Hindu customs, dreaded as experts in black magic. Also, as the wives of British officers employed many of these as cooks, the term was further corrupted to carry the connotation of a race of cooks.<sup>90</sup>

'Chakmas' were another group that had originally come from Arakan. Though they normally spoke Bengali and adopted Hindu customs, their religious textbooks were in Arakanese and the title of chiefs such as Po-Min and Kha-Min were all from the Burmese, meaning prince. They called themselves 'Saksa' which was corrupted into 'Chakma' in Bengali. This word literally means 'son of Sak', and they regarded themselves as the same people as, the 'Thaek' in Arakan. The 'Chakma' in the Chittagong Hills, however, seem to have developed a separate identity from the 'Thaek' in Arakan, as they adopted another term 'Sakmee' for the latter.<sup>91</sup>

'Tiperah' were obviously the same as the Tripuri. Those Tripuris in the Chittagong Hills who lived outside the jurisdiction of the Tripura Rajah were called 'Mrung' in the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; Allen, et al. *Gazetteer*, 410.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 108 (28 April 1798).

Chittagong Hills. Buchanan regarded the affinity between the Mrung and the Tripuri as somewhat similar to that between the Burmese and Arakanese, as they had the same culture and spoke dialects of the same language.<sup>92</sup> Marmas called them 'Mrung' or 'Wathé Mroo' and Burmese called them 'Myoun' ('Mroun' or 'Mrung' in Arakanese) in distinction from the 'Myoo' or 'Mru'. The Bengalis, however, indiscriminately used 'Moroong' for both the Mrung and the Mru. This confounded Buchanan initially, but soon he was able to confirm them as different people by the way they bound their hair in knots: the Mrung or Tipperah bound their hair in a knot at the nape while the Mru had a knot on the forehead.<sup>93</sup>

These were the people living nearer to the plains. Apart from these, the Bengali called all the others from further inland by a blanket term, 'Koongkies', which, according to Buchanan, had been corrupted into English as 'Kookie' or 'Cuci'. Buchanan had only two occasions to meet them: the first was when Kaung-la-pru sent six men and two women from one of his tributaries, and the second was at the market of Kaung-la-pru, where Buchanan saw one man and three women. On the second occasion, he could not get any information from them, as there was no-one who spoke Bengali or Marma among these Kukis. Thus, he could only make some observations on the ornaments they were wearing. The first group, on the other hand, was accompanied by the headman of the village, who could speak some Bengali, and Buchanan could interview them regarding their culture, and collect samples of their words.

Of the names of the people he wrote:

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 74 (12 April), 87 (18 April 1798).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 63-5 (9 April), 66-7 (11 April 1798).

They name their own tribe Zou. By the Ma-ra-mas they are named Langga, which by the Bengalese is corrupted into Lingta. By the Bengalese they are commonly called Koongky, which we have corrupted into Kooky, or as it is written in the Asiatic Researches, Cuci.<sup>94</sup>

This is the only mention of ‘Zou’ (Zo) in his journal. He seems to have regarded ‘Zou’ as somewhat different from ‘Koongky’ in the extent of its use and therefore not as a compatible term. Buchanan himself preferred to call them ‘Koongky’, except in the table of vocabulary he collected from this particular group, preserving the Bengali appellation unless other terms – such as Langga – were used by the informers.

‘Langga’, also spelt ‘Laynga’, ‘Lanka’, ‘Linkta’, ‘Lingta’ and so on, was another blanket term Buchanan often used as coterminous with ‘Koongky’.<sup>95</sup> According to Buchanan it was the Marma people who used this term for the same people whom the Bengalis called ‘Koongky’<sup>96</sup> and it was while he was with the Marma that Buchanan recorded the Kuki being called ‘Langga or Koongky’. The term ‘Koongky’ was obviously well known among the Marmas as well, perhaps due to their interaction with the Bengalis. On the other hand, the Bengalis corrupted the Marma term ‘Langga’ into ‘Lingta’, which is the same term as ‘Lunctas’ that Macrae used in his article.<sup>97</sup> A similar form is found in a list of ‘rude tribes of the hills’ given to Buchanan by a Burmese merchant as ‘Layn-ga’ \_\_\_\_\_ (‘Lin-ke’ in Burmese), confirming the Arakanese origin of the term.<sup>98</sup> This fits in with the explanation of the origin of this term given by Macrae,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 94 (19 April 1798).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 41 (29 March), 65 (9 April), 86 (17 April), 87 (18 April), 92-4 (19 April), 107 (27 April 1798) to give but few examples.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 87 (18 April 1798).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 86 (17, April 1798)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 41 (29 March 1798).

when he mentioned the term ‘Lunctas’ in a legend of Marma.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, Macrae’s note that the name implied ‘naked’ does not match this Marma origin, because it is in Bengali that ‘Langga’ means naked.

Van Schendel recognises this term, especially the Burmese word Lin-ke(\_\_\_\_), as the corruption of ‘Lakhers’.<sup>100</sup> If this is true, which is likely, it shows that the usage of Langga to mean Kuki people in general, originated from a section of the people who were called ‘Lin-ke’ by the Arakanese, which then was softened into ‘Langga’ and corrupted into ‘Lingta’ or ‘Luncta’ by the Bengalis, who also added their own interpretation that this term came from their word ‘naked’: an example of metonymy.

According to Buchanan, Lushai, spelt ‘Looshe’ or ‘Loosai’, was another term that went through a similar corruption. Buchanan noted that the Koongkies were in various places also called ‘Loo-sai, Loo-she and Lang-ga or Linkta.’<sup>101</sup> From this, it appears that Buchanan understood these terms as interchangeable, but when he was in Tripura, a *dewan* or minister of the Rajah told him of ten ‘different kinds of Kukis’ subjected to the Tripura Rajah among whom ‘Looshee’ was one.<sup>102</sup> In this sense Lushai was a subgroup of the Kuki. In fact, Buchanan postulated that ‘Longshue’, the name of a powerful Kuki chief near Fenny, gave birth to the term ‘Loosai,’<sup>103</sup> thus adding another explanation regarding the origin of the term Lushai.<sup>104</sup> He also pointed out that it was

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<sup>99</sup> Macrae, ‘Account of the Kukis’, 185.

<sup>100</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 201 (Index of Ethnic Groups).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 117 (2 May 1798).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 132 (18 May 1798).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 126 (13 May 1798).

<sup>104</sup> See for example: Elly, *Military Report*, 5-6 and Soppit, *A Short Account*, 2.

the Chakmas who commonly employed the term ‘Loosai’ for the same group called the ‘Koong-kies’. At this point, it is tempting to conclude that Lushai originally came from the name of one chief to designate the people under him – a common practice in the hills in this frontier – and then this usage was expanded by the Chakmas who applied the term to other Kukis as well: in a similar way as the term ‘Langga’ came to be applicable to a broader range of the Kuki. Nevertheless, the information from Buchanan is not sufficient to support such a conjecture, at best, it only shows that different people used the term ‘Lushai’, as well as ‘Koongky’ and ‘Langga’ with different extensions.

Apart from the terms ‘Koongky’, ‘Langga’, and ‘Loosai’, there were other categories that appear in Buchanan’s journal which, even though Buchanan regarded them as separate categories, are nowadays recognised as cognate groups of the Kuki-Chin people. Mru was one of them. The name they called themselves were ‘Moroo’ or ‘Moroosa’ and the Marma and the Arakanese called them ‘Moroo’ or ‘Mroo’ which was the same as the Burmese ‘Myoo’. Buchanan had first heard of Mru as a people living under Kaung-la-pru but speaking a different language. Later he had opportunity to interview two different groups of them and to visit one of their villages, which was on friendly terms with the Marma chief Aung-ghio-se.<sup>105</sup>

Another Kuki-Chin group that Buchanan regarded as a separate entity was the Bawm-zo. ‘Bon-zu’ was the Marma and Arakanese term for the same people, and Buchanan used this form in his diary. Buchanan heard of them from Marmas and Chakmas as powerful people who were, unlike the Kukis, armed with muskets. Many of the Kuki and Loosai were said to be subjects or tributaries of Bon-zu chiefs. They did

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,

not have much communication with the Bengalis in Chittagong nor with the Chakma or Marma but were known to acquire salt from Arakan.<sup>106</sup>

Other than these, there were categories of the Kuki-Chin people mentioned only very briefly in the journal. Chakmas who guided him told Buchanan of the ‘Lang Mang’ who were ‘constantly at war with the Koongkies’ and who ‘slept on trees like baboons’<sup>107</sup>; there was a persistent tendency to apply the stigma of half-brutes to the people further away in the hills. A Burmese merchant also named some of the hill tribes of the Chittagong Hills towards the head of the Mayu River among which were ‘Kue-mye’(\_\_\_\_, Kwemi), ‘Kio’(\_\_\_\_, ‘Cho’: possibly a misspelling of ‘Chin’ \_\_\_\_), and ‘Shandu’(\_\_\_\_, Shendu).<sup>108</sup> Regarding these, Buchanan merely recorded the fact of his hearing these names and the approximate locations.

In Tripura, Buchanan noticed four categories of people: Tripuri, Riang, Kuki, and Alynagur. Of these, little more than the names were recorded. There were disagreements regarding the Riang: some told him that they spoke a language totally different from the Tripuri, while others told him that they spoke dialects of the same language as Tripuri and Alynagur. Alynagur was rather the name of a place than of a people. The only account of Kukis concerned the location of some of their villages as related by a Bengali woodcutter.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 86 (17 April), 87 (18 April), 110 (28 April 1798).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 117 note, 119 (2 May 1798).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 41 (29 March 1798).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 125-6(12 May), 133 (18 May 1798, first entry).



His accounts of the Kuki in Manipur are more interesting than those concerning Tripura. Because of some hostilities with Cachar, the Manipur Rajah could not use the normal route he used to visit Tripura, which was through Khaspur – the capital of Cachar. Instead he had cut a fresh route circumventing Cachar through the southern hills and via Bhanga, a border town in Sylhet. The Kuki around this road were all said to have been subject to one powerful chief who lived three days' journey south of this new road at a place called 'Poitoo' and that chief was said to be able to raise eight thousand armed men.<sup>110</sup> As van Schendel observed, this name 'Poitoo' seems not to be the name of a place but of a Kuki group, which became notorious as raiders in the southern frontier of Sylhet and Cachar from the 1820s.<sup>111</sup>

### 3) Buchanan's Proto-Ethnology of the Kuki-Chin Frontier

Buchanan's journal of the survey of south-eastern Bengal contains even richer and more detailed accounts of the ethnic categories compared to his *Manuscript Burma Journal*, but in both of these journals, Buchanan merely collected the facts: what he understood of these confusing usages of ethnic categories is nowhere to be seen. In the case of his travel in Burma, however, he later published an article in *Asiatic Researches*,<sup>112</sup> which reveals a fraction of his understanding. Here he used the language, or more precisely, the words he had collected, to make up the six categories which appear in table 3.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 136 (18 May 1798, second entry)

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., footnote by van Schendel.

<sup>112</sup> Buchanan, 'A Comparative Vocabulary'.

**Table 3. Language Groups of Burma According to Buchanan**

Primary Category	Burma				Siamese [Shan]			Moitay [Meithei]	Kiayn [Chin]	Karayn [Karen]		Moan [Mon]
Sub-Categories	Burma Proper	Arakan	Yo	Tenasserim	Siam Proper	Tai(-Yay) / Myelat Shan	Tai-Loong / Kathee Shawn			Burma	Talain	

In this table, Buchanan used language as a guiding principle to regroup and arrange the categories he had collected in Burma. Burma proper, Arakanese, Yo and the people of Tenasserim are grouped together under ‘Burma’, while Siamese proper(Thai), Kathee and Myelat Shans are put under ‘Siamese’ and ‘Burma Karens’ and ‘Talain Karens’ under Karen. Not all these groupings, however, were based on the analysis of their languages. The only examples where he concluded one category to be a sub-category of another through linguistic evidence are Tenasserim and Arakan, which from the evidence of vocabularies he regarded as dialects of Burmese. In other cases, he had learned of mutual affinities from the people he met during his journey and formed a categorisation based on the knowledge.

The reason he published this was explained in his own words:

Language, of all adventitious circumstances, is the surest guide in tracing the migrations and connections of nations. . .<sup>113</sup>

When he mentioned ‘the migration and connections of nations’ here, it was on a grander scale than that of the ethnic categories of Burma, and was in a wider academic context than that of the study of one kingdom: it was about the movement of all the nations of the earth studied by means of comparative philology.

In the early nineteenth century, various concepts and methods of formerly undifferentiated philological tradition began to blossom into the comparative philology that traced the dispersion of all different races of the earth from the biblical explanation of the dispersion of the sons of Noah. In due course, such interest was to give birth to a discipline called ‘ethnology’ in mid-Victorian Britain. Religion was another topic related to this dispersion of mankind that was hotly debated at the time among the scholars: whether polytheism was a result of degeneration from monotheism after Noah’s flood or the result of the progress of human civilisation.<sup>114</sup>

Buchanan was certainly aware of these developments. Moreover, his interest in the people of the places he visited and the particular aspects of these people that he endeavoured to study seem to have been guided by current developments in the science of mankind among Europeans. In fact, whenever he met a new set of people, his questions were invariably about their religious practices and language. He was aware of misunderstandings that could arise from the difference in languages, and therefore, made broad enquiries about the gods and spirits that were worshipped, about mortuary customs, and about the concept of the after-life, rather than asking about ‘religion’ in

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>114</sup> Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 20-5, 56-60.

general. Regarding language, he adopted an especially systematic approach, and he collected the same set of ‘vocables’ whenever he had chance.<sup>115</sup>

Despite this interest, as Vicziany revealed, his real academic ambition at this time, that which drove him to such zealous research even against the wishes of his superior administrators, concerned plants not people.<sup>116</sup> Buchanan was also aware that his research was far from being complete. In spite of this, he published the result of his travels in Burma as a contribution to the pan-European academic discourse, in the hope that someone after him might benefit from what he had done:

It is a beginning, which I hope hereafter to make more compleat(sic.), and where I fail, others without doubt will be more successful.<sup>117</sup>

The study of language, however, did not enable Buchanan to perceive the relationships between different groups beyond what was told to him by the local people. In his article on the languages of Burma, he confessed that he was confused by the existence of such a number of different languages among people with similar physical and cultural traits.<sup>118</sup> The confusion was obviously greater when he came into the Chittagong Hills. Here, all he could make out of the words he had collected was that there was some similarity between the Burmese and the ‘Zou’ language, while he found Marma the same as the Arakanese dialect of the Burmese.<sup>119</sup> Though Buchanan was the first British person to meet the Kuki-Chin people from both sides of the frontier, his

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<sup>115</sup> See Appendix A. ‘Vocables of Kuki-Chin Collected by Buchanan’, pp. 343-4 below.

<sup>116</sup> Marika Vicziany, ‘Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in Early Nineteenth Century India: the Surveys of Francis Buchanan 1762-1829’, *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no.4 (1986) 625-60.

<sup>117</sup> Buchanan, ‘A Comparative Vocabulary’, 220.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 67 (11 April), 94 (19 April 1798).

study of words did not enable him to relate the ‘Koongky’ of the Chittagong Hills to the ‘Kiayn’ of Burma.

He also could not avoid using exonyms such as ‘Kiayn’ and ‘Kuki’ for the Kuki-Chin people. Van Schendel praised Buchanan as the first to introduce ‘emic’ perspectives in the Chittagong Hills.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, from his journey in Burma he evidently preferred to call people by the name they call themselves. This is especially true of the Marma with whom he had close interaction. Nevertheless, whether in Burma or in Chittagong his knowledge on the Kuki-Chin people came largely from his guides, translators and other non-Kuki-Chins with whom he associated. From these, he adopted the usage of Kuki (spelt ‘Koongky’ in Bengali fashion) and Kiayn as the standard blanket terms to cover all ‘other’ hill peoples of western Burma and eastern Chittagong. It was partly due to the limited extent of his interaction with the Kuki-Chin people that he could not conclude whether the terms used by the Kuki-Chin for themselves, such as ‘Zou’ or ‘Kāloūn’, were coextensive with ‘Koongky’ or ‘Kiayn’ and opted for the latter that were more widely used and covered all those that he had not met.

Regardless of this shortcoming, his journals, especially the part relating to the Chittagong Hills, are still valuable sources as they show the confused and complex situation of ethnic categories better than any other accounts published afterwards. In this aspect, Buchanan’s journals contrast with Lewin’s work, which attempted to render the situation more comprehensible to its readers by suggesting fictitious groups clearly distinguished from each other, and neatly classifiable under supra-categories of ‘Chaungtha’ and ‘Toungtha’ that were not genuinely ‘ethnic’ in origin.

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<sup>120</sup> Van Schendel, ‘Invention of Jumma’, 127.

The complex situation of the ethnic categories revealed in Buchanan's journal reflected the similarly complex political situation of the Hills. In the Chittagong Hills, a political entity usually consisted of people from different ethnic categories. For example, the country of Kaung-la-pru consisted of Marma villages under different *roajas* (from Burmese Yua-tza \_\_\_\_\_ or village headmen), as well as Kuki, Mru, and Mrung villages subjected or tributary to him, and slaves originally captured as prisoners of war.<sup>121</sup> This state of affairs was also true of other chiefs' villages. A Bawm-zo chief called Taikoup by the Chakmas was said to rule over a mixed population of Lushai (or Kuki) and Bawm-zo from whom he received a tribute of rice and cotton from the head of every family. He was also said to have many Lang-ga settlers and slaves, and some slaves tattooed like Burmese.<sup>122</sup> These were what van Schendel calls 'Multi-ethnic arrangements', for example:

Villages inhabited by swidden cultivators belonging to different language groups; villages that were 'ethnically stratified,' being inhabited by an ethnic group together with its debt peons from different groups; and villages in which the leaders had servants from several other groups. Moreover, chiefs often collected tribute from households belonging to an amalgam of ethnic groups.<sup>123</sup>

The distinction between the hill people and the Bengalis of the plains also became blurred from a closer viewpoint. Chakma and Marma not only lived in the nearer hills and visited the markets in the plains but in many cases were living side by side with the Bengalis: some of the subjects of Kaung-la-pru actually occupied lands belonging to the

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<sup>121</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 33-4 (25 March), 78(13 April), 87-8(18 April 1798).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 88 (18 April), 110 (29 April 1798).

<sup>123</sup> Van Schendel, 'Invention of Jumma', 124-5.

zemindars and paid rent to them,<sup>124</sup> and Taubboka Min of the Chakma held a large estate around Rangunia but a part of this fertile land, according to Buchanan, had been unjustly seized by the Company's native officer about fourteen years previous to his visit, during the rule of Taubboka Min's father.<sup>125</sup>

The multi-ethnic arrangements he found in the Chittagong Hills seem to have been related to the complicated and confused usages of ethnic categories. Different people in different contexts used different sets of categories. For example, the Burmese merchant he met in Chittagong knew the term 'Layn-ga' and 'Chin' but not 'Kuki', but in Chittagong Hills the term 'Chin' was not used but Kuki, 'Langga', and Lushai by different people with different extensions. In Burma, through his almost exclusive interaction with the dominant population in the central part of the country, he acquired a knowledge of the taxonomy of the ethnic categories as understood by the people within that specific context, which made it easier for him to come up with a simplified system of categorisation, as seen in his article on the languages spoken in Burma. In this sense, the confusion he faced in the Chittagong Hills was due to the variety of the people he could interview: unlike Burma, here he met different people with different ideas on the categories of people around them.

This complicated ethno-political situation revealed in his journal was seldom noticed by other administrators, nor did it interest the British administration: it was enough for the administrators to name the 'Chakma' and a group of 'Mugs' called 'Bohmong' who were tributaries. Thus, as in the case of Macrae, the categorisation

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<sup>124</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 34.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 101; see also *Ibid.*, 115

popularly employed by the Bengalis became standard British categorisation for the people in the Chittagong Hills. In this simplified form, the British administrators recognised two powers in the hills closer to the plains – Chakma and Bohmong – and one race of marauders against whom these friendly chiefs worked as shields: the Kuki. In the meantime, Buchanan's works were forgotten, even among the British administrators, until recently, and therefore made no impact on the British colonial practices or ethnographic knowledge.

In relation to colonial practice and knowledge, Buchanan's journeys show two ways in which the consolidation of the colonial administration encouraged the collection of information on the territories around British administration: one was the political need to know its possibly hostile neighbours, and another was economic calculations to know possible resources which could be exploited. Nevertheless, the articles that appeared in *Asiatic Researches* can at best be described as a result of personal interest rather than of any administrative interests of British colonialism. Only in the broadest sense were these related to the consolidation of British rule in India: the growing interaction between the administrators and the local people in the proximity of the Kuki-Chin land increased the chance for the British to acquire second-hand knowledge on the Kuki-Chin through those local people who had closer relationships with the Kuki-Chin.

This is a different case from Buller's report on Tripura, which was an example in which administrative contexts dominated the contents of the report and the circulation of the information. In the case of Rawlins and Macrae, however, both their interest and the publication of their information were independent of their administrative duties. In



short, an administrator as an individual is under the influence of various circumstances in which colonial administration is but one, and the weight of colonial administration on an individual administrator also varied.

Lastly, there were notable differences in Buchanan's attitudes towards administration and scholarly activities that set him apart from the generation of scholars prior to him. One was his identification with the governmental duties to protect the people with the same principles of sympathy and justice that the British parliament had imposed on the Company at the time of the reforms. Thus, when Buchanan heard that the Lushai were one of the tributaries to the Tripura Rajah, he commented that it would be just to put a stop to their depredations on the Chakma, who were tributary to the Company, by using the influence of the Rajah of Tripura.<sup>126</sup> In another instance, commenting on the miserable conditions of the Arakanese refugees along the Chittagong-Arakan border and the unsettled state of that part of Chittagong, he urged the government to extend firmer control over the province, which in his opinion could not succeed 'without previously humbling the Burmas'.<sup>127</sup> Here we can observe the merging interests of an expansionist and a benevolent despot.

The kind of sympathy shown by Buchanan was also different in nature from that of Hastings's generation. Hastings's generation came to India for trade, and their attitude to the administration was first to learn the native ways, which would be the least resisted by the Indian population, and therefore the most effectual mode of governance. On the other hand, the reforms of Cornwallis broke away from the traditionalist view,

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<sup>126</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 132 (18 May 1798).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-1 (7 April 1798).

and opted for justice and efficiency along English lines. Thus, the moral sympathy of the administration with the people began to base itself on the belief that the answers to the political – and growingly, social as well – problems in India should be found in English ideas. Thus British Indian Government as a whole began to adopt a collective sense of the superiority of British ways to Indian ways.

Such a change in attitude, however, was not generally apparent among British administrators in India as yet. As Stokes commented, though Cornwallis's reforms had a definite tendency towards 'Anglicisation', his measures were still consistent with the old mercantilist conception of the British position in India, and they were not aimed at assimilation of the Indian people and culture to that of Britain.<sup>128</sup> Apart from the question of principles behind the administration, the consolidation of the British administration in this frontier area itself came slowly.

Then, in the 1820s, one event suddenly focused British attention on this frontier, causing a flood of changes. In a sense, it was an inevitable result of the expansion and consolidation of the British administration in Eastern Bengal, towards which another power, the Kingdom of Burma, was expanding from the east. The events that necessitated diplomatic missions to the 'Court of Ava' were a symptom of the growing tension between these two neighbours, which in 1824 erupted into a military showdown, the First Anglo-Burmese War.

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<sup>128</sup> Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 5, 26.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FIRST ANGLO-BURMESE WAR AND THE CHANGING FRONTIER: 1824-1833

#### 1. The First Anglo-Burmese War

##### a) The Outbreak of the War

Border troubles in Chittagong with Burma continued after the last diplomatic mission to the Court of Ava by John Canning in 1811. Chin Pyan, a son of a former *myo-thugyi* of Mrohaung, partly succeeded in taking Arakan in 1811. He then hid himself in the Chittagong Hills but continued to invade Arakan until his death in 1814. In the meantime new troubles were brewing in the north. In 1812 the Burmese invaded Manipur led by Marjit Singh, a Manipur prince who had been brought up in Ava. Then in 1816 they also invaded Assam led by a Burha Gohain – one of the three highest officers of the state<sup>1</sup> – named Badan Chandra who had requested Burmese support for his own ambition.<sup>2</sup> British authors of the time tended to depict this as outright expansionism of the Burmese and have particularly emphasised the brutal and inhuman way with which the Burmese treated the Assamese during their campaign.<sup>3</sup> Yet from the

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<sup>1</sup> for the origin of these officers of State see Gait, *History*, 80, 246-7, 430 (Appendix F).

<sup>2</sup> Thant Myint, *Making*, 15; Gait, *History*, 229-32, 324-5; Bhuyan *Anglo-Assamese*, 396-7, 481-2; Translation of a letter from the Rajah of Munnipore (Marjeet Singh) to James Ewing, the Magistrate of Sylhet. (OIOC F/4/617 15345, no. 19 and 25, 28 December 1817); see also letter from James Ewing, Magistrate of Sylhet, to W. B. Bayley, the Acting Secretary of State, 5 January 1818, and 6 January 1818 (OIOC F/4/617 15345)

<sup>3</sup> Gait, *History*, 237, 335; Harvey, *History*, 298; Horace Hayman Wilson, *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War* (Calcutta: Government Gazette Press, 1827), 7; Extract from a Despatch from the Governor-General in Council at Fort William in Bengal to the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 12 September 1823, para. 99 (Wilson, *Documents*, Document 8: 6-10) 7.

Burmese point of view, their invasions of Arakan, Manipur and Assam were necessary in order to restore law and order, remove 'bad rulers', and help the local people to get 'good rulers'.<sup>4</sup> In fact, all of the above-mentioned invasions originated from local pretenders requesting Burmese support and continued due to the desire of the Burmese to keep these countries under their influence in stable tributary relationships.

The British first felt the Burmese advance through the refugees pouring into the frontier districts of Chittagong, Sylhet, and Rangpur. Among these were several claimants for various thrones, requesting military assistance against the Burmese. Chin Pyan was one such case. Chaurjit Singh, a prince of Manipur, solicited British support against the Burmese in 1812, but took refuge in the Jaintia Hills. Marjit Singh, who had dethroned Chaurjit with the help of the Burmese, then invaded Cachar, with the result that Gobind Chandra, the Rajah of Cachar, sought British support in 1817. Then in 1819 Marit Singh himself fled into Cachar fleeing from the Burmese who invaded Manipur to punish Marjit Singh's insolence. In Cachar, Marjit Singh reconciled with Chaurjit Singh and together they turned out Gobind Chandra. The Rajah of Cachar again fled into the British territory and appealed for assistance. Soon after this, Chaurjit Singh also fled into Sylhet after a quarrel with Gambhir Singh, another of the Manipuri princes.

Added to this number were the Assamese nobles and princes. Before turning to the Burmese, Badan Chandra had requested British support in 1816. Purandar Singh, a prince dethroned by the Burmese, fled into the British territory in 1819, pleading for help. Then Chandrakanta, the one who the Burmese had placed on the throne, fled near

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding Arakan see *ROB*, vol.4, xvii, 83 (16 October 1784), 182 (4 October 1787); regarding Manipur see *ibid.*, vol.7, 136 (15. September 1817); regarding Assam see *ibid.*, vol.7, 97 (28 October 1816), vol. 8, 52 (15 September 1820).

to – and occasionally entered – Rangpur, but continued his military campaign against the Burmese from 1821. During this turbulent period, the Burmese constantly urged the British Indian Government to capture and hand over these defectors, together with their followers.

Despite all these pleas, the Government of British India adamantly stood by the policy of non-intervention on this frontier. It was, however, a different story with the frontier officers who actually had to deal with the refugees while receiving rumours of the advancing Burmese troops. Not surprisingly, some of the frontier officers took the situation in their own hands and provided support to the princes and nobles in exile against the Burmese. Captain White, who was in Chittagong during Chin Pyan's campaigns against the Burmese, suggested that T. C. Robertson, the Magistrate of Chittagong, as well as John Macrae, a civil surgeon and the author of the article on the Kuki in *Asiatic Researches*, had implicitly supported Chin Pyan against the Burmese in Arakan.<sup>5</sup> This was done without the sanction of the central authorities, but on the other frontier, David Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur, supported the Assamese princes against the Burmese with permission from the government.<sup>6</sup>

Then from around the 1820s the Burmese began to assume a more aggressive attitude towards British India. On the Arakan frontier a real confrontation began over an island at the mouth of the Naaf River called Shapuri, or Sheenmaboo in Burmese.<sup>7</sup> On

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<sup>5</sup> Captain W. White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which Led to the Burmese War* (London: C. Hamilton, 1825) 15-6.

<sup>6</sup> Nirode Barooah, *David Scott in North East India 1802-1831: A Study in British Paternalism*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969), 64-78.

<sup>7</sup> Extract from a Despatch from the Governor General in Council to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 23 February 1824, (Wilson, *Documents*, no.28: 24\*-8), Woodman, *Making*, 61, 65-6.

the Assam frontier, the Burmese Government sent a large force led by their most renowned general, Maha Bandula, in 1822 and defeated Chandrakanta, who fled to Assam Choky to seek British protection.<sup>8</sup>

At this stage, both Scott and Robertson argued strongly for a war, which they saw as the only solution for the border problem.<sup>9</sup> The authorities at Calcutta, however, did not believe that the Burmese would actually invade British territories.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the existence of a less than friendly power at the doorstep of British India itself was a threat that had to be addressed. When the crisis surrounding Shapuri Island intensified, George Swinton, the Secretary to the Government and a close friend of David Scott, saw in this dispute an occasion for settling the security question along the whole eastern frontier: any rupture with Burma over the Island of Shapuri was to be used as an excuse to march Company troops into Assam. By the end of the year 1823 the Commander-in-Chief was already considering the most effective mode of engagement.<sup>11</sup>

The final decision was made in relation to the events in Cachar. The Rajah of Cachar, Gobind Chandra, realising it was hopeless to obtain British assistance against the Manipuri princes, turned to the Burmese for support. Thus, in November 1823, the Burmese gathered all their troops at Gauhati and in December of that year, 4,000

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<sup>8</sup> Extracts from a Despatch from the Governor-General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 12 September 1823 (Wilson, *Documents*, Document 8: 6-10); Barooah, *David Scott*, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Woodman, *Making*, 66; Barooah, *David Scott*, 73-6.

<sup>10</sup> Extract from a despatch from the Governor-General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 12 September 1823, para. 115 (Wilson, *Documents*, no. 8: 6-10).

<sup>11</sup> Extract from a letter from David Scott, Agent to the Governor General on the North East Frontier, to George Swinton, Secretary to the Bengal Government, 31 January 1824 (Wilson, *Documents*, no. 24: 24-17\*); Woodman, *Making*, 62.

Burmese and Assamese marched through the Barail Range and stockaded in the village of Bikrampore in Cachar, 45 miles to the east of Sylhet. Another column came from Manipur, driving out Gambhir Singh on its way, and yet another was marching through the Jaintia Hills, over which they claimed suzerainty inherited from Assam.<sup>12</sup>

Scott finally received the government's sanction to move troops into Cachar. Cachar was hastily declared to be under British protection and an assault was made on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 1824 and the Burmese were driven back to Manipur by the end of February. This was the first armed clash between the Burmese and the British. After this skirmish, the Burmese commander wrote to Scott that their order was to reinstate Gobind Chandra on the throne and to pursue the three Manipuri princes, even into British territory. Scott warned the Burmese not to make any further advance and declared the Jaintia Hills under British protection. Once again, Scott wrote emphatically on the danger of the Burmese in Assam, urging the Government to take action and war was declared officially on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>13</sup>

Thus began the First Anglo-Burmese War. In the official declaration of war, the Governor-General justified the war by putting all the blame on the Burmese who compelled the British government to a war 'by the hostile conduct and language of its officers, and the actual advance of its forces to several and widely distant points of our frontier'. The British Government, he continued, had to take up arms 'not less in self-defence, than for the assertion of its rights, and the vindication of its insulted dignity

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<sup>12</sup> Barooah, *David Scott*, 77; Bhuyan, *Anglo-Burmese* 513-4; Gait, *History*, 332.

<sup>13</sup> Hall, *History of Southeast Asia*, 596-7.; Barooah, *David Scott*, 78-9; Gait, *History*, 332-3.

and honour'.<sup>14</sup> He therefore knew that there had been no actual invasion by the Burmese, but felt that the war was necessary nonetheless to uphold British honour and to deter the possibilities of future aggression. At this period, the question of 'honour' was understood to have a serious repercussion on the British position. The point is most clearly made by John Malcolm, who wrote in 1826 that:

we have, whenever our authority is in question, no retreat . . . our name and ascendancy must be supported, and victory must, on any terms, be obtained; for we cannot [as aliens in India] long exist if our strength be even doubted.<sup>15</sup>

Yet the war cannot be fully understood from the British or Burmese side of the story without reference to local circumstances. Particular features of the political network in the frontier played a pivotal role in bringing these two powers into collision. The engagement of the Burmese on the frontier, their continued struggle to maintain supremacy, and the process by which the British officers at the frontier and later the government itself were drawn into the war, were all due to this particular characteristic of the frontier. In other words, the mechanism of the frontier had sucked the two powers into a war.

The 'multi-ethnic arrangement' discussed in the last chapter also contributed. Not only the polities in the Chittagong Hills but virtually all the polities on this frontier were composed of different elements of population from neighbouring polities. Prolonged instability in the region also promoted continuous emigration of people looking for safer places outside their traditional domain. Thus, Chin Pyan, Manipuri princes and

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<sup>14</sup> Declaration on the part of the Right Honourable the Governor General in Council, 25 February 1824 (Wilson, *Documents*, no.29: 28-32), 31.

<sup>15</sup> John Malcolm, *Political History* 2, 267-8, 1826; quoted in Fisher, *Politics*, 32.



Assamese princes could all raise an army chiefly among their compatriots in British territory, and the numbers could easily swell with the participation of others who joined the venture expecting loot and other future benefits.<sup>16</sup>

There is not much evidence to show the Kuki-Chin people's implication in this war, but there are two instances which show Kuki-Chin involvement. In 1817, when Marjit Singh was making his first invasion of Cachar, a Mr. F. Carey<sup>17</sup> warned the Magistrate of Sylhet that there were Burmese troops behind the Manipuri and 'all the Nagas and Kokee tribes have already joined them'.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that either the Burmese or the Manipuri invoked the assistance of the Kukis during their campaigns either through their tributary relationship or through the lure of plunder. In another instance, Chin Pyan's army was said to have included a *sirdar* named 'Tongrabo' who was a Chin from the Arakan Hills. When the war broke out, Tongrabo accompanied British army into Arakan and established himself among the 'haunts of his fore-fathers' on the banks of the Talak River, where he was said to have been much respected by his own tribe and followers.<sup>19</sup>

#### b) Administrative Changes to the Frontier Area

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<sup>16</sup> Gait, *History*, 235, 238; Thant Myint, *Modern History*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> It is not clear whether this person was the same as Felix Carey, eldest son of William Carey and an early missionary to Burma, who wrote Burmese grammar in 1814 and died at Serampore on the 10 November 1822.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from J. Ewing, Magistrate of Sylhet, to W. B. Bayley, 20 December 1817, enclosure, 'letter from F. Carey to Sylhet' (OIOC F/4/617).

<sup>19</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 11 Feb. 1828.

The war lasted two years. By the time it came to an official end with the Treaty of Yandabu in February 1826, the British had lost over three thousand soldiers excluding sepoys. Of these only a hundred and fifty were killed in battle, and the rest by disease. The total number of casualties was estimated at fifteen thousand. The financial cost was also high, since the Company was left with a deficit of five million pounds and a total cost estimated at fourteen million pounds.<sup>20</sup>

If the particular political features of the frontier brought about the First Anglo-Burmese War, it was also to produce the most notable change to the frontier during the rule of the Company. The Treaty of Yandabu granted the Company not only an indemnity of 10 million rupees (or 1 million pounds), permission to exchange residence of accredited ministers, but also suzerainty over Manipur and Assam, and cession of Arakan and Tenasserim.<sup>21</sup>

Strategic calculations were the most important reason for the annexation of Arakan. At the commencement of the war, the Governor-General was of the opinion that the retention of ports and principal islands would benefit British war efforts by overawing Ava with the might of the British – not the whole of Arakan but only several ports.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, John Canning, the chief advisor during the war, thought that the annexation of the whole of Arakan was the best way of solving the problem in Chittagong, since the Arakan Yoma provided the best and cheapest line of defence.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Trager, *Burma*, 35; Bruce, *Burmese Wars*, 127; Barpujari, *Assam*, 18; Woodman, *Making*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Third Article, 'Treaty of Yandabu', 1826, (Wilson, *Documents*, no.170, 209-10; also in B. B. Kumar, *Trends of British Annexation of North-East India* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1994) annexure 1: 36-9).

<sup>22</sup> Woodman, *Making*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

During the course of the war, the latter view won general agreement. General Robertson, while negotiating with Ava for the treaty of Yandabu, maintained that ‘we must have the mountains as a barrier between us and you to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of war.’<sup>24</sup>

The British policy for Assam had been, from the commencement of the war, to expel the Burmese and re-establish those states, which had been overrun by the Burmese.<sup>25</sup> This principle was apparent in the Treaty of Yandabu, which stipulated that the King of Burma renounced all claims upon, and would abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, including Cachar and Jaintia.<sup>26</sup> The proclamation to the Assamese people also emphasised that the British were not led into their country by the thirst of conquest but to ‘exclude our foe from Assam and re-establish in that country a government adapted to your wants and calculated to promote the happiness of the people of all classes’.<sup>27</sup>

Yet such an ideal government was hard to find and during the occupation of Gauhati, where the British troops stayed during the rainy season of 1824, David Scott reported that it was premature and impolitic to install a native prince ‘when the people lost all confidence in their chief’. Thus in practice the British administration of Assam from Goal Para to Gauhati started during the war-period. This part was conveniently called ‘Lower’ or ‘West’ Assam in contrast to the ‘Upper’ or ‘East’ Assam still under

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>25</sup> Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 527.

<sup>26</sup> Second Article, ‘Treaty of Yandabu’, 1826 (Wilson, *Documents*, no.170, 209-10).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Translation of the Proclamation Addressed to the Inhabitants of Assam by the Agent to the Governor-General on the North East Frontier’ (OIOC H/662); Barpujari, *Assam*, 39-40 (Appendix A).

Burmese control at this point. This division was retained even after Assam was cleared of Burmese in January 1825, when the temporary administration began, with David Scott in charge of Lower(or Western) Assam, and Colonel Richardson in charge of Upper(or Eastern) Assam.<sup>28</sup>

In February 1828, Scott made his first proposal regarding the administration of Assam, in which he opted for the annexation of western or Lower Assam and the restoration of the Assamese king in the eastern or upper Assam. His proposals were based on his observation that, as the Lower Assam had been under the Mughal emperors before, the revenue system was similar to that of Bengal and less resistance could be expected to a foreign rule. The government accepted this proposal and in March 1828 regular troops were withdrawn and the administration of Assam began.<sup>29</sup>

The restoration of the Assamese monarchy in Upper Assam had to wait another five years, as the British Indian Government could not decide whom to place on the throne – Chandrakanta or Purandar Singh. In the end, the Governor General signed a treaty with Purandar Singh in 1833. He was favoured over Chandrakanta largely due to the general distrust entertained by the British officers of the latter: he had once surrendered himself to the Burmese.<sup>30</sup> The reign of Purandar Singh, however, did not last long and in 1838, upon his failure to pay tribute, the Company assumed direct administration of this tract and Purandar Singh was pensioned off.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 552.

<sup>29</sup> Barpujari, *Assam*, 82; Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 528.

<sup>30</sup> Barpujari, *Assam*, 82.

<sup>31</sup> Gait, *History*, 360.

Cacahr had been proclaimed to be under British protection just before the official declaration of war, and a treaty was signed between Gobind Chandra and the Government on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1824. Under the terms of the treaty, Rajah Gobind Chandra was restored to the throne with an annual tribute of ten thousand rupees.<sup>32</sup>

After the final expulsion of Burmese troops from Cachar in June 1824, the British troops remained defensive, unable to penetrate the jungle into Manipur,<sup>33</sup> but a year later, Gambhir Singh, the younger of the Manipuri princes, marched into Manipur with five hundred men and expelled the Burmese. From this time on, the government armed and paid for the soldiers of Gambhir Singh. After a short retreat back to Sylhet, Gambhir Singh again entered Manipur in December 1825 and cleared the remaining Burmese from stockades in Tammu.<sup>34</sup> This made Gambhir Singh a favoured figure for the British among all the candidates to the Manipuri Throne, and his name was especially mentioned in the Treaty of Yandabu as the sovereign of Manipur.<sup>35</sup>

Gambhir Singh enjoyed special treatment from the British Government that the other independent Rajahs did not receive. He was exempted from any tribute, but the British Indian government 'paid, accoutred and supplied' Gambhir Singh's now 2,000 strong army and styled it the Manipur Levy with Captain F. T. Grant as the commander.<sup>36</sup> The British calculation was that Manipur would act as a 'strong bulwark'

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<sup>32</sup> 'Treaty with Gobind Chandra, Rajah of Cachar', 1824 (Kumar, *Trends*, 47-8 Annexure 4).

<sup>33</sup> Gait. *History*, 332-40.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>35</sup> Second Article, 'Treaty of Yandabu', 1826 (Wilson, *Documents*, no.170, 209-10).

<sup>36</sup> India Political Department, no.14, 3 December 1834, para. 84.(OIOC E/4/742); Mackenzie,

against the Burmese. In the words of Scott, the reestablishment of Manipur afforded ‘a well founded prospect of defence to our frontier in that direction, by the interposition of a race of people known to entertain a rooted antipathy to the only enemy against whose aggression it was necessary to guard’.<sup>37</sup>

Thus strengthened, Gambhir Singh began to extend his own influence over the neighbouring territory. In January 1826, Gambhir Singh sent his troops to occupy the Kubo valley.<sup>38</sup> The Burmese protested to the British Indian Government, but Captain Grant firmly backed Gambhir Singh’s move. Only in 1834, was it transferred back to Burma with compensation for Gambhir Singh.<sup>39</sup> Gambhir Singh also encroached upon Gobind Chandra’s territory. In 1827 he subjugated Naga clans in a tract of country that had belonged to Cachar, and began moving Manipuri settlers into parts of Cachar he claimed his own. This created refugees into Cachar, fleeing from ‘the dread of the prospect of being placed under Gambhir Singh’.<sup>40</sup>

This was not the only trouble for Cachar. Gobind Chandra got caught up in mutual hostilities with Tularam, the heir of Kohi Dass, who had rebelled against Gobind Chandra and established himself in the northern Hills of Cachar back in 1813. After the assassination of Kohi Dass, Tularam had carried on the rebellion. At last the British

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*History*, 150; Barpujari, *Assam*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from W.H. McNaghten, Secretary to the Government of India, to T. C. Robertson, Agent to the Governor-General in the North Eastern Frontier, 30 May 1833, para. 67 (NAI Foreign, P. C., no.110, ‘Minute on Jenkin’s report of the North Eastern Frontier’); also found in Mackenzie, *History*, 150.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Captain F. J. Grant, Gumbier Sing’s Levy, to C. Tucker, Esq., Commissioner, 2 January 1826, (Wilson, *Documents*, Document 165(B): 205-6).

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Captain F. J. Grant to Swinton, 18 February 1831(OIOC F/4/1447 56960); Mackenzie, *History*, 152.

<sup>40</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December 1834, paras.65, 66 (OIOC E/4/742); Barpujari *Assam*, 86.

Government intervened and in 1829, Scott induced Gobind Chandra to recognise Tularam's authority in North Cachar in return for a treaty of peace.<sup>41</sup>

A year after this, in 1830, Gobind Chandra was murdered by a Manipuri gang. It was never confirmed that they were acting under Gambhir Singh's orders, despite strong suspicion in that direction. A more pressing problem concerned the future disposal of the country, as Gobind Chandra had died without heir. Lieutenant Fisher, who had been on survey duty in Sylhet, was sent by the British to Cachar to manage the country pending further settlement. Then in August 1832, Cachar was declared to be British territory, with Lieutenant Fisher as the first Superintendent.<sup>42</sup>

By this time, the British authorities' appreciation of the importance of Manipur and their faith in Gambhir Singh had decreased. In 1833, the new Governor-General William Bentinck viewed the advantages of the connection with Manipur as 'very problematical,' as the country showed no sign of development in its revenue, administration, military independence, or 'civilisation'.<sup>43</sup> Besides, the Directors thought that the conduct of Gambhir Singh towards the hill people was 'by no means favourable' and the manner in which he used the Manipur Levy to increase his dominions 'harsh, arbitrary and far from scrupulous.'<sup>44</sup> A subsequent review was made and in 1835 British superintendence over the Manipur Levy was discontinued and

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<sup>41</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 190-1; Barpujari, *Assam*, 89; Gait, *History*, 309; Mackenzie, *History*, 102.

<sup>42</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December 1834, paras. 64, 65, 81 (OIOC E/4/742); Gait, *History* 356; Barpujari, *Assam*, 98.; Mackenzie, *History*, 102

<sup>43</sup> Letter from McNaghten, Secretary to the Government, to Robertson, Agent to the Governor-General in the North Eastern Frontier, 30 May 1833, paras. 68, 69, 70 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.110 'Minute on Jenkin's report of the North Eastern Frontier'); see also Mackenzie, *History*, 150.

<sup>44</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December, 1834, paras. 84, 85, (OIOC E/4/742).

Major Grant, then promoted from Captain, was withdrawn. Instead a Political Agent was installed:

. . . for the preservation of a friendly intercourse, and as a medium of communications with the Manipur Government, and, as occasions might require, with the Burmese authorities on that frontier, and more especially to prevent border feuds and disturbances which might lead to hostilities between the Manipuris and the Burmese.<sup>45</sup>

The first officer appointed was Lieutenant Gordon, who had before been stationed in Manipur as an assistant to Major Grant.

While strategic considerations formed the chief reason for the annexation of Arakan, the later annexations of Assam and Cachar were motivated more by the prospects of material gain. The Directors of the Company were particularly attracted by the material value of a territory. When Purandar Singh was placed on the throne of Upper Assam, the Court of Directors reprimanded the Governor-General strongly:

You had been positively enjoined in no case to conclude a permanent settlement, in any part of our Territory without the previous sanction of the home authorities. In the present case you have not only fixed the revenue, but made over the administration of an extensive District with a population of 200,000 souls and resources adequate to the support of many times that number.<sup>46</sup>

During the ten years of consideration of the future of Assam, the Directors had opened their eyes to the wealth of the country.<sup>47</sup> The place Jenkins praised the most was Cachar. About both the hills and plains of Cachar he wrote that ‘there can scarcely be in India and probably not in the British Empire a tract more capable of producing varied

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<sup>45</sup> Minute by Lord William Bentinck, 7 February 1835, quoted in Mackenzie, *History*, 152-3.

<sup>46</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December 1834, para. 34 (OIOC E/4/742).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 35, 38.



products.’<sup>48</sup> Thus, replying to the question of the annexation of the plains of Cachar, the Directors reminded the Governor-General of the possibility that the country could ‘become under good management a highly valuable possession’ as:

. . . all your officers who are best acquainted with the country concur in representing its soil as extremely fertile, and suited to the culture of cotton, sugar and various other valuable productions. . . The upper part of the country, towards the hills as well as the hills themselves are covered with immense forests of valuable timber, which is brought to market at small expense by being floated down the various streams which intersect even the hilly part of the country. . .<sup>49</sup>

In contrast to Cachar, Manipur was known to be located ‘in the heart of a difficult and mountainous country, with no mineral treasures, or facilities of intercourse with the more civilised and wealthy states, and with a population greatly disproportioned to the cultivable area of its surface’, while Gambhir Singh was represented as ‘the poorest of all the native princes under British influence’.<sup>50</sup>

The Governor-General, on the other hand, was more inclined towards the strategic or political value of a territory. Regarding Northern Cachar, he wrote that it was ‘of value to us only because it is interposed between Assam and Sylhet and the Cassyah Hills and Munneepore.’<sup>51</sup> These assessments seem to have had a lasting effect, as Manipur was to remain semi-independent under its own ruler. Northern Cachar also maintained a precarious independence until 1854, but in that year it was annexed

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<sup>48</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. A. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government in Political Department, 1 June 1833, para.2 (H.K. Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins: Report on the North-East Frontier of India: A Documentary Study with Introduction, Notes and Glossary* (Delhi: Spectrum, 1995): 145-60), 145.

<sup>49</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December 1834, para. 71 (OIOC E/4/742).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. para. 86.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from W. H. Mcnaghten, Secretary to the Government, to T. C. Robertson, Agent to the Governor-General on the North East Frontier, 30 May 1833, para. 44. (NAI Foreign, P.C., no. 110).

because of the inability of its rulers to keep the neighbouring hill tribes under control.<sup>52</sup>

Another important administrative structure introduced to the Frontier after the First Anglo-Burmese war was the Agent to the Governor-General in the North East Frontier of Bengal. It was created in 1823 to ‘exercise a general control and superintendence over the political relations and intercourse with the petty states in that quarter, including Sikkhim, Bootan, Tibet, Cooch Behar, Bijnee, Assam, Cachar, Manipur and Jaintia, and other independent states’.<sup>53</sup> David Scott was the first Agent and, during the war, he was in charge of contacting chiefs of this frontier in order to induce them to accept British suzerainty and shake off the Burmese yoke.<sup>54</sup> His subsequent efforts were directed towards the administration of the newly acquired territories, and mediating between the central authorities, other frontier officers and the chiefs of the hill people. After the annexation of Lower Assam, the management of Assam was added to his charge, on top of his duties as the magistrate of Rangpur and the Agent in the North East Frontier. The administrative burden proved too much for one man, and in 1831 Scott died in Cherrapunji due to ill health and fatigue. Robertson, the former Magistrate of Chittagong, succeeded Scott and suggested the separation of the office of the Agent in the North-East Frontier from the magistracy of Rangpur. This was done in 1834 and Francis Jenkins succeeded to the office as the third Agent.<sup>55</sup>

With these annexations, the British approached nearer to the Kuki-Chin, but the

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<sup>52</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 103, 145; Barpujari, *Assam*, 157-63.

<sup>53</sup> Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 456-8.

<sup>54</sup> Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier*, vol.1 (Gauhati: Lawyer’s Book Stall, 1970; reprint, Shillong: NEHU, 1998), 27 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>55</sup> Barpujari, *Assam*, 120; idem, *Problems*, vol.1, 81.

change was not confined to physical distance alone: the war also changed British attitudes regarding the frontier from a lack of interest to constant vigilance against threats that could come from or through the hills. During the war itself, British troops had encountered Burmese troops swelled in number by the hill people: for example, half of the Burmese force that invaded Assam in 1821 was known to have been the Singpho (or Kachin) levy.<sup>56</sup> Besides, frictions with the hill people were one of the major threats to the peace and security of the frontier.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the hill peoples were no longer outside direct administrative concern, but became central to the administration of the newly acquired territories after the First Anglo-Burmese war.

## 2. Surveys and the British Knowledge of the Kuki-Chin

### a) The Surveys of the Eastern Frontier of Bengal

The First Anglo-Burmese war had very effectively highlighted British ignorance of the geography of Burma and the Eastern Frontier of Bengal. As Pemberton commented, British knowledge regarding Burma ‘had not advanced one step beyond the point it had attained when the clear, laborious, and accurate Buchanan withdrew from the field of investigation’.<sup>58</sup> Thus, at the commencement of the war, Pemberton continued, ‘our ignorance of the whole frontier became manifest, and it was found that the records of Government furnished no information that could in the slightest degree direct or

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<sup>56</sup> Thant Myint, *Modern History*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Barpujari, *Assam*, 55; idem, *Problems*, vol.1 and 2; Chakrovorty, *British Relations*, 17-23; Gait, *History*, 338, 341-70

<sup>58</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 2.

facilitate the advance of those armies.’<sup>59</sup> The only reliable map available for the main force along the Irrawaddy River were the charts Thomas Wood had compiled during Symes’s First Mission in 1794. No information regarding a land route was available, and as the initial plan to move the troops through the river proved impracticable, the British troops had to move slowly, sending pioneers in advance to ascertain the positions for the ensuing day’s encampment.<sup>60</sup> Similarly in Assam, the only map of the Brahmaputra available for the troops was that compiled by Thomas Wood, who had accompanied Captain Welsh’s mission to Assam to support Rajah Kamaleswar against bandits between 1792 and 1794.<sup>61</sup> As a result the British had to pay a bitter price for this ignorance ‘in an expenditure of life and treasure without parallel in the annals of Indian warfare.’<sup>62</sup>

Not only were the British ill-informed about these foreign territories but they did not even have correct information regarding the limits of their own territories. The Naaf River, which was supposed to be the boundary between Chittagong and Arakan, had been surveyed in 1814 by John Cheape despite ‘a good deal of difficulty and fatigue’, but towards the east he had made no attempt to penetrate the wild hills. The course of the Koladyne River, which was supposed to be the eastern boundary of Chittagong, was given as described by Cheape without pretension to its accuracy, and the Blue Mountain, conjectured to be within the British territory, was only observed from forty miles’

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 3, 70; Trant, *Two Years in Ava: From May 1824 to May 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827), 70.

<sup>61</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 1, 81, 85, 398 (biographical notes on Thomas Woods); regarding Captain Welsh’s mission see Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, chapter 7: 300-423.

<sup>62</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 2.

distance.<sup>63</sup> The boundary of Chittagong with Hill Tripura was also assumed to be the Fenny River, though no treaty existed and it was subject to continuous disputes between the Rajah and British officers.<sup>64</sup>

The southern boundary of Sylhet was the only boundary on this frontier that had been settled before the war. Lieutenant Fisher, who was employed in the revenue survey of Sylhet from 1820, demarcated the boundary in the presence of representatives of the Rajah.<sup>65</sup> The northern boundary of Sylhet was rendered definite only after the war in 1826. Further north, the boundaries with the Garrow Hills had been settled by Scott while he was bringing the Garrows under submission, but the British never had officially laid down its boundary with Assam other than holding the western bank of the Brahmaputra as their territory.

Naturally, the war stimulated a collective zeal on the part of the British administrators in India to know this formerly unknown part of the world east of Bengal. In fact, for the Surveyor General, Major J. Blacker, the war itself was an opportunity to study this ill-known region, and he suggested the deputation of a number of surveyors ‘to acquire geographical and physical knowledge of a tract of country which may be termed *terra incognita*.’<sup>66</sup> Therefore, at the commencement of the war, revenue surveyors who had been employed elsewhere were transferred to this frontier, to take military duties as well as carrying out survey missions whenever possible.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 3, 8

<sup>64</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 280.

<sup>65</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 3, 55; Mackenzie, *History*, 278.

<sup>66</sup> Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese*, 579.

<sup>67</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 3, 52, 181.

Regarding the Assam valley, particular attention was paid to the question of the source of the Brahmaputra.<sup>68</sup> James Bedford, who was given charge of the survey of the Assam valley from December 1824, was directed to consider this as his main object. Lieutenants Burlton, Jones and Neufville on the Quarter Master General's staff and Mathew and Bedingfield, who were under the Political Agent, also performed survey missions.<sup>69</sup>

To Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur, Lieutenants Birnie Browne, Robert Pemberton, and sub-assistant Macpherson were posted as surveyors. When Gambhir Singh's troops moved into Manipur, Pemberton and Browne took the opportunity to survey the vicinity of a Kuki village named 'Thangum', which had been under dispute between the Rajahs of Tripura and Cachar. From here, Pemberton continued into Manipur following Gambhir Singh, while Browne and McPherson were transferred to Burma. After reaching Manipur, Pemberton returned to Calcutta on leave but returned to Manipur before Gambhir Singh's campaign into the Kabaw valley early in 1826, surveying the routes he travelled.<sup>70</sup>

In Arakan the surveyors, as well as the regular troops, had harder times. The first surveyor attached to the column at the early stage of the campaign in May 1825 was Major Salch. He died of fever while reconnoitring the Koladyne River. The remaining surveyors were also constantly engaged in reconnoitring missions until the final

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 79, 399 (biographical note on Thomas Wood); vol. 3, 1, 53-6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., vol.3, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 65.

expulsion of the Burmese across the Yoma. They then found that most of the important instruments and documents, which had been under Major Salch, were so neglected that they had become unserviceable. When a survey across the Arakan Yoma was ordered, the surveyor complained:

For this interesting duty I have scarcely a pocket compass, nothing wherewith to determine the height of the mountains, or even a sextant. The absence of a perambulator will not be of any moment, as the use of it must be totally impracticable over such steep and rocky ground.<sup>71</sup>

When it was determined to hold the whole of Arakan, the importance of locating routes through the mountains to Burma increased, as this would make it possible to defend against possible invasion by the Burmese and to send troops into the Kingdom of Ava. Captains Ross and Trant led the first group that successfully crossed the mountains through the Aeng Pass. Accompanied by Thanduk Wun, a former *Myowun* of Sandoway, the 18<sup>th</sup> Madras Infantry, 50 pioneers, 36 elephants, and 100 pack bullocks,<sup>72</sup> left Yandabu on the 6<sup>th</sup> March, went through Pakeng Yeh (Pakhan Ngé), Cholain Mew (Tsalen myo) and reached Aeng on the 26<sup>th</sup> and proceeded to Amherst harbour which they reached on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1826.<sup>73</sup> Another group was led by Lieutenant Browne, who traversed the Arakan Yoma through the Tongho Pass. He left Prome on 18<sup>th</sup> March, went through Padaung, which he left on 23<sup>rd</sup>, and reached Toungoop in the Sandoway district on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1826. This group was less successful than that of Ross and Trant, as the Burmese coolies deserted the mission in the middle of the mountains. Browne reported that this pass was unsuitable for the march of an army, and would only answer

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 69, 198.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>73</sup> T. A. Trant, *Two Years in Ava: From May 1824 to May 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827); idem, 'Notice of the Khyen Tribe, inhabiting the Yuma Mountains, between Ava and Arakan.' *Asiatick Researches*, vol.11 (1828): 261-9; idem, 'Report on a Route from Pakung Yeh in Ava, to Aeng in Arracan.' *JASB*, vol.11 (2), no.132 (1842): 1136-57; see also *Calcutta Gazette* 22 and 25 May 1826.

the purpose of *dak*-communication.<sup>74</sup>

In the Irrawaddy valley, the surveyors could not do much work during pitched battles and only a few sketches of the Irrawaddy River and routes to important towns were made by Lieutenant Trant and Major Jackson of the Quarter-Master General's department. At the beginning of 1825 more surveyors, Lieutenants Browne and Macpherson, were transferred from Cachar to the Irrawaddy valley, and another experienced surveyor, Peter Grant, was attached specifically for this purpose. In March 1826, John Crawford was appointed as the Civil Commissioner of Pegu, with headquarters at Rangoon, pending a final settlement with the court of Ava. While in this post, he proceeded to Martaban at the end of March to take possession of the province of Tenasserim. This occasion was also used for a survey of the coast. The rivers in Tenasserim were surveyed<sup>75</sup> as well as inland routes towards China, Siam, and Ava, which were surveyed by Captain McLeod and Dr. Richardson from 1829 to the end of the 1830s.<sup>76</sup> In September 1826, Crawford was deputed to the court of Ava to conclude a commercial treaty. DeMontmorency accompanied this mission and surveyed the towns and fortification of Ava.<sup>77</sup>

In 1828, DeMontmorency was again sent by the Government to survey the Chindwin River from its confluence with the Irrawaddy. He travelled by boat up the

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<sup>74</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 72-3; *Calcutta Gazette*, 13 July 1826.

<sup>75</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 20 and 27 April, 1826(on Salween river), 29 and 30 May 1826(on Martaban, Ye, and Tavoy), 3 August 1826 (Amherst harbour); for general description see *ibid.*, 9 and 29 March, 4 May 1826; Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 75.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855*, with an introduction by Hugh Tinker (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>77</sup> John Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in the Year 1827*, (London: Colburn, 1829).



river and, in three weeks, reached Kendat, a town at the border of Manipur, where he met Lieutenant Pemberton who by then had surveyed routes in Manipur, Assam, and the Khasi Hills, and was engaged in a commission laying down the boundary between Manipur and Burma.<sup>78</sup> Pemberton then proceeded to Ava and travelled to Arakan despite the unfavourable weather from July to September, retracing Captain Trant's route and making barometric observations to record the altitude.<sup>79</sup>

Upon his return to Calcutta, Pemberton, together with Captain Francis Jenkins, was appointed for a singularly important survey mission during the immediate post war period. From 1831 to 1833, they were ordered to survey Arakan, Cachar, Manipur, Assam, and the Khasi Hills. This survey originated from the need to formulate defensive arrangements for the Arakan frontier, and to find out the best mode of military operations in case of another war with Burma. For this, the Governor-General needed more comprehensive information and thus decided to send experienced officers on a special survey mission to this frontier. Soon this plan was enlarged to include all of the newly acquired territories.<sup>80</sup>

Their first destination was Arakan. After a month of preparation at Calcutta, they arrived at Kyouk Phyu on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1831. From there they surveyed the Aeng Pass up to the top of Mount Naragain and then inspected the military cantonments along

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<sup>78</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 78.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 72; Robert B. Pemberton, 'Journey from Munipoor to Ava, and from thence across the Yooma Mountain to Arracan, by Capt. R. B. Pemberton', with introduction and notes by D.G.E. Hall, *JBRs* vol. 18, no.2 (December 1960): 1-96; Letter from Lt. Pemberton to W. R. Young, 16 Feb. 1831 (OIOC F/4/1449 56965 No. 53).

<sup>80</sup> Minute by the Governor General, 30 December 1830; George Swinton, a letter to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 11 February 1831; Letter from George Swinton to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 19 August 1831 (OIOC F/4/1446-9).

the coast, marching up to Chittagong which they reached on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. They submitted their report on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1831 while they were in Calcutta preparing for the next mission.<sup>81</sup>

After the rains of 1831, Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton started for Manipur.<sup>82</sup> They left Calcutta on the 13<sup>th</sup> October, surveying routes from Sylhet through Cachar, then into Manipur which they reached on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. Here they were delayed due to the Nagas, through whose territory they had to pass, who were reported to be hostile. On the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1832, they left Manipur with more escorts – six hundred of the Manipur Levy with Lieutenat Gordon and a Rajah's nephew – furnished by Gambhir Singh, and the party literally fought their way through into Assam and reached Gauhati on the 18<sup>th</sup> February. They then turned southwards through the Khasi Hills back to Sylhet and reported their return on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1832.<sup>83</sup>

In the meantime, more routes into Burma from these newly occupied areas were surveyed in preparation for another military campaign into Burma. In 1831, Richardson surveyed the land route from Ava to Kendat,<sup>84</sup> while Captain Grant of the Manipur Levy performed a tour of inspection along the Manipur frontier including a detailed survey of the course of the Ningthee River, which connected to those parts surveyed by

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<sup>81</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, to George Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, 8 September. 1831. (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 19-25 'Pemberton's report on the military and sanitary condition of the province of Arracan').

<sup>82</sup> Letter from George Swinton to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 22 July 1831 (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton to George Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government of India, 14 April 1832 (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>84</sup> D. Richardson, 'Journal of a march from Ava to Kendat, on the Khyendwen River, performed in 1831, by D. Richardson, esq. Assistant Surgeon of the Madras Establishment, under the orders of Major H. Burney, the resident at Ava' *JASB* vol.2. (1833): 59-70.

Richardson.<sup>85</sup> The sketch maps of these two surveys were printed in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Another route into Burma was thought to exist from Assam through the Hukawng Valley but the Burmese Government had been opposing the survey of this route, which lead through the Amber Mine. An opportunity came when a group of Kachin people tributary to Burma attacked another Kachin chief under British protection. Henry Burney, the resident at Ava, despatched Captain S. F. Hannay not only to sort out this relatively insignificant feud, but to investigate the communications between Assam and Ava through the Hukawng valley. This journey also passed through Bhamo, which was much valued as a gateway to China.<sup>86</sup>

The information thus collected did not just stay within administrative circles. The *Calcutta Gazette* published many articles resulting from the surveys,<sup>87</sup> as did the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.<sup>88</sup> Some of those who participated in the survey

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<sup>85</sup> F.T. Grant, 'Extracts from a journal kept by Capt. F. T. Grant, of the Manipur Levy, during a tour of Inspection in the Manipur frontier, along the course of the Nigtee river & c. in January 1832', in *JASB* vol.3 (1834): 124-34.

<sup>86</sup> Robert. B. Pemberton, 'Abstract of the Journal of a route travelled by Capt. S. F. Hannay of the 40<sup>th</sup> regiment Native Infantry from the Capital of Ava to the Amber Mines of the Hukong valley on the southeast frontier of Assam', *JASB*. vol.6. no.64 (April, 1837): 245-63

<sup>87</sup> To give but some examples see *Calcutta Gazette* 23 February 1826 (Annexation of Kubo by Gumbheer Singh); 2, 9, and 29 March (regarding Tenasserim); 20 April (Survey by Trant, and by Pemberton); 27 April (the Salween River); 4 May. (Tenasserim); 15 May (Brahmputra); 22 May (Trant's survey); 13 July (Browne's survey of Tongho pass); 3 August (Peter Grant); 8 September (Moulmein); 5 November 1826 (Mishmees and Khamptis).

<sup>88</sup> T.A. Trant, 'Notice of the Khyen Tribe, inhabiting the Yuma Mountains, between Ava and Arakan', *Asiatic Researches*, vol.11 (1828): idem, 'Report on a Route from Pakung Yeh in Ava, to Aeng in Arracan', *JASB*, vol.11(2), no.132 (1841): 1136-57; Lt. R. Wilcox, 'Survey Journey of Lt. R. Wilcox', *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 16 (1832); D. Richardson, 'Journal of March from Ava to Kendat, on the Khyendwen River, performed in 1831', *JASB*, vol.2 (1835): 59-70; F. T. Grant, 'Extract from a Journal Kept by Capt. F. T. Grant, of the Manipur Levy, during a Tour of Inspection on the Manipur Frontier, along the course of the Ningthee River & c. in January 1832', *JASB*, Vol.3 (1834): 124-34; William Foley, 'Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Ramree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country, and Brief Account of the Customs & c.', *JASB*, vol.4, no. 37 (Jan. 1835) 20-38 (continued to vol.5, no. 40, (Apr. 1835): 199-207); J. McCosh, 'Account of the Mountain Tribes on the Extreme North East Frontier of Bengal', *JASB*, vol. 5, no.52 (Apr. 1836) (information provided by Francis Jenkins); R. B. Pemberton, 'Abstract Journal of a Route Travelled by Capt. S. F. Hannay', *JASB*, vol.6, no.64, (Apr. 1837): 245-63 ; McLeod, 'Journey by McLeod from Moulmein to Ava to Hung Kiang'. *JASB*, vol. 6, no.65 (1837); E. R. Grange, 'Extracts from the Narrative of an Expedition into the Naga Territory of Assam', *JASB*, vol. 8,

mission also published their own accounts in single volumes. Notable among these were *Two Years in Ava*, published by Thomas Trant, which includes the narrative of his march through the Aeng Pass, and the *Report on the Eastern Frontier* by Robert Pemberton, based on his extensive experience and knowledge as well as that of the others, which was published by order of the Government of India.<sup>89</sup> William Griffith also produced several volumes, notable among which were the *Report on the Tea plant of Upper Assam*(1840), and the *Journal of travels in Assam, Bootan Affghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries*(1847) which deals with his journeys in the Naga hills and from Upper Assam through the Hukong valley to Ava in 1837.<sup>90</sup>

These surveys were different from those mentioned in earlier chapters in terms of the way information was collected. Formerly, it had been mostly based on casual and personal curiosities. But the surveys during and after the First Anglo-Burmese War were coordinated by the central authorities, with destinations purposefully chosen to cover as much of the different areas as possible, and, prior to each survey mission, orders were despatched with specific information the surveyors had to look for.<sup>91</sup> Measurements were preferred and the surveyors were mostly trained engineers who were accustomed to the use of equipment provided by the government.<sup>92</sup> The information thus gathered

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no.90 (June, 1839): 445-70.

<sup>89</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 1835.

<sup>90</sup> William Griffith, *Journal of Travels in Assam, Burma, Bootan, Affghanistan, and the Neighbouring Countries*, arr. John M'clelland, (Calcutta: Bishop's College Press, 1847; reprint, Taipei: Cheng Wen Publishing Company, 1971)

<sup>91</sup> Letter from George Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government, to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 11 February 1831; Letter from George Swinton, to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 19 August 1831 (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>92</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 175, 181, 332; regarding the survey methods adopted in the North East Frontier, see *ibid.*, 189, 198-9, 203-4 and Chapter 15. 'Instruments' and Chapter 23 'Surveyors'

was sent to the Surveyor General's office, where it was compiled, published, and ultimately, used for compiling maps of the region.<sup>93</sup>

The most important information for the central authorities regarded routes: possible routes of invasion from Burma by the Burmese and suitable routes of invasion into Burma by British troops. In the case of Jenkins and Pemberton, their orders were to find out the best mode of defence of the frontier, including the locations for stationing troops, and the appropriate size of, and ways of supplying them. However, a surveyor's report was seldom confined to measurements of routes but also included large amounts of information regarding the resources of the country, population, political situation, language, and customs of the people.<sup>94</sup> In fact, when the report of Jenkins and Pemberton reached London it was the socio-cultural information that interested the Directors of the Company the most.<sup>95</sup> From an earlier period, the central authorities, who had little knowledge or contact with India, looked upon survey missions as a vital source of information regarding the general situation of India. As early as 1788, James Rennell, the first Surveyor General, ordered surveyors to send in their journals and field books, noting 'the appearance and produce of the Countries, names of village and whatever else may seem remarkable' through which they passed. This request was partly made to ensure that the surveyors were using government money for beneficial ends.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, the effect of this was obvious in supplying the Government with much detailed description of the territories under its rule.

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<sup>93</sup> R. B. Pemberton, *Map of the Eastern Frontier of British India with the Adjacent Countries*, (16 miles to an inch, Calcutta: The Surveyor General's Office, 1838: BL. Maps 52450 (28))

<sup>94</sup> Robert Pemberton, 'Abstract of the Journal'.

<sup>95</sup> India Political Department No.14, 3 December 1834, para. 109. (OIOC E/4/742).

<sup>96</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 1, 195-6; idem, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 353.

The surveys in Assam, Arakan and Burma after the war were no exception to this trend. There were visible individual differences regarding the information imparted beyond the immediate purpose of the survey, but in countries so little known as Assam and Burma, the information provided by these surveys proved to be of the utmost interest.<sup>97</sup> Some of the information thus collected related to the people residing in the hills, and in this manner more knowledge was made available about the Kuki-Chin people.

#### b) British Knowledge on the Kuki-Chin

##### 1) Records of the Chin in Arakan

Captain Ross and Lieutenant Trant were the first British officers to encounter the Chin people in their own villages. During their march through the Aeng Pass, they first passed a Chin village near 'Shoegoun', a place that marked the beginning of the hills. From this village they continued for two days in the hills to reach 'Napeh' (Ngape). Between Shoegoun and Ngape they noted mixed settlements of the Burmese and the Chins but after that there were only a few hamlets inhabited by the Chin 'who had placed themselves under the Burman Government'. Here, Trant had the opportunity to observe the customs of the Chin he met, and record them in detail.<sup>98</sup> As mentioned earlier, Pemberton later traced the same route during the rainy season of 1830, but he

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., vol.3, 198.

<sup>98</sup> Trant, *Two Years*, 425, 429-30.

was occupied with distance and barometric readings, so that except for a note on the tattooed face of the Chin women, he did not leave any observation of the people.<sup>99</sup>

Jenkins and Pemberton re-surveyed the Aeng Pass in 1831 and more notes on the Chin can be found in their report.<sup>100</sup> This report also includes the opinions of the officers stationed in Arakan regarding the Chin people living toward the source of the Koladyne River. Other than this, in December 1827 the Junior Commissioner of Arakan, Mr. Paton, made an excursion to the town of Talak and to the source of the Talak River. He was then accompanied by a Chin chief named Tongrabo, a former *sirdar* of Chin Pyan, and attempted to contact other Chin chiefs living towards the source of Talak; however, they were tributary to a Burmese village to the east, and refused to meet a British officer, fearing that such acts might offend the Burmese authorities.<sup>101</sup>

Lieutenant Trant's journal, especially the parts relating to a description of the Chin people, appeared in four different places,<sup>102</sup> with four different spellings for the word 'Chin'. The book he published in London in 1827 used '*Kieaans*'; his article in *Asiatic Researches* in 1828 used 'Khyén'; his article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* used 'Kicaams', which, according to the editors, was 'the spelling used in his manuscripts'; and the *Calcutta Gazette* in 1826 even used 'Kareans'. As 'Kieaans' is the term used in his book, it is likely that Trant adopted this form in his own manuscript.

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<sup>99</sup> Pemberton, 'Journey from Munnipoor', 71.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Capt. Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, on special survey duty Eastern Frontier to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government, 8 September 1831 (NAI Foreign, S.C., Nos. 19-25, 'Pemberton's report on the Military and Sanitary Condition of Arakan').

<sup>101</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 11 February 1828.

<sup>102</sup> *Calcutta Gazette* 22 and 25 May 1826; Trant, *Two Years*; idem, 'Notice of the Khyen Tribe'; idem, 'Report on a Route'.

The sound of this term corresponds with ‘Kiayn’ that Buchanan had used earlier. The editors of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* obviously misread this as ‘Kicaams’, which is an understandable mistake arising from manuscripts. In fact, the same article also printed ‘passive’ as the name of their supreme being, which cannot be other than another misreading of ‘passine’, which can be none other than ‘*pathian*’ meaning God, that appears in Trant’s book.<sup>103</sup> The editors of *Asiatic Researches* seem to have freely used their own judgement and opted for Khyén, a more common spelling among the British administrators in Arakan, while the editors of the *Calcutta Gazette* seem to have abused their similar freedom and replaced this term with one they were familiar with: namely, the Karens.

‘Khyén’, adopted by the editors of *Asiatic Researches* illuminates a certain progress in the British categorisation of the Chin people. The variety of ways of spelling the ‘Chin’ that had existed before – Kiayn (Buchanan, 1798), Kayn (Symes, 1795), Caen (Cox, 1821) and Kieaans (Trant, 1827) – were being standardised into ‘Khyen’. This form started to have wider currency among the administrators during the years immediately after the annexation of Arakan. An article in the *Calcutta Gazette* in February 1828 that contained a description of the Chin people by the Junior Commissioner of Arakan, Mr. Paton, used ‘Khyang’.<sup>104</sup> Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton, reporting their survey of Arakan in 1831, used ‘Kyens’<sup>105</sup>; Captain Dickinson, who was then the superintendent of Arakan used ‘Khyeng’<sup>106</sup>; while

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<sup>103</sup> Trant, *Two Years*, 430; idem, ‘Report on a Route’ 1149.

<sup>104</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1828.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary, 8 September, 1831 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 19-25, ‘Pemberton’s report on the Military and Sanitary Condition of Arakan’)

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Captain Dickinson to Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, 29 April 1831, para. 9 (NAI,

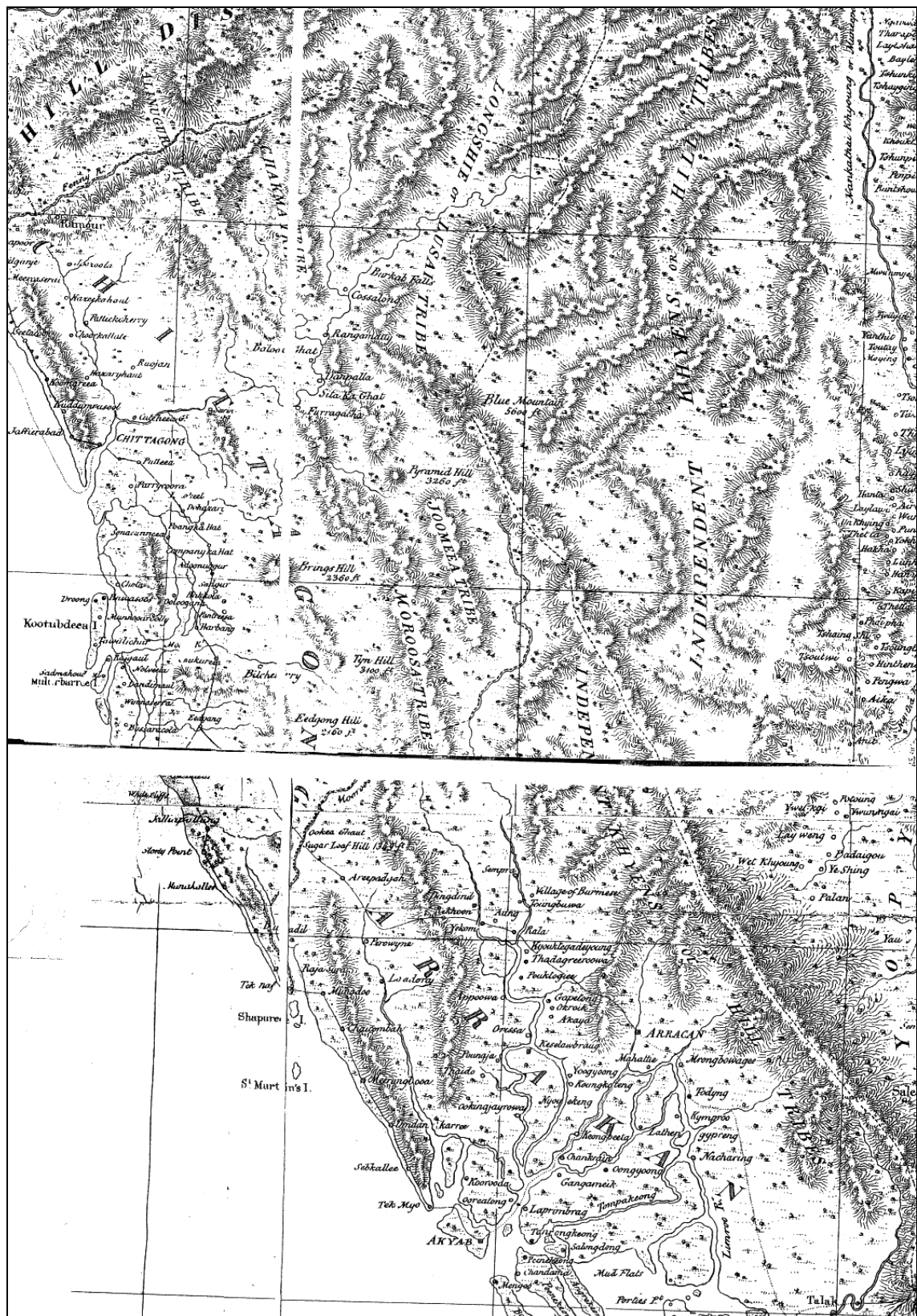


Pemberton used 'Khyen' in the book and map that he compiled (see Map 7 below).<sup>107</sup>

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Foreign, S.C., nos. 19-25, 'Pemberton's report on the Military and Sanitary Condition of Arakan', Appendix. No.5)

<sup>107</sup> Pemberton, *Report*; idem, *Map of the Eastern Frontier of British India with the Adjacent Countries*.



Map 7. Part of Map of the Eastern Frontier of British India with the Adjacent Countries, by R. B. Pemberton (1838) (BL. Maps 52450(28))

None of these, however, made any effort to find out the names the people used for themselves in the way that Buchanan did, even though Jenkins and Pemberton knew the existence of ‘various denominations of tribes that came under the general term of the Kyens,’ no other category was mentioned than that of ‘Kyen’.<sup>108</sup> The only division of the Chin people, common to all of those who mention the Chin in this period, was that analogous to the Burmese division of ‘subjected’ and ‘independent’ Chin. Trant described the Chin people around the Aeng Pass as an ‘inoffensive and quiet’ people ‘devoted to agriculture’, and the same was said by Foley of the ‘Kaengs’ of Ramree.<sup>109</sup> This description, however, was in contrast to those who lived further in the ‘remote and unfrequented recesses of the mountain wilds,’ who were described as ‘perfectly wild and independent’ and ‘addicted to plunder and rapine.’<sup>110</sup> The officers stationed in Arakan during Jenkins and Pemberton’s survey held similar views. Captain Dickinson, the Superintendent of Arakan, was of the opinion that, though there was no reason for supposing those Chin who inhabited the mountains between Arakan and Ava to be other than well affected towards the British Government, the people towards the source of Koladyne were ‘utterly indifferent’ to the British Indian government and any attempt to interfere there would be opposed.<sup>111</sup> Captain M. G. White, the Senior Assistant Superintendent of Arakan, also described the tribes near Aeng, or ‘civilised Kheing’, as ‘industrious and orderly’, but the inhabitants of the other mountainous circles, or the

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<sup>108</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton to Swinton, 23 June 1831 (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>109</sup> William Foley, ‘Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree’, *JASB*, vol.4, no.40 (1835): 206-7.

<sup>110</sup> *Calcutta Gazette* 22, 25 May 1826; Trant, *Two Years*, 430; idem, ‘Report on a Route’, 1150-1.

<sup>111</sup> Letter from Captain Dickinson, Superintendent of Arakan, to Captain Jenkins and Pemberton, on Special Survey Duties, 29 April 1831, para. 9 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos.19-25, ‘Pemberton’s report on the military and sanitary condition of the province of Arracan’ Appendix. No.5).

northern hills towards the source of the Koladyne, as ‘men of notorious bad character’.<sup>112</sup>

It is not clear whether the evidence for this division came from the British officers’ own observations or from what the Burmese or Arakanese told them. Most likely it would have been a bit of both: as the British came to occupy the same position the Burmese or Arakanese had in relation to the Chin people, it is natural that the same categorical division that mattered to the Burmese before them became the most relevant division of the Chin people for the British officers. Not only the division itself, but the stereotypes were also the same as those delineated by Symes and Buchanan before: the ‘subjected Chin’ were industrious, inoffensive, and orderly, while the ‘independent Chin’ were uncivilised, wild, and savage marauders.

There was a particular attitude toward other people, however, that was peculiar to the British officers at this time. This can be best demonstrated in the following quote from Trant on the Chin people in general:

To judge, however, by their simple code of laws, they are not by any means deficient in the knowledge of right and wrong, and are quite aware of the footing on which men stand with each other. It is therefore highly probable, that with lenity and kindness, they might be induced to mix with their more civilised neighbours, and become useful members of society.<sup>113</sup>

Here, Trant judges the Chin people by the standard of their collective achievement in moral development. The code of law is used as a gauge for this development and he concludes that they can be brought to a higher state of civilisation, which would

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<sup>112</sup> Letter from Captain White to Jenkins and Pemberton, 6 April 1831. para. 8 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 19-25, ‘Pemberton’s report on the Military and Sanitary Condition of Arakan’, Appendix no.7).

<sup>113</sup> Trant, *Two Years*, 430.

ultimately make them more useful members of society. What underlies this comment is a view of ‘civilisation’ in terms of the different degrees of progress of different groups of people, and a form of utilitarianism that views full realisation of the potential utility of individuals or groups to ‘society’ as the proper goal in life.

Trant himself does not specify what he meant by ‘more useful members of society,’ but Jenkins and Pemberton had a more specific view on this. It was the utility of the people in the service of the colonial state. Jenkins and Pemberton first mention ‘Kyens’ (other than a passing reference to their villages) in relation to the coolies needed to convey arms and supplies to the troops in the event of a campaign into Burma through the Aeng Pass. In Arakan, the carriage cattle, elephants or carts were reported to be too few and unsuitable for the army.<sup>114</sup> Thus, it was critical to obtain a secure source of manpower. At this point, Jenkins and Pemberton turned their eyes to the Chin. They saw a great number of these ‘practised porters’ in the hills around Aeng and northward, who could be assembled at Aeng with little delay. Also, as the females were ‘capable and in the habit of performing most of the duties which generally fall to the lot of the males,’ this would cause little inconvenience to their everyday work.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, John Crawfurd was most explicit on the theme of ‘civilisation’. After returning from the embassy to the Court of Ava from September 1826 to February 1827, Crawfurd left a journal following the tradition of his predecessors, Michael Symes and Hiram Cox. In contrast to Symes, who had been full of awe towards Burma

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<sup>114</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton, to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary, 8 September, 1831, para.34 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 19-25, ‘Pemberton’s report on the Military and Sanitary Condition of Arakan’).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Para 35.

and its people, however, Crawford focuses on how ‘uncivilised’ the people of Burma were. To him, the evidence that the Burmese were ‘barely civilised’ and ‘semi-barbarous’ was overwhelming: tattooing and piercing the earlobes; inferior quality of clothes compared ‘even to that of Cochin Chinese’; only moderate progress in useful arts, a large part of which was carried out by foreigners; and extremely limited knowledge in the higher branches of knowledge. The system of government was characterised by ‘its rudeness, vices, and imperfections’ beyond all question.<sup>116</sup> His final verdict was that they were greatly inferior to the Hindoos in civilisation, and still more so to the Chinese. Nearest in the level of civilisation, Crawford judged, were the inhabitants of Java.<sup>117</sup>

Nevertheless, within Burma, the Burmese were at the top of the league table of civilised nations, followed by Mons, Shans, and Manipuris. Then came the wilder tribes of Karens, and Kyens who were ‘little less civilised’ than the Burmese, to be followed by Palaon, Pyu, Lenzen, Lawá, D’hanu, D’hanao, and Zalaung, who, according to him, lived in ‘savage states’ in the mountains<sup>118</sup> – a daring conclusion for one who never had any direct contact with any of these. The only reason that the Chins were not put at the lower level of this hierarchy was perhaps the fact that many of them, at least those who were under the consideration of Crawford, lived near the Burmese villages and had more or less settled villages while the quality of silk clothes produced by the Kyens surpassed that of their ‘more civilised masters’.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Crawford, *Journal*, 431.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 372.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 470.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 378.

In this view, the people were divided into groups with different levels of civilisation. Such factors as material culture, political institutions, laws, religion and languages were taken into consideration in judging the stage of development of a group. Europeans were obviously the forerunners followed by Chinese and Indians. Not all the officers held such a whole view on world 'civilisations' as Crawford, but the same principle that people can be judged and compared in terms of degree of civilisation can be found in most of the other works. Those who had written about the Kukis in Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur were no exceptions.

## 2) The Kuki in Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur

Thomas Fisher was the first to record the Kuki people from his own observations, though mixed with what he had heard from the Manipuris who were then in possession of Cachar.<sup>120</sup> After the war, it was Pemberton who first recorded observations of the Kuki when he followed Gambhir Singh into Manipur in 1825. On that occasion he surveyed the road from Banskandi in Cachar into Manipur, and also visited a Kuki village of Thangum (or Thlangum) to ascertain whether this village fell under the jurisdiction of the Rajah of Tripura, who had been anxious to put this village under his influence. The result was published in the *Calcutta Gazette*.<sup>121</sup> Later in 1831, he came back to this frontier with Jenkins and, as in Arakan, more information on the Kuki

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<sup>120</sup> T. Fisher, 'Memoir of the Countries on and Near the Eastern frontier of Sylhet', in Wilson, *Documents*, appendix 15: 21-28); the same is found in Fisher, 'Memoir of the Countries on and Near the Eastern Frontier of Sylhet', *JASB*, vol. 6 (1840); see also 'Extracts from a Memoir of a Survey of the Southern part of Silhet made in the years 1821-2 by Lt. Thomas Fisher 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Native Infantry'. (OIOC Mss. Eur. D106).

<sup>121</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 29 December 1825; also found in Wilson, *documents*, appendix 13: 17-9.

people can be found in their reports and the book he published afterwards.<sup>122</sup>

‘Kuki’ as an ethnic label did not suffer from the existence of as many varieties of spelling as Chin in Arakan did. This perhaps was due to the fact that British officers understood Bengali better than Burmese. On the other hand, the usage was more confused than ‘Khyen’. Fisher introduced the Kuki (spelt Kooky) as follows:

The extensive range of mountains which, after dividing Cachar from Maunnipoor, passes through the independent territories on the sea coast to the east of Chittagong is occupied in different parts by various tribes of savages which in the parts between Cachar and Munnipoor are called Nagas, and in places near Tipperah and Sylhet, are styled Kookies.<sup>123</sup>

In this introduction, Fisher recognises the existence of a variety of unspecified groupings, which were locally classified into two categories of Naga and Kuki by others. The categories of Naga and Kuki were the main division of the hill people of Manipur and Cachar in the other works as well. Upon the difference between the Nagas and the Kukis, Pemberton observed that the Kukis, who were ‘scattered among the ranges south of Barak’, were of ‘smaller stature (than Nagas), darker complexions, and more unfavourable countenances’.<sup>124</sup> This, which he later attributed to the ‘Malay descent’ of the Kukis,<sup>125</sup> was contrasted to ‘the northern Nagas’ who generally bore some degree of resemblance to the Chinese. Yet, for both Fisher and Pemberton, this division was basically a geographic one: the Nagas lived in the northern hills, while the Kukis occupied the southern.

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<sup>122</sup> Captains Jenkins and Pemberton’s report on Cachar, Manipur, Assam and Kashi hills, 27 Aug. 1832, para. 35 (NAI Foreign, P.C., nos. 87-8).

<sup>123</sup> Fisher, ‘Memoir’.

<sup>124</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 29 December 1825.

<sup>125</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 17.



The division between Kuki and Naga was only distinctive in categorical terms: there was great confusion in the actual application of the division to real groups or individuals. To take one example, Jenkins and Pemberton at times used expressions such as ‘southern or Kookie Nagas’<sup>126</sup> showing that the category Kuki was somehow regarded as a sub-category of Nagas and therefore giving the impression that the term Naga was used to designate the hill people in general, while the term Kuki was confined to those in the south. Besides, the Anals and Koms, which Pemberton classified under the category of Naga, were regarded as Kukis in the later *Gazetteers*, or in more recent publications.<sup>127</sup> The ‘Khongjai’ was a term for the new Kukis in Manipur, and Pemberton regarded this as a somewhat similar term to Kuki but the Political Agent of Manipur reported them as Nagas.<sup>128</sup> It seems that these two terms divided the hill people into two categories and therefore, used in contrast to each other, but there were confusions in the actual application of this categorical division onto individuals or groups.

Similar confusion is found in the other cognate categories of the Kuki. Pemberton occasionally referred to ‘Koochung’, or ‘Kuchoons’ and ‘Khongjuee’ or ‘Khongjai’ people in Manipur.<sup>129</sup> What ‘Kuchoon’ exactly referred to is unknown, but according to Dun, ‘Khongjai’ was a name generally given to the ‘New Kukis’ by the Manipuris in

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<sup>126</sup> Report by Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton on Cachar, Manipur, Assam and Kashi hills, 27 Aug. 1832, para. 35 (NAI Foreign, P.C., nos 87-8).

<sup>127</sup> Dun, *Gazetteer*, 28-35; Haokip, *Zalen-Gam*, 66; Gangte, *Kukis*, 31.

<sup>128</sup> Letter from Captain Gordon to J. H. Maddock, Secretary to the Government of India, 18 November 1841, ‘Settlement of the question of jurisdiction of Khongjai village’ (NAI Foreign P.C., nos. 68-70, 6 December 1841).

<sup>129</sup> See Pemberton, *Report*, 3, 14. 51.

contrast to the 'Old Kukis' <sup>130</sup> and this term appears in the context of Manipur throughout the British colonial period. Pemberton, however, does not seem to have had any accurate knowledge of these two categories or their relationships with the category Kuki, but from the usages such as 'Khonjuee or Kookee villages', it appears that he understood them as more or less coterminous with the Kuki. All these show confusion among the British officers regarding the ethnic categories of the hill people and at the same time suggest the existence of multiple and often conflicting categorisation within Cachar and Manipur similar to that found by Buchanan in the Chittagong Hills thirty years before: the terms were distinctive, or even contrasting, but the applications were not as clearly differentiated.

Nevertheless, the Poitoo in the southern hills of Cachar and Sylhet were more readily identified than other sub-groups of the Kuki. There are disagreements regarding the identity of the 'Poitoo'. While they were undoubtedly a major Kuki group south of Sylhet and Cachar as Fisher recognised, references to the Poitoo disappear in the British records before the annexation of the Lushai Hills. Some identified this group with 'Paite' currently in Manipur, <sup>131</sup> but John Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, who made a special tour among the Lushai chiefs in 1869, recognised these as two different categories, one called 'Poitoo' and another, 'Pytes'. Edgar describes the latter as being in the easternmost hills near the watershed of the Irrawaddy and recognises them as a cognate group of the 'Soktes'. or Pytes'. <sup>132</sup> The description of the Pyte here,

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<sup>130</sup> Dun, *Gazetteer*, 32.

<sup>131</sup> Lian Sakhong, *Religion*, 165; van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 136(note 301); see also, Elly, *Military Report*, 36.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from J. W. Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, on Special Duty, to the Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, 13 March 1871, para.8 (NAI Foreign Political A. May 1871, nos. 576-653 'Lushai Raids').

their location, and their relation to the Soktes, all fit the current Paite. The remaining question then is: what had become of the Poitoo? One likely assumption is that the Poitoo as a polity had been weakened and dispersed among the Lushais and other sub-groups of the Kuki in Cachar and Sylhet as a result of a series of attacks from the British as well as the Lushais.<sup>133</sup>

In the meantime, the 'Poitoo' were undeniably the most important Kuki group south of Cachar and Sylhet at the time of Fisher. He reported them as having a close relationship with Sylhet, bringing the forest products down for trade to a market at a small town called Chargola. Several names of the chiefs are mentioned: 'Landoo', 'Lollhoo', and 'Bontay-loll' who were brothers and 'Rochacheboo' who was a cousin of the other three. To the south of the 'Pytoo' he mentions 'others governed by three chiefs, 'Shukboul', 'Bannietany', and 'Loll-tyem'. Most of these names were later identified again as the names of Poitoo and Lushai chiefs in other reports,<sup>134</sup> which further testifies to the existence of the Poitoo. There seems to have been much greater intercourse between the Poitoo and the people of Sylhet, which resulted in both the more detailed knowledge of the Poitoo and the clearer sense of the identity of Poitoo held by the dwellers in the plains.

Different stereotypes did exist regarding the Kuki people living near the plains and those living further inland, but such a division did not culminate in a categorical division as the 'subjected' and the 'independent Chin' in the case of Arakan. While in

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.; see also Suhas Chatterjee, 'Mizo Chief Lalchukla: A Victim of British Diplomacy', in *Studies in the History of North-East India*, ed. J. B. Bhattacharjee (Shillong: North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1986) 162-5; Elly, *Military Report*, 36; Haokip, *Zale 'n-Gam*, 55-6, 64.; Gangte, *Kuki*, 34; for a further discussion see chapter 6, pp.211-6 below.

<sup>134</sup> See Mackenzie, *History*, 289-200; Chatterjee, 'Mizo Chief'.

Cachar, Jenkins noted in his private journal that the Kukis around Cachar were those who had been chased out of their original homes by ‘a stronger tribe from the south – a race clothed in armour of hide and well armed with their common weapons but having besides a few musquets’.<sup>135</sup> A similar note can be found in Pemberton’s book regarding the ‘Changsels’ who were said to have moved to the first peak south of Cachar in recent years.<sup>136</sup>

Jenkins noted that there were many Kuki villages in the low hills around Cachar, which were not settled in fixed positions. Beside those displaced by other Kukis, there were more Kukis being driven into Cachar by Gambhir Singh’s occupation of the Jiri Tracts. The influx of a scattered and mobile population posed an administrative problem for Cachar. For the pacific development of administration – maintenance of roads, imposition of government rules and taxes, protection of the people and travellers – and also for the increase in cultivation, it was far more preferable to have these people settled in fixed villages. Thus Jenkins, as well as Fisher, recommended locating them along the line or road that links the southern plains of Cachar to the Central hills in order to construct and maintain the road.<sup>137</sup>

These ‘refugee’ Kukis were regarded as industrious people who could serve a useful purpose for the government, and in this they were contrasted to the Kukis outside the jurisdiction of Sylhet, Cachar or Manipur. These latter were noted for their ‘thirst for

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<sup>135</sup> Private Journal kept by Captain Jenkins on his Last Tour through Cachar, 1 December 1831 (OIOC F/4/1446 56957).

<sup>136</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 195.

<sup>137</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government in Political Department, 1 June 1833, para.9 (Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins*, 145-60) 152.

blood' and 'avidity after plunder', and who depopulated the hills which were inhabited by less warlike tribes.<sup>138</sup> In Sylhet, Jenkins and Pemberton also observed that the unsettled or misgoverned state of the Kuki tribes on the border of the plains made 'the most fertile and valuable tracts' of southern Sylhet 'desolate and unprofitable jungles' due to 'the dread the Bengalees entertained of their plundering and murderous incursions'.<sup>139</sup> Besides, the villages along the routes linking Cachar and Manipur, especially that of Kala Naga routes, were under constant threat from the raids of the Kuki, endangering the maintenance of these routes as well as the wood cutters and merchants who used them.<sup>140</sup>

On the threat posed by the Kuki raids, Pemberton thought that since the Kukis east of the Chikoo *Nullah* had tendered submission to the Manipur Rajah, and since this river serves as a sufficiently clear boundary between Manipur and Tripura, each Rajah should be made answerable for the people within his own jurisdiction. Nonetheless, he admitted that there was a vast tract of country inhabited by 'independent tribes as yet totally unknown to either of the parties', which made it unreasonable to transfer them either to Manipur or Tripura before their subjugation. On this matter, Pemberton was of the opinion that '[it] had better be left to the gradual operation of time and the general improvement of the still unoccupied but fertile plain below these'.<sup>141</sup>

On the other hand, Jenkins's opinion was more optimistic. Commenting on those

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<sup>138</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 29 December 1825.

<sup>139</sup> Report by Captain Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton regarding Cachar, Manipur, Asam and Khasi Hills, 27 Augusts 1832, para. 81. (NAI Foreign P.C. nos. 87-8; OIOC F/4/1446 56958).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 35.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 82.

two Kuki persons he met in Sylhet, he wrote in his private journal that ‘presents and good treatment would certainly win these simple savages to our purpose’ and when they were rendered docile, the value of their services, he thought, ‘might prove beyond comprehension’.<sup>142</sup> In another separate report of his own, he wrote regarding the possibilities of controlling the Kukis in this tract, either directly, or through the medium of the Tripura Rajah:

I should conceive it would be by no means a difficult matter to manage them; the tribes settled in Cachar have shown themselves a valuable addition to its population as agriculturists and there seems to be no reason to doubt that they could be turned to good account as an armed police for their habits are decidedly warlike and it is with some difficulty that they have lately been restrained from attacking another tribe of Kukies beyond our border against which they have some old cause of enmity.<sup>143</sup>

In inducing the Kuki to settle along the border, Jenkins saw the solution of the two direst problems in Cachar: development and security. In his private journal, recalling his encounter with the two Kukis on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1831, Jenkins wrote that they would be ‘welcome settlers and agriculturalists’, who could bring the fertile but deserted lands of Cachar under cultivation. Furthermore, by teaching these settlers the use of firearms, which ‘would give such a decided superiority over any of their neighbours,’ the security of the frontier or even ‘advancing it at pleasure’ would be ensured.<sup>144</sup>

Jenkins’s plan was not only confined to the betterment of the British administration or the development of the territory to its full potential. Several days after his first encounter with the two Kuki men, he found some Kukis among the coolies employed

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<sup>142</sup> Private Journal Kept by Captain Jenkins on his Last Tour through Cachar, 1 December 1831 (OIOC F/4/1446 56957)

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. A. Macnaghten, esq. Secretary to Government in Political Department, 1 June 1833, para.5 (Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins*, 145-60) 149.

<sup>144</sup> Private Journal by Jenkins, 1 December 1831 (OIOC F/4/1446 56957).

for him. He observed that they were ‘by no means inferior looking people in muscular strength or intelligence but miserably enslaved to the Manipuris’. Then he commented that:

. . . [they can be used for] far more important purpose . . . of bringing under control and thence to civilisation many of their kindred tribes. A consummation much devoutly to be prayed for if ever we expect to have peace on our borders and to turn to protect the inexhaustible wealth of this now much profitless frontier.<sup>145</sup>

What is found here is a grander object than development and security: that of bringing ‘civilisation’ to the others in the hills through the medium of the settled Kuki people. This opinion was heartily welcomed by the Directors in London who praised Jenkins’s suggestion to conciliate the Kuki as ‘an excellent spirit’ which should be met with due attention by the Governor-General.<sup>146</sup>

It was a very similar note to Trant’s earlier comment on the Chin people, that ‘with lenity and kindness’ they could be ‘brought to civilisation and become useful members of society.’<sup>147</sup> In a similar spirit, Jenkins and Pemberton, recommended augmenting the Sylhet Light Infantry with a form of Kuki Levy so as to prevail on ‘the wilder and more refractory tribes’ to take permanent service in the military. This, they argued, would be ‘a step to extending our influence and control over them, to acquire a knowledge of them and their country and to induce the tribes to come into our settled countries for the purpose of traffic’.<sup>148</sup> Here, the particular understanding of ‘civilisation’, and the utilitarian approach to the people and land, were mixed to produce an early form of

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 7 December 1831.

<sup>146</sup> India Political Department, no.14, 3 December 1834, para.120 (E/4/742).

<sup>147</sup> Trant, *Two Years*, 430.

<sup>148</sup> Report by Jenkins and Pemberton on Cachar, Manipur, Asam and Khasi Hills, 27. Aug. 1832. para. 57.(NAI Foreign, P.C., nos. 87-8; OIOC F/4/1446 56958).

British paternalism or their interest in the development of their subjects' living conditions – for the benefit of the government as well as the country and the people.

This change was not confined to a few surveyors on this frontier, but the attitude of the British in general was going through a change around the same period independent of the events on the frontier. Thompson and Garret regard the arrival of the Governor-General Lord Bentinck in 1828 as a milestone for a new era in which the British India administration as a whole would turn towards Anglicism and paternalism, with more administrators believing in British superiority over the Indians.<sup>149</sup> This change, according to them, was best demonstrated in the debates between 'Anglicists' and 'Orientalists' over education in British India that took place in the Committee of Public Instruction from 1823. Here, the 'Orientalists' were those older generation conservatives, living the dream of Hastings and Jones, who genuinely appreciated Indian culture and preferred the traditional values, institutions, and culture of India to be preserved, whereas the 'Anglicists' argued for the enlightenment of the natives of India with the 'progressive elements' of European civilisation. In the end it was the Anglicists' view that Bentinck adopted: if the government contributed money it should be invested in some form of 'useful' training.<sup>150</sup>

Spear summarised this change as the combined effect of several factors: the utilitarianism which believed that societies could be reformed by proper laws, the radicals who failed to introduce such reform in Britain but had strong influence over the India House through personal connections, and their unexpected allies among the

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<sup>149</sup> Thomson and Garret, *Rise and Fulfilment*, 306-7, 312.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 313-4.



religious evangelicals.<sup>151</sup> Thus there was a convergence of interest in influencing the Government of India to become more involved in reshaping the daily lives of the people of India: the evangelicals had a keen interest in spreading the Gospel among the Indian subjects, while the radicals viewed India as a ‘sociological guinea pig’, to borrow Spear’s expression, through which they could demonstrate the virtues of new ideas which they could not pass through the British parliament.<sup>152</sup>

This created a new dominating ethos among the British regarding India at the dawn of Victorian Britain. Thus, by the 1830s, the administrators in India were a radically different breed from the early merchants of the Company, and also different from unimaginative and unmotivated cogs of a bureaucratic machine. Of course, there were individual differences, but a new generation had already arrived in India with a passionate belief in improving the rule as well as the ruled. Therefore, together with the security reasons that heightened British alertness towards the hills, the changing attitudes of the British administrators who tried to induce this ‘warlike’ people into civilisation began to change the neglected state of the hill people on the frontier.

The surveys represent the changing attitude revealed in the study of India, with troops of surveyors trained in the method of measurements rendering the landscape into abstract value that can be reconstructed into uniform knowledge. Thus, a natural result of the surveys on the Kuki-Chin category was standardisation. This was most obvious in the spellings of the word ‘Khyen’, but standardisation also took place regarding the British understanding of the Kuki-Chin categories in a broader sense. In the introduction

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<sup>151</sup> Spear, *History of India*, 121-3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

to his book, published in 1835, Pemberton wrote that there were ‘few circumstances more calculated to arrest attention in considering this chain of mountains, than the number and variety of the tribes by which it is inhabited’, and he continued:

Of these, the principal are the Murams, who occupy the tract of country between Assam and Muneepoor; the Kupooees, known in Bengal by the term Nagas, who reside on the several ranges of hills between the latter country and Cachar, and the Khongjuees, who under the more generally known names of Koochungs, and Kuci, stretch from the southern borders of the Muneepoor valley to the northern limit of the province of Arracan: these are succeeded by the Khyens, who occupy that portion of the tract between Arracan and Ava, and the Karens, who reside on the inferior heights overlooking the low lands of Bassein.<sup>153</sup>

Regarding the Kuki-Chin categories, this paragraph presents two distinctive *groups* of people, one named ‘Koochungs’ and ‘Kuci’ and another named ‘Khyen’, occupying different portions of the hills. Moreover, they are seen as two different units within a whole range of similarly isolated categories, all of which can be located in separate locations. What is neglected here is that, as Buchanan found in the Chittagong Hills, different people in different contexts use any of these terms with different meanings. In other words, the *extension* of a category depended on the particular context in which it was used. Therefore, a group of individuals could be called by different names according to the circumstances.

Some correspondence regarding the disputes between Burma and Manipur demonstrate this point clearly: in January 1831, the British Resident at Ava, Major Burney, sent a letter to Captain Grant, the commander of the Manipur Levy, to apprise him of an alleged incursion of Manipuri into the Burmese territory of Ningthee. In this letter, as well as in the original complaint from the Burmese governor of Nighthee, he

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<sup>153</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 15.

claimed that thirty Chin villages (spelt 'Khyn' or 'Khyen') were destroyed by the Burmese.<sup>154</sup> Captain Grant, on the other hand, supported the Manipuri actions as legitimate, and replied that the mention by the Burmese of thirty 'Khyn or Naga' villages destroyed was sheer exaggeration, as only one 'Naga' village had been destroyed by the Manipuri due to their aggression.<sup>155</sup> What the Burmese called 'Khyen', were here known by Captain Grant as 'Naga', in the context of Manipur, where there was a confusion between the categories of 'Naga' and 'Kuki'.<sup>156</sup>

This confusion is natural, as the category 'Khyen' was one that had meaning in the context of Burma and Arakan, and 'Kuci' was a main division against the Nagas in the context of Manipur and Cachar. In the local usages these two terms were not used in the same context. Yet in the process of the compilation of geographic information following the survey, categories developed from different contexts were juxtaposed on a larger context of geographic knowledge of the whole Eastern Frontier of Bengal. Thus, the categories Kuki and Chin began to be regarded as two different units in a new geo-administrative context.

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<sup>154</sup> Letter from Major Henry Burney, Resident at Ava, to Captain Grant, Commander of Manipur Levy, 5 January 1831 (OIOC F/4/1447 56960).

<sup>155</sup> Letter from Captain Grant, Commander of Manipur Levy, to George Swinton, the Secretary to the Government, 27 January 1831 (OIOC F/4/1447 56960).

<sup>156</sup> Letter from Captain Grant, Commander of Manipur Levy, to George Swinton, the Secretary to the Government, 12 October 1831, paras. 21-2 (OIOC F/4/1446 56956).

## CHAPTER 5

### Beginning of the Frontier Administration: the 1830s

#### 1. Arrangements for the Newly Acquired Territories

##### a) British Frontier Policy

After the First Anglo-Burmese War, the British administration formed a continuous frontier with the Kuki-Chin people except for the eastern parts where the Kingdom of Burma, though weakened by the British, maintained its sovereignty. Administrative duties over these areas were divided between the Agent in the North East Frontier, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. The latter came into being in 1834 when the office of Governor-General was separated from the administration of Bengal to concentrate on the supervision of all three presidencies and general matters relating to India. Of the districts within the Kuki-Chin frontier thus formed, the native state of Hill Tripura, however, was almost totally ignored by the British administration except for intermittent legal issues raised by the Rajah regarding his jurisdiction<sup>454</sup> and, as Hunter wrote, no one knew about the internal state of the country during the 1820s and 1850s but ‘only rumours came that the Kukis raided [Tripura] Raja’s territory and the Raja’s people raided Kuki territory.’<sup>455</sup> Similarly, the British officers did not notice the situation in the Chittagong Hills until the late 1840s, and British contacts with the Kuki-Chin people, for the rest of the period of the Company, were divided between two frontiers: the

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<sup>454</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 281-6.

<sup>455</sup> Hunter, *Statistical Account*, 467-8.

northern frontier, or the hills south of Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur; and the southern frontier, or the hills to the north of Arakan and east of Chittagong.

In both the northern and southern Kuki-Chin frontier areas, initial British policy after the annexation was that of retrenchments, focusing on the consolidation of British rule in the plains. After such an expensive war as the First Anglo-Burmese War, the authorities in London naturally preferred not to increase their financial burden any further.<sup>456</sup> Under this circumstance, the central authorities tried to restrain any reckless decisions by the frontier officers to engage with the hill people, which often led to expensive and protracted warfare with them.<sup>457</sup> This led to a defensive, non-interventionist policy in the frontier districts.

There were also some reasons of a moral nature as well. Many of the actions taken by the British officers in dealing with the hill people were often too harsh or inhumane in the eyes of the central authorities.<sup>458</sup> Summary punishment or burning whole villages was particularly abhorred. In another instance, the directors wrote to the Governor-General that:

Indiscriminate destruction (even if only of property) which affects the innocent as well as the guilty, is contrary to the principles of civilized warfare as well as to the dictates of humanity and of an enlightened polity.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Imdad Hussain, 'Shan Militia: Origins of the Para-Military System in Assam,' in *Studies in the History of North East India*, ed. J. B. Bhattacharjee (Shillong: NEHU Publications, 1986), 148.

<sup>457</sup> Carey and Tuck, *Gazetteer*, 12; Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.1, 81-3; Chakravorty, *British Relations*, 17-23.

<sup>458</sup> India Political no.56, 2 June 1841, para.14 (OIOC E/4/766).

<sup>459</sup> India Political no.32, 1 September 1841, para.5 (OIOC E/4/767); see also: Letter from Secretary to the Government of India to Francis Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General in the North East Frontier, 12 February 1840. (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 93-4, 'Summary punishment not to be inflicted on leaders of raids in the North-Eastern Frontier.' 12 Feb. 1840).

The only case in which a summary punishment was justified, according to the directors, was when ‘the tribe has made itself collectively a party to the injury by refusing to make reparation or give up the offenders or by refusing to enter into an engagement to forbear from plundering or by violating such engagements when made; where every experiment has been tried in vain to conciliate them, and where they cannot be reached by any other mode of punishment.’<sup>460</sup>

On the other hand, the officers on the frontier tended to advocate more assertive measures. Francis Jenkins was one of the advocates of such measures. Contrary to what the directors thought of summary punishments, Jenkins believed that destroying villages and therefore convincing the hill people of British power was the only way to rid the frontier of the troubles caused by their incursions into the plains.<sup>461</sup> In relation to the Nagas, he even wrote that: ‘the most humane and efficacious punishment we can inflict upon the hill tribes is the burning of their villages and the destruction of their hoarded corn’.<sup>462</sup>

Thomas Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar, also shared a similar view. In the winter of 1832, while Jenkins was on the special survey mission with Pemberton in Cachar, Fisher sent word to Jenkins of an incursion of the Poitoo Kuki into the south-western part of Cachar, where they had murdered three inhabitants and taken their heads. Fisher wrote that a show of force was necessary to convince the Kukis that the British had the ability to reach their villages. This, he said, was the only way to render this

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<sup>460</sup> India Political no.32, 1 September 1841, para.5 (OIOC E/4/767); see also Barpujari, *Problem*, vol.1, 176-7.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>462</sup> Barpujari, *Problem*, vol.1, 178.

turbulent frontier peaceful and let the cultivators return to the fertile tract, which had long been deserted due to fear of the Kukis.<sup>463</sup> For this purpose he recommended sending a detachment of seventy to eighty men to chastise all of the Poitoo villages. Furthermore, Fisher suggested a thorough survey of the country of the Kukis, to collect geographic information 'southwards through the independent hill territory of Tripura Rajah to Agurtolah (Agartala) or Odeypoor (Udapur)'.<sup>464</sup> It was necessary to know the situation in the hills south of Cachar to deal with the Kuki raids more effectively and to render this frontier peaceful.

Jenkins joined Fisher in urging the government to 'exercise control over the Kuki tribes either directly or through the medium of the Tripura Rajah'<sup>465</sup> and T. C. Robertson, the Agent to the North Eastern Frontier at that time, also concurred with their views.<sup>466</sup> Yet the government could not sanction such a risky expedition. The reasons given were, first, that it could possibly lead 'to our being engaged in protracted warfare' with Kukis, and second, that there was no clear evidence of the 'murderous inroads' which had merely been alleged. The Secretary to the Government took this opportunity to emphasise that before taking any military action against hill tribes 'the guilty party must be found to mediate or to commit aggressions which cannot be guarded against or

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<sup>463</sup> Letter from Lt. Thomas Fisher to Captain Francis Jenkins, on Special Survey Duty, 12 February 1833, para.8. (Barpujari *Francis Jenkins: Report on the North-East Frontier of India: A Documentary Study with Introduction, Notes and Glossary*, (Delhi: Spectrum, 1995), 166-71); Letter from T. C. Robertson, Agent to the Governor-General in the North East Frontier, to the Secretary to the Government in the Political Department, 25 September 1833, para.2 (NAI Foreign P.C., no.24, 10 October 1833); see also India Political Department no.44, 25 September 1835, para.21 (OIOC E/4/745).

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Letter from Jenkins to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government in Political Department, 1 June 1833, para.7 (Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins*, 148-9).

<sup>466</sup> Letter from T. C. Robertson to the Secretary to Government in the Political Department, 25 September 1833, para.2 (NAI Foreign P.C., No.24, 10 Oct. 1833).

repelled by ordinary precaution'<sup>467</sup> Mere allegation that the fertile tracts were deserted by cultivators for the dread of the Kuki inroads was not sufficient to send troops against them: there had to be definite offenders clearly identified as guilty and their location must be within easy reach of the troops. Such information was precisely what Fisher wanted to acquire by sending expeditions to the whole of Tripura: without this knowledge an expedition was too risky and without an expedition there was no other easy way of obtaining such information.

Writing in the 1870s, Woodthorpe described the Company's policy regarding the 'frontier tribes' of the early days of annexation as the policy of conciliation, civilisation and raising barriers,<sup>468</sup> but he also conceded that 'a policy of conciliation would be ineffectual, without impressing on the tribes a conviction of our power to punish them if necessary.'<sup>469</sup> In reality, there was a visible discrepancy of opinion among different ranks of officers: the central authorities preferred conciliatory policies, while the frontier officers wanted more assertive solutions. Actual action was decided case-by-case, led by individual circumstances. Overall, as Barpujari noted, British India was penetrating into the hills slowly but steadily through the activities of the local authorities.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Letter from Political Secretary to the Government to T. C. Robertson, 10 October 1833 (NAI Foreign P.C., No.24, 10 Oct. 1833); India Political Department no.44, 25 September 1835, para. 21 (OIOC E/4/745).

<sup>468</sup> Robert Gosset Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition: 1871-1872* (London : Hurst and Blackett, 1873, reprint Calcutta: FIRMA KLM, 1978), 4-5 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>470</sup> Barpujari, *Problem*, vol.1, 75, 85.



## b) Defensive Measures in the Northern Kuki-Chin Frontier

One of the means adopted by the British frontier officers to suppress the incursion of the hill people was to give annual payments to the hill chiefs in return for not invading border villages. This practice, termed 'blackmail', had existed in different parts of Assam and Sylhet before the British occupation, and when the British annexed these territories they continued the tradition.<sup>471</sup> The directors welcomed this and, commenting on a case of the Dufflas, they praised the practice of 'blackmail' as 'the most effectual and least troublesome mode of keeping the Dufflas, Booteahs & c. in order.'<sup>472</sup> The Directors further hoped that those who received the blackmail would undertake the control of others around them and become responsible for their quiet conduct.<sup>473</sup>

Among the Kuki-Chin people, a Poitoo chief named Buntye (or Bontai) received blackmail from the British authorities at Sylhet. This was also a continuation of the arrangement between Buntye and zemindars of the plain during the Mughal period.<sup>474</sup> Undoubtedly, it was the Poitoo Kukis who had the upper hand in this relationship. In September 1826, upon the failure of the Sylhet authorities to deliver blackmail, Buntye massacred a group of Sylhet woodcutters at a hill between the Rivers Dhaleswari and

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>472</sup> India Political, no.28, 19 August 1840, para. 5 (OIOC E/4/763).

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 279.

the Singla. The Collector of Sylhet sent three messengers to Buntye's village, located on the River Lungai three days journey south of Sylhet, to investigate the case. They were also directed to seek the possibilities of opening communications with other Poitoo chiefs named 'Laroo' and 'Linden' living further upstream. The names of these three chiefs – Buntye, Laroo, and Linden – were identical to the three chiefs named by Fisher in his earlier article: Bontay-loll, Lollhoo, and Landoo. Buntye, however, did not allow the messengers to pass upstream. Instead, he kept two of the messengers as hostages while sending the last back to collect the blackmail after showing him the severed heads of the woodcutters. The Government had no other choice but to sanction the payment to save the other two messengers. Enquiry was made regarding the possibility of reaching Buntye's village with troops and the Tripura Rajah was called upon for assistance, but nothing came out of this. Instead, the British temporarily closed the markets to all Kukis in retaliation.<sup>475</sup>

Apart from 'blackmail', the British officers also gave occasional presents to the hill chiefs. This custom seems to have taken place not only with the chiefs out of British influence but also with those who normally paid tax. One such case was recorded between the principal Assistant in Nowgong and a group of the Kuki people in 1853.<sup>476</sup> Unfortunately, only the register of the document exists now, but it is probable that the group of Kukis mentioned in this article was one of those that lived in the Northern Cachar Hills, which were made over to Nowgong in 1839.<sup>477</sup> Both Jenkins and

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> NAI Foreign, Political Despatch to the Court of Directors no.2, 5 January 1853, 'Articles Presented by the Principal Assistant, Nowgong, to Kookies'.

<sup>477</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 145.

Pemberton mentioned the existence of Kuki settlements in the hills north of Cachar,<sup>478</sup> and when Lieutenant Bigge surveyed this tract, he reported the Kuki population as the most important contributor to the revenue of all the residents of the hills.<sup>479</sup> Thus, the present mentioned in 1853 seems to have been one that was in the nature of an occasional renewal of faith rather than an annual payment.

Whether it was an annual practice or an occasional present, such presents were made to keep the hill people in a friendly relationship with the British administration. The Government's interpretation, according to Woodthorpe, was that the 'blackmail' was a compensation for the loss the people of the village incurred by giving up their occasional plunder.<sup>480</sup> Yet there is no denying that such a custom continued as a result of Britain's inability to force their influence on the hill chiefs; therefore, it is highly likely that the hill chiefs assumed that they had some kind of superiority over the British. Indeed, later in the 1860s a group of the Lushai people whose chief had been given presents by a British officer were reported to have told the subjects of Manipur in a sneering manner that: 'Your Raja [meaning Manipur Rajah] has become very great lately, and has joined the Feringhee Sahibs [the British]. Look, the Sahibs have paid us tribute'.<sup>481</sup> 'Tribute' was what they regarded it to be.

How long the British authorities of Sylhet continued to pay blackmail to Buntye is

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<sup>478</sup> Letter from Captain Jenkins to J.H. Maddock, 26 November 1840, para.3 (NAI Foreign, P.C., nos. 67-9, 21 December 1840); Pemberton, *Report*, 196-7

<sup>479</sup> Letter from Lt. Bigge to Captain F. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General in the North East Frontier, 17 October 1840, (NAI Foreign, P.C, no 48, 21 December 1840).

<sup>480</sup> Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 4-5.

<sup>481</sup> Letter from Dr. Brown, Political Agent at Manipur, to C. U. Aitchison, Officiating Secretary to the Government, 1 April 1870, para.3, (NAI Foreign, Political A, nos. 271-7, July 1870).

obscure, but it can be safely said that it did not last longer than the first expedition against the Poitoo in 1844 and is likely to have been discontinued during the mid-1830s when another measure was adopted for the security of the frontier. After the annexation of Cachar by the British, the Poitoo initially remained friendly to the British and showed an interest in opening a bazaar within Cachar. This induced Lieutenant Fisher to regard it sufficient to place a small post of sepoy in the Kuki bazaar at Kossinugar for the defence of the south-western frontier of Cachar.<sup>482</sup> On the other hand, defensive measures were urgently needed for the south-eastern part of Cachar where there was no relationship or communication with the Kukis who raided the plains. Four months after his assumption of the management of Cachar, in December 1830, Lieutenant Fisher reported the establishment of a party of sepoy, consisting of a *havildar* (sergeant), one *naik*(corporal) and 16 sepoy, to protect the south-eastern part of Cachar from the incursions of the Kukis. But he was doubtful about the effectiveness of this post of sepoy beyond its immediate neighbourhood, since the attacks of the Kukis were commonly made suddenly in the night for the acquisition of heads rather than plunder.<sup>483</sup>

On this account, he suggested maintaining a party of *chowkidars* (watchmen) among the inhabitants of adjacent villages. His suggestion was to set aside a portion of land within every village as rent-free for the maintenance of *chowkidar* parties and furnish them with matchlocks or other inferior firearms. The firearms, Fisher calculated, would deter Kuki attacks as ‘the Kukis had a great dread of fire arms and had never

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<sup>482</sup> Letter from Lt. Fisher’s to David Scott, 24 December 1830, paras. 2-3 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832, ‘Fire-arms for use of Chowkeedars on the Kookie Frontier’).

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

been known to attack a village thus armed.<sup>484</sup> This, he argued, was a far more effective and economical mode of defence than the alternative, the establishment of a chain of posts of sepoy.<sup>485</sup>

Upon receiving Fisher's suggestion, David Scott, the Agent to the North Eastern Frontier, asked Fisher to clarify the quantity of land to be given and the amount of revenue to be relinquished as the advance.<sup>486</sup> To this, Fisher replied that his proposal was not a relinquishment of revenue immediately derivable but the offer of inducements to the settlers to clear a portion of wasteland on condition that they defend the *pergunnah* thus occupied. The quantity of such land, he suggested would be one *hal* to each *chowkidar* and ten *chowkidars* for every hundred *hals* of cultivation.<sup>487</sup>

This was not the only instance of paying a cash advance to encourage people to settle in the waste land of Cachar. For example, in 1831 five hundred rupees were advanced to the Kukis of Gograpar in central Cachar and in 1833 Fisher reported with satisfaction that the amount had been nearly repaid.<sup>488</sup> Jenkins recommended further settlements of two thousand Kukis and Nagas, as suggested by Fisher, to be located and settled near the road. The advance, he thought, would easily be recovered by employing them as porters for traffic, or for the protection of passengers and for the building and

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Letter from Lt. Fisher to William Cracroft, Acting Agent to the Governor-General in the North East Frontier, 16 January 1832 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832).

<sup>486</sup> Letter from David Scott to Lt. Fisher, 11 January 1831 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832).

<sup>487</sup> Letter from Lt. Fisher to David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General in the North East Frontier. 7 February 1831 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832).

<sup>488</sup> Letter from Lt. Fisher to Capt. Jenkins, on Special Survey Duty, 12 February 1833, para.6 (Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins*, 169).

repair of the roads between Cachar and Dhurumpore.<sup>489</sup> There were other Kuki villages on the southern hills of Sylhet and Cachar established by the British authorities. The circumstances leading to such establishments, or the number and exact location of such villages cannot be found in the documents, but the existence of such villages was clearly mentioned when they were attacked by ‘independent’ Kukis.<sup>490</sup> Pemberton also mentions a small colony of Kukis established on the Telyn hills towards the southwest of Cachar as the first settlement to cultivate this area.<sup>491</sup>

Fisher’s scheme, however, was different from these in that it was principally for the purpose of defence, and the participants were given not only advances but also firearms. Government approval for Fisher’s scheme arrived in February 1831.<sup>492</sup> Yet in the following year, Fisher submitted a modified plan. He wrote that the original plan of defence by *chowkidars* could not be ‘speedily effected’ and consequently a number of small posts of sepoy were still called for. Fisher does not specify the reason for this, but from the context, it is probable that he could not find enough people willing to settle in the tracts threatened by the Kukis. Therefore, instead of Cachari or Bengali *chowkidars*, he suggested establishing Manipuri villages on the troublesome frontier on condition that they build defences against the Kukis. For this, he asked the Government’s sanction for an advance of two thousand rupees to a Manipur prince named Purbitta Singh to facilitate their settlement under the same condition sanctioned in the letter by Scott mentioned above, i.e. provision of muskets and rent-free lands on

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<sup>489</sup> Letter from Capt. Jenkins, on Special Survey Duty, to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government, 1 June 1833., para. 4. (Barpujari, *Francis Jenkins*, 148); Pemberton, *Report*, 196.

<sup>490</sup> See for example Mackenzie, *History*, 29-1; India Political Draft, paras. 46-50 (E/4/808)

<sup>491</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 194.

<sup>492</sup> Letter from David Scott to Lt. Fisher, 23 February 1831 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832, ‘Fire-arms for use of Chowkeedars on the Kookie Frontier’).

the condition of the defence of their own settlements against the Kukis.<sup>493</sup>

Though Manipur came under the British influence, the internal struggle among the contenders to the throne continued<sup>494</sup> and Purbitta Singh, one of the princes, had crossed the border into Cachar with his followers, applying for settlement. Fisher took this opportunity to solve the defence problem on the Kuki frontier by establishing Manipuri settlements along the southern frontier. Facing a lack of resources and manpower, the British administration sought to deal with defence by the indirect means of establishing a line of villages of people deemed more warlike than the Cacharis, as a human shield. The authorities in Calcutta were not sure about the expediency of supplying muskets. Nonetheless, the plan was sanctioned in November 1832, as Fisher proposed.<sup>495</sup>

Two years later, in January 1834, Fisher reported the Manipuri settlements as a success: there had been no Kuki outrages along the line of villages of Purbitta Sing, the advance made to him had already been paid in part, and the villages appeared to be improving. Besides, several other Manipuri chiefs also offered to ‘take advances for the establishment of villages under similar terms with that of Purbitta Sing’. To this Fisher added that:

A great extension of cultivation and consequent increase of revenue might be expected from it not merely from the lands which would be cleared by the Manipuris but from much larger tracts which will be protected by them and which in their present state of insecurity our unwarlike Ryots are afraid to

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<sup>493</sup> Letter from Lt. Fisher to William Cracroft, Acting Agent to the Governor General in the North East Frontier, 16 January 1832 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832) – *This letter was a reply to a letter from William Cracroft, 9 January 1832. Thus, the actual idea must have been suggested before the date of this letter, or any letter contained in this volume of documents.*

<sup>494</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 153.

<sup>495</sup> Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India in the Political Department to T.C. Robertson, Agent to the Governor General in the North Eastern Frontier, 5 November 1832 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.20, 5 Nov. 1832).

occupy.<sup>496</sup>

The authorities in Calcutta and London sanctioned further advances for establishment of more Manipuri villages on the remaining positions on the frontier, as Fisher recommended, without question.<sup>497</sup>

Pemberton also noted these Manipuri settlements as a ‘most complete success.’ While he regarded the Bengalis as noted for ‘natural timidity and physical inferiority’, which made them unable to contend with the fierce border tribes, the Manipuris were regarded as a hardy race that could provide protection not only of their own villages but also those of the Bengalis behind them, with just a few muskets. Besides, their intimate knowledge of the Kuki, and their experience and ‘anticipation’ in dealing with the Kuki, were mentioned as contributing factors for this scheme.<sup>498</sup>

It is doubtful that the Kuki raids were repulsed by the mere possession of fire-arms in the hands of the Manipuri settlers. While mentioning the lack of Kuki raids on the frontier defended by the Manipuri settlements, Fisher contrasted it with the other parts of Cachar defended by posts of sepoy. He reported that in December 1833 a group of Kukis openly attacked a post of the Company’s sepoy, and were repulsed ‘after a few rounds of musketry and arrows had been exchanged.’<sup>499</sup> In one place, the Kukis were reported to be bold enough to make an open attack on a post of sepoy while in another

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<sup>496</sup> Letter from Captain Fisher, to T. C. Robertson, 13 January 1834, paras. 3 and 4 (NAI Foreign P.C., no.26, 20 February 1834).

<sup>497</sup> Letter from Secretary to the Governor General in the Political department to T. C. Robertson, 20 February 1834 (NAI Foreign, P.C., no. 26, 20 February 1834).

<sup>498</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 193-4.

<sup>499</sup> Letter from Fisher to T. C. Robertson, 13 January 1834 (NAI Foreign, P.C., No.26, 20 February 1834).



place they were reported to have been overawed by the mere possession of firearms by the Manipuris. It seems that Fisher was driven by his anxiety to prove the success of his own scheme. Nevertheless, it is still very probable that these Manipuri settlements located in between the hills and the plains worked as a buffer zone, and proved helpful in repopulating the area, which was the main goal of the scheme, if not by deterring the Kuki attacks, then by absorbing the attacks. As Woodthorpe commented, it was a policy of raising barriers.<sup>500</sup>

The Manipuris, on the other hand, were not quiet settlers protecting their own vicinities. Captain Lister, reporting some 10 years later, provided a different view of the Manipuri settlers. According to Lister, Tribowanjit was one of the Manipuri princes who was settled to the south of Sylhet and Cachar between 1834 and 1835. He received considerable land at Jafferbund, south of Hailakandy, with two thousand rupees and twelve muskets to start a settlement and bring the Poitoo Kukis under control. He was also allowed to levy tolls from timber, bamboo and other forest products coming down the Dhaleswari River, as well as exacting protection money from the woodcutters.<sup>501</sup>

Thus strengthened, Tribowanjit raided Kuki villages and joined with another brother in Cachar to attack Manipur in 1841, where both of them were killed. After his death, the village was taken over by another Manipuri prince and the custom of receiving tolls and protection money continued.<sup>502</sup> These aggressive activities of the Manipuri princes aggravated the Kuki people towards the Manipuris and possibly to the

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<sup>500</sup> Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 4-5.

<sup>501</sup> Report by Lister in 1853 (in Mackenzie, *History*, 287-8)

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

British administration that supported them. In fact it was only a matter of time until ‘mere possession of firearms’ would become insufficient to hold against Kuki raids, and such an event was actually recorded in April 1844 when the Poitoo Kukis attacked one of the Manipuri settlements in Sylhet.

### c) Arrangements of Southern Kuki-Chin Frontier

In Arakan, the British administration took longer to settle down in the plains than in Cachar. This is no surprise, considering the difference in size: Cachar was only a district of less than 4,000 square miles including the northern hills,<sup>503</sup> while Arakan was a division with three districts (Akyab, Kyouk-hpyoo, and Sandoway) and more than 13,000 square miles in total area, excluding the Northern Arakan Hills, which were incorporated in the 1860s.<sup>504</sup> Before the British, the Burmese had divided Arakan into four divisions of Akyab, Ramree, Aeng, and Sandoway. Upon annexation, the British divided Aeng between Akyab and Sandoway maintaining three districts. Then in 1833 Aeng was re-constituted as a district, following a suggestion of Jenkins and Pemberton, but in 1852 Ramree and Aeng were merged as Kyouk-hpyoo.<sup>505</sup>

An Assistant Commissioner was appointed to each district, which was divided into circles and villages administered by the native authorities. Arthur Phayre, who was a senior Assistant Commissioner of Arakan, wrote in 1841 that there were overall 160

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<sup>503</sup> Allen et al, *Gazetteer*, 440, 453.

<sup>504</sup> Spearman, ed., *Gazetteer*, s.v. ‘Arakan’, ‘Akyab’, ‘Kyauk-hpyu’, ‘Sandoway’.

<sup>505</sup> ‘Report on the Progress of Arakan Under British Rule from 1826 to 1869’, para. 78 (Government of Burma, *Report on the Progress of Arakan Under British Rule From 1826 to 1875* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1876): 1-53).

circles and 960 villages in Arakan during his time. Of these circles, 148 were called the ‘*Kyun*’ or islands, being situated in the low lands, and 12 were called ‘*Kyoung*’ or streams, being in the hill districts.<sup>506</sup> ‘*Kyun*’(\_\_\_\_\_) in Burmese also means alluvial lands, and therefore the circles of ‘*Kyun*’ were those in plains, in contrast to the ‘*Kyoung*’(\_\_\_\_\_) in the hills. The heads of circles were called ‘*Kyun-okés*’ or ‘*Kyoung-okés*’ according to the situation of the circle. These officers, or *thugies*, were in charge of delivering the revenues of the circles. The villages were under the charge of *Rawa-goung* (\_\_\_\_\_) *Yuwa Gain*: village headmen), elected by the people themselves, who dealt with the collection of revenue as well as preservation of order. In later years, all the official duties of *Rawa-goung* were transferred to *Thugyis*, and *Rawa-goung* became a nominal position.<sup>507</sup>

The actual implementation of the administrative system was not smooth in Arakan. At the annexation, the posts of native officers in the civil administration, the police, the courts and the military were given to Bengalis from Chittagong. This practice naturally caused disaffection among the Arakanese as well as necessitating a large number of interpreters, making the administration inefficient. As an example, in a report to the Court of Directors, the Superintendent of Arakan described the normal procedures in the court, in which evidence was taken in Arakanese, or the language of the people, then interpreted into Hindi and recorded in both, while the orders of the European officers were recorded in Persian. It was in 1836, ten years after the annexation, that Arakanese was chosen as the official language, and the people of Arakan began to take offices in

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<sup>506</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 689.

<sup>507</sup> ‘Report on the Progress of Arakan Under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869’, paras. 26-7.

the administration.<sup>508</sup>

The *zemindary* style of revenue assessment introduced by the British in 1826 also proved to be a failure. As the British had no knowledge of the revenue assessment before the annexation, the government received tenders as to the amount of revenue which should be paid by the person holding the appointment of *Kyun-oke* or *Thugyi* in each circle. In other words, the government auctioned the position of the head of circles according to the amounts of revenue the candidates promised to pay, regardless of the actual level of production. The Superintendent of Arakan wrote to the Government in 1828 that many doubtful characters made their way into these lucrative positions, and in principle, assessment was made on such rough grounds as the number of ploughs and bullock ploughs.<sup>509</sup> Phayre wrote of the administration in Arakan before 1836 that it was ‘difficult to account for such an impolitic and unjust system of taxation . . . ever having been proposed or adopted’.<sup>510</sup> The following passage by the Assistant Commissioner of Ramree reviewing the early revenue collection in his district shows the real situation:

The revenue was a capitation tax only, and the demand was freaky in its nature and irregular as to amount and time of demand. No man knew what tax he had to pay per year; how many instalments he had to pay it in; and when each instalment would be due. When the tax-gatherer arrived, he made his demand apparently as the fit took him, and received not only money in liquidation of his demand, but cloths of all sorts, ivory, rice or paddy, bees’ wax, hair off the head of the people, dahs, hatchets, or any other saleable articles; all those who could not pay did for a time desert their circle or village and hide in the jungle to evade the tax, or to put off the day of reckoning in

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<sup>508</sup> India Revenue Department, no. 1837, 11 October 1837, paras.51-2 (OIOC E/4/752).

<sup>509</sup> Letter from J. Hind, Esq., Assistant Commissioner, Ramree District, to the Commissioner of the Arakan Division, 30 July 1869 (Government of Burma, *Report on the Progress*); Letter from Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government in the Revenue Department, to the Commissioner of Arakan, 10 October 1828, para.10 (Government of Burma, *Report on the Progress*, 48-50); Letter from N. J. Hallhed, Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, to the Superintendent of Arakan, 23 June 1829 paras.3-8 (Government of Burma, *Report on the Progress*, 50-53).

<sup>510</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 700.

order to gain time.<sup>511</sup>

To cripple the British administration further, the unhealthy climate of Arakan, which had already made the province notorious during the war with Burma, continued to create casualties among the Indian sepoy and European officers stationed in Arakan. For instance, the post at Aeng, which was created in 1833 after the advice in the report of Jenkins and Pemberton, killed the first two British officers posted there within a few months of their arrival, and the third officer also died in 1837 from what then became notorious as the 'Aeng Fever'. The fourth officer, Lieutenant A. C. Rainey, moved the headquarters to Kyouk-hpyu in March 1837 on his own responsibility. The Government sanctioned this arrangement in the following year and in 1852 the Districts of Aeng and Ramree were amalgamated into Kyouk-hpyu.<sup>512</sup>

On top of all this, to borrow the words of the Governor-General in 1831, the people of Arakan were not disposed to sit down quietly under 'grievances real or imaginary'.<sup>513</sup> Especially near the Burmese frontier, the country was reported to be in 'an agitated state'<sup>514</sup> and the vicinity of Aeng to be 'infested with banditti'.<sup>515</sup> In 1829, reports came that army deserters had joined the insurgency of one named Saoo, a *thugyi* of Allegyoo (Alegyun). To suppress this insurgency, the Government sent two expeditions in 1829 and 1830, resulting in three European deaths and many more sepoy casualties from

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<sup>511</sup> Letter from J. Hind, Esq., Assistant Commissioner, Ramree District, to the Commissioner of the Arakan Division, 30 July 1869 (Government of Burma, *Report on the Progress*).

<sup>512</sup> 'Report on the Progress of Arakan Under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869'. para. 78

<sup>513</sup> Minute by the Governor-General, 23 August 1831, (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>514</sup> Letter from C. Paton, Superintendent of Arakan to N.I. Halhed, Commissioner of Arakan, 26 November 1829 (OIOC F/4/1449 56966).

<sup>515</sup> India Political Department no.14, 3 December 1834, paras.115-20 (OIOC E/4/742).

disease. In the end, Saoo fled into Burma, and the court of Ava was pressed to apprehend him and hand him over to British authorities in Arakan and this was duly carried out.<sup>516</sup>

This was not merely a case of bandits taking the opportunity of the initial confusion, but of resistance to British rule, aimed at replacing the British administration in Arakan with an Arakanese dynasty.<sup>517</sup> In 1827 a man named Shwe-pang, descendant of a former king of Arakan before the Burmese annexation, returned and began to attract the loyalty of the *rawa-goungs*. The British government persuaded him to accept a post of *Kyun-oke*, but in 1836, Shwe-pang, with another man named Kyeet-tsan-we, raised arms to seize the government of the country. This revolt was joined, Phayre wrote, by ‘a band of escaped convicts, and other desperate characters’, and ‘some of the ignorant hill tribe, the Khyengs’.<sup>518</sup>

This is one of the rare references regarding the Chin people in Arakan during the 1830s. Despite its brevity it sufficiently demonstrates that the Chin people joined the Arakanese in their struggle against the British. It also shows that British control had not been consolidated over the Chin villages around Aeng. In fact, the whole of the *kyoungs* were under very limited control. From the *kyoungs*, the *kyoung-okés* or ‘head of a river district’ collected 2 or 3 rupees per house from the hill men. The kind of control to which the people of *kyoung* circles were subjected, Phayre continued, stopped at paying two rupees per year per household. The assessment for this was made on the basis of the

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 699-700.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

number of cultivators and the chiefs were answerable for the preservation of order in their clans, which meant that the chief had to make sure that the men under him did not commit murderous inroads into the plains. Phayre also recorded that some of the chiefs outside these circles also paid a fixed sum yearly as a token of their fealty but were entirely beyond the control.<sup>519</sup> Beyond these were large clans who lived further in the interior, did not pay anything, and therefore were not under British influence.<sup>520</sup>

Here, a division of the hill people can be observed: those living in the administered area under *Kyoung-oke* and those entirely out of British control. Interestingly, the word *kyoung* is the same word as in the category ‘Kyoung-tha’ in contrast to ‘Toung-tha’ previously seen in regard to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This suggests that the division of Kyoung-tha and Toung-tha, when it originated in Arakan, had a close relationship with the administrative incorporation of the *kyoung* circles into the administration of the plains, which, in turn, was analogous to the division between the wild and subjected Chins.<sup>521</sup>

The overall situation on the Arakan frontier can be described as a gradual decrease of the Company’s control towards the interior of the hills to the north. There were first the semi-integrated villages of *kyoungs*, then the tribute paying villages, and finally the uncontrolled people beyond these. A part of the lack of control was due to the unsettled situation in the plains, but within the system described by Phayre there was no particular zeal shown by the British to control the people in any other way than preventing them

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> ‘Report on the Progress of Arakan Under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869’. paras. 87-8.

<sup>521</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 689.

from committing inroads into the administered areas. In fact, the reason that the *kyoung* circles came under British rule was not because the British had subjugated them but because the British had inherited the arrangements of their predecessors. On the other hand, less control also meant less responsibility on the part of the British Indian Government to protect the people of these frontier villages. From the later records, it can be seen that these frontier villages were constantly at war among themselves or with the people further away,<sup>522</sup> but no mention of defence could be found in the administrative reports, not even news of such events. In other words, the existence of these semi-integrated friendly groups at the fringe actually worked as a buffer zone that absorbed most of the attacks from outsiders, but went unnoticed by the British officers in the plains.

Chittagong was in a similar situation to Arakan in this respect. Due to the pre-existing arrangements with the hill chiefs, the British administrators did not concern themselves much with the affairs of the hills further inland. In fact, during the 1830s the Chakma and Marma polities were going through a period of chaos: internal feuds weakened the central authorities and this was naturally followed by numerous raids by the Kuki-Chin people, partly in alliance with the warring factions of the former ruling classes. Nevertheless, no investigation was made regarding the situation of the Chittagong Hills in the 1830s,<sup>523</sup> and it was only in the 1840s that the problem began to be discussed in relation to that of the Arakan Hills.

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 705

<sup>523</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 333.



## 2. The Boundaries of the Frontier

There was a notable difference in the British management of the Kuki-Chin frontier between the northern and the southern frontier. In the northern frontier areas, the problems of Kuki people were recognised and the administrators adopted various measures to deal with them, but such problems were not even noticed by the British officers in the southern frontier areas. This difference was again due to the existence of semi-integrated villages in the southern frontier that the British had inherited from their predecessors, but it was also closely related to the different conditions of the boundaries in the respective frontiers. The British boundary on the Kuki-Chin frontier was better laid down in the northern frontier (i.e. the southern boundaries of Sylhet, Cachar, Manipur) than in the southern frontier (i.e. north of Arakan and east of Chittagong).

The demarcation and maintenance of boundaries could be most successful when the division could be fixed to clearly recognisable geographic features such as well-identified rivers, streams and mountain ridges. In the north the hill ridges, rivers and streams met the plains at right angles. This posed a problem in finding an easily recognisable line of natural boundary. Fisher laid down the southern boundary of Sylhet in 1822 by linking certain obvious streams and ridges through plains and forests. Here, the obscure part was when the line of demarcation crossed the plains in between streams and ridges; but, over all, the line of demarcation was sufficiently clear for administrative purposes.<sup>524</sup> Other than this, the southern boundary of Cachar and Manipur was only imagined. The only point that had actually been surveyed by Pemberton was the confluence of the Chikoo *Nullah* with the Barak, which marked the triple boundary of

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<sup>524</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol. 3, 55; Mackenzie, *History*, 278.

Cachar, Manipur and Tripura. From this point until the line of demarcation met the Manipur River (or Kathé Chaung in Burmese), the boundary was an imagined line, 'most ill-defined and irregular'.<sup>525</sup>

Despite this, the southern boundary of Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur was still by far better defined than the northern boundary of Arakan or the eastern boundary of Chittagong. The terrain in the northern hills of Arakan was more complicated than the southern hills of Sylhet and Cachar: a series of mountain ranges swept down to the plains from the north-north-west to the south-south-east, which gradually increased in height eastwards towards the great Yoma Range, and towards the north to the current Chin State. Besides, unlike the *nullahs* in Cachar and Sylhet that alternated with the mountains in an orderly manner, here sizeable rivers such as Koladyne and the Talak pierced the mountains leaving long trails of cultivable valley wedged between high hills.

In the map compiled by Pemberton, the northern boundary of Arakan starts in the west from the Naaf River, and then follows the Mayu River in a north-easterly direction up to about 21° north latitude where it crosses a mountain range to join the Koladyne. Then it follows the Koladyne up to its source at about the 22°40' north latitude, which marks the northern limit of Arakan. Thence, it follows the eastern boundary of Chittagong and continues along the mountain ridge that includes the Blue Mountain in a northerly direction to join the eastern boundary of Hill Tripura (see Map 2 on page xiv and Map 7 on page 162 above). This boundary line, however, could only have been a work of the imagination. Pemberton himself never surveyed the River Koladyne and no

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<sup>525</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 21; Mackenzie, *History*, 185 (the 'Agreement between the government of British India, Manipur, and Burma regarding the boundary between Manipur and Burma.')

other survey followed, despite Pemberton's strong urge for its necessity.<sup>526</sup> The mountains north of Arakan and east of Chittagong had never been contacted by the British except from a distance or through rumour. In fact, the area where the northern boundary of Arakan meets the eastern boundary of Chittagong was the most erroneously drawn part of Pemberton's map. Pemberton simply took the conjectured courses of rivers and the mountains as the boundary and linked these to define the boundary of Arakan and Chittagong.

The actual administrative limits fell far short of this conceptual boundary. Writing in 1841, Phayre stated that British authority extended 'up the Kola-dan River. . . to the mouth of a stream called the Oo-tha-lang', which he located at about 21°40 north latitude, near the town of Koladyne. Beyond this, he said, was 'untrodden by civilised man.'<sup>527</sup> This is a full one-degree of latitude south of Pemberton's estimate. Observing this difference in 1869, the Commissioner of Arakan called Phayre's boundary 'the real or practical boundary' and Pemberton's as 'the nominal or political boundary'.<sup>528</sup>

The same division also existed on the eastern frontier of Chittagong: the Company's influence stopped at the territories of the Chakma and the Phru, while the eastern boundary of these polities had never even been made an issue for the administrators of Chittagong. It was only in the 1860s, when the Hill Tracts of Chittagong constituted a separate administration from the rest, that at least the boundary

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<sup>526</sup> Note by R. B. Pemberton on the subject of a proposed survey of the inland navigation of Arakan, 11 November 1831 (NAI Foreign F.C. no.3, 11 Nov. 1831); Letter from Lt. James Duff to Commissioner of Chittagong, 23 October 1831 (NAI Foreign F.C. no.3 11 Nov. 1831); Minute by the Governor General, 23 August 1831 (OIOC F/4/1449).

<sup>527</sup> Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', 4.

<sup>528</sup> 'Report on the Progress of Arakan under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869', para. 19.

between these hill chiefs and Chittagong proper was settled.<sup>529</sup>

Later, this division between ‘practical’ boundary and ‘political’ boundary was formalised with the promulgation of the ‘Inner Line’ Regulation: the *Regulation for the Peace and Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier of Bengal*’ (Statute 32 and 33, Vic, Cap.3).<sup>530</sup> In its origin, the ‘Inner Line’ was defined to prevent British subjects from moving into the hills and thereby leading to complications with the hill people. Therefore, through this regulation, the passage beyond this line was strictly forbidden except by the authorisation of the government. Soon this came to represent the limit of British jurisdiction. The counterpart of the ‘Inner Line’, or the ‘Outer Line’, had never been defined or even named thus, but to the enquiry of an officer regarding the nature of ‘Inner Line’ and ‘Outer Line’ in 1884, the Secretary of State replied:

The ‘Inner’ Line, which varies in every district to which the Regulation I of 1873 has been applied, is the line up to which it has been decided that our officers shall exercise some kind of jurisdiction. Between that and an outer line (the actual term “*Outer Line*” cannot be traced in any of the papers after a careful search) lies a tract<sup>a</sup> over which we claim some sort of sovereignty, but exercise no jurisdiction, and work by personal influence only. Outside that again lies independent territory, over which we claim no right, and with which we do not interfere in any way.<sup>531</sup>

(<sup>a</sup> Of which the external boundary is purposely left undefined [footnote in the original text])

Therefore, the concept of an Inner Line represents a stage in the development of the boundary of British India, when the different capacities of the state – administrative,

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<sup>529</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 337-42.

<sup>530</sup> Framing of a Regulation under 33 Vic. Cap. 3, Section 1, for the Peace and Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier of Bengal (NAI Foreign Reveue A. nos. 4-9, August 1873); see also Mackenzie, *History*, 55, 89.

<sup>531</sup> K.W. no.2 to the ‘Modification of a small section of the Inner Line o the Lakhimpur District towards the south-west’ (NAI Foreign External A, nos. 366-75, Oct. 184).

political or sovereign control – had different recognised geographic limits. The Inner Line was not yet the ideal boundary of a modern state, which, ideally, fixes the limits of all the capacities of a state on one line defined by geographic features; beyond which is another equally complete state. But it was still a more rationalised form of boundary than what had existed during the period of the Company: namely, the vague diminuendo of the British Indian government in the vicinity of its boundaries.

The reality of the limits of British India during the period of the Company depended on the difficult local situations and boundaries in different parts of frontier areas in different conditions. For an example, the southern boundary between Sylhet and Hill Tripura was better defined than any other parts in the Kuki-Chin frontier area, due to the disputes with the Rajah of Tripura. The Tripura Rajah had been claiming the whole of the hills south of Sylhet and Cachar as under his influence, and British officers had accepted this even though they doubted the actual control the Rajah had over the various Kuki chiefs in these hills.<sup>532</sup> This claim erupted at times into conflicts with Cachar and Manipur, and, when the British came into this region, they needed to make a clear division of sovereignty to prevent future conflicts. Thus, Fisher demarcated the southern boundary of Sylhet in the presence of a representative of the Rajah of Hill Tripura.<sup>533</sup>

The demarcation of the southern boundary of Sylhet was also a measure for the defence of Sylhet against Kuki raids. The claims of Tripura Rajah was one reason that started the boundary survey but it was also ordered so that the government could ‘fix

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<sup>532</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 277, 279.

<sup>533</sup> Phillimore, *Historical Records*, vol.3, 55; Mackenzie, *History*, 282-3.

upon the Rajah the responsibility of keeping order in his own markets, and preventing the passage of marauders to the defenceless plains'.<sup>534</sup> In dividing the respective limits of jurisdiction, the British officers expected a sharp division of rights – such as revenue collections – as well as responsibilities of controlling the people within the respective boundaries. Thus the Tripura Rajah was, in principle, held responsible for the matters within his boundary and he was asked to exercise control over the people or at least assist British efforts to put them under control as can be seen in the case of the raids by the Poitoo into Sylhet in 1826 and Cachar 1832.

In reality, however, the boundary of the North East Frontier had been the least successful in this very respect. The network of political relationships between the native Rajahs and the hill people constantly defied so rigid a definition of a boundary: whenever there was a conflict, whether within or between polities, the Rajahs of Tripura, Manipur, Cachar and North Cachar mobilised the hill people for warfare, or even resettled those friendly to them in order to gain political superiority over their adversaries.<sup>535</sup> Besides, the movement of people, either by their mode of cultivation or by inter-tribal warfare, ruined the efforts by the British officers to sustain the division of sovereign control over the population through boundaries.

In one instance, men from three villages of Khongjai Kuki, presumed to be the subjects of the Manipur Rajah, had been employed in the maintenance of the Manipur road in 1841; but when the time for the payment came, two of the villages were found to be within Cachar. The problem was whether the government should pay these

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<sup>534</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 278.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 153, 164, 280,

villagers as inhabitants of Cachar or pay the Manipur Rajah for the service, the work being part of his subjects' annual quota of public works.<sup>536</sup> Upon closer inspection, it was found that the two villages within Cachar recognised the supremacy of the other village in Manipur, whose chief was responsible for arranging the annual quota of labour to be rendered to the Manipur Rajah. Therefore the decision was made that as long as this village stayed within Manipur, all three villages were to be regarded as tributary to Manipur. A treaty to this end was signed between Manipur and British India.<sup>537</sup>

Despite these failings in reality, the British Indian administration had an undeniable preference for a rigidly defined boundary between districts and between different polities. The increasingly rationalised revenue collection, especially that part linked with the direct measurement of land and productivity, was one reason. Besides, the sense that the administration has to provide protection to the taxpayers within its territory contributed to the refined sense of division of 'our people' and 'our territory' from the rest.

It is also the case that the division of subjects from outsiders was bound to be a geographic one, since the British were alien to the people they had come to rule. Unlike the other native rulers who had embedded loyalties deriving from a cultural, religious, or ethnic core, the British did not have a natural limit of their influence embedded in the people, and their rule could only be limited in geographic terms. In the initial years of

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<sup>536</sup> Letter from Captain C. T. Gutherie, Superintendent of Munnipore Road to the Secretary to the Military Board, 5 July 1841 (NAI Foreign, P.C., nos. 70-3, 'Settlement question of Jurisdiction over villages of Khongjai', 9 August. 1841).

<sup>537</sup> Letter from Captain Gordon, Political Agent at Manipur, to Secretary to the Government of India in the Political Department, 6 December 1841 (NAI Foreign, P.C., nos. 68-71, 'Settlement question of Jurisdiction over villages of Khongjai', 6 December 1841).

annexation, the British administration exercised sovereignty within the limits it had inherited from its predecessors. They assumed that the records of Mughal, Assam or Arakan would provide them with the administrative limits within which the British administration would work as the inheritor of that particular sovereignty. Lack of precise records was one problem. The Burmese war had already disrupted whatever was available, and on many occasions the actual customs were in conflict with what had been recorded. Besides, the Arakanese records on the northern limits of Arakan, as found by Captain Dickinson, the Superintendent of Arakan, were so vaguely termed, with all distance measured by the time taken to travel, that they could not provide any guideline to the British administrators.<sup>538</sup> Thus, if the British administration in Arakan was to have a boundary, it had to be one newly drawn by British through survey, pacification of those inside the boundary and political negotiation with the people outside the boundary. All these could not be achieved at the start of their administration in Arakan. Therefore, against their principle, the actual limits of administration were left vague on the boundaries, with the general practice of gradually diminishing influence.

Naturally, while the British officers remained defensive, no more information on the hill people was added to the reports of the previous surveys. On the other hand, the information from the surveys was not enough for the management of the frontier neither for the expedition into the hills, nor for the demarcation of boundary. The change to this situation, however, came not from another survey, but from the increasing consolidation of the administration in the plains and resulting increase in relationships with the local people, which began to make impact in the 1840s.

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<sup>538</sup> Letter from Captain Dickinson, Superintendent of Arakan, to Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Phayre, on Special Survey Duties, 29 April 1831 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos.19-25, 'Pemberton's report on the military and sanitary condition of the province of Arracan', Appendix. No.5).



## CHAPTER 6

### EXPEDITIONS INTO THE HILLS: the 1840s

#### 1. Expeditions into the Hills

##### a) Northern Frontier

##### 1) Blackwood's expedition in 1844

On the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1844, some two hundred Kukis attacked a Manipuri colony called Kochabari in southern Sylhet and took twenty heads as well as six captives.<sup>1</sup> Fearing the recurrence of such raids, the cultivators deserted neighbouring government estates, and troops and police had to go down in numbers to restore confidence.<sup>2</sup> The information given to the Sylhet authority by the survivors of the attack and Europeans employed at Tripura Rajah's court pointed to a Poitoo chief named Lalchokla as the main culprit.

Lalchokla (also spelt 'Lal-Suktla') was a son of Laroo who had been mentioned by Fisher as one of three chiefs of Poitoo.<sup>3</sup> Laroo had died in 1843 and his son, Lalchokla, committed the raid to acquire heads to adorn his father's tomb as Kuki custom dictated.

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<sup>1</sup> The narrative of the event and the subsequent expedition is found in the following: Letter from J. W. Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, on Special Duty, to the Commissioner of the Dacca Division, 13 March 1871, paras.2, 19-20 (NAI Foreign Political A. May 1871, nos. 576-653 'Lushai Raids'); Mackenzie, *History*, 289-200; Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 11-2; Elly, *Military Report*, 27-8; Reid, A., *Chin-Lushai*, 7-8; Ray, *Dynamics*, 4; Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 33-4; Suhas Chatterjee, 'Mizo Chief', 162-5.

<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 289.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher, 'Memoir'; see also Mackenzie, *History*, 279-80.

Besides, Lalchokla stated during his trial that it was also a revenge for the maltreatment of his father by two Manipuri princes, Ramsing and Tribowanjit<sup>4</sup> – the Manipuri princes who had been settled on the Sylhet frontier by the British officers to defend against the Kukis.

There is, however, another explanation for this raid. John Edgar, who was a deputy commissioner of Cachar during the years leading to the outbreak of the First Lushai Campaign in 1871-2, gave a more complex background to this incident, based on what he had learnt from the Lushais. The Poitoo Kukis, according to him, had long been under pressure from the Lushai, and sometime in the late 1830s, Laroo (spelt Lasoo by Edgar) had been driven out of his territory by a Lushai Chief named Mongper (a chief of the Sailo clan of the Lushai). Laroo then pleaded with Tribowanjit and Ram Sing for support and these Manipuri princes had surprised and destroyed Mongper's village, taking Mongper a captive. Mongper was later released upon the promise not to raid either Poitoo or Manipuri villages. After the death of Laroo in 1843, Laroo's son, Lalchokla was somehow reconciled with Mongper, and immediately after committed the raid on Kochabari. So, Edgar concluded that the raid was done at the suggestion of Mongper, if not with his assistance.<sup>5</sup>

It is quite possible that both of these versions were true: the Manipuri princes could have molested Laroo after assisting him against Mongper. Thus, at the background of this seemingly straightforward head-hunting raid was a struggle for the political survival of the Poitoo chiefs in a complicated political environment composed of the British

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 289-90.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para.19; see also Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 33.

administration, Manipuri settlers and the Lushai chiefs encroaching from the south.

Tripura Rajah was not a bystander in this intricate network of hill politics. When the government asked the Rajah of Tripura to apprehend the culprit, Tripura Rajah refused, arguing that he had no authority over the particular tribe in question. The British officers suspected that the Tripura Rajah was protecting this Poitoo chief. In fact, it was found out later that Lalchokla had applied to the Tripura Rajah for protection against the British.<sup>6</sup> Chatterjee argues that Lalchokla was a friendly and powerful vassal of Tripura Rajah.<sup>7</sup> It was a common practice for the Kuki chiefs around Tripura to be aligned with either the Rajah or his adversary to the Tripuri throne. As a Kuki chief might easily change sides according to the circumstances and his own calculation of benefit and loss, it was important for the Tripura Rajah to protect those aligned with him. As seen above, Laroo's alignment with the Manipuris was overturned by his successor Lalchokla who allied himself to the Lushais, and Gnurshailon the son of Lalchokla was said to have aligned with an opponent of the Rajah in the 1860s on marrying the daughter of the Lushai chief Sukpilal.<sup>8</sup>

This time, the British Indian Government was determined to punish Lalchokla for the raid and began preparing an expedition. When this news reached the Tripura Rajah, he suddenly became cooperative and sent in four Kuki prisoners and 'twenty seven witnesses', but all of these denied any knowledge of the raid. Next, he sent in a Kuki chief named Botai, a cousin of Laroo. This is not the Buntay or Bontai of the Sylhet

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<sup>6</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 289.

<sup>7</sup> Chatterjee, 'Mizo Chief', 163.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para.21; see also Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 33.

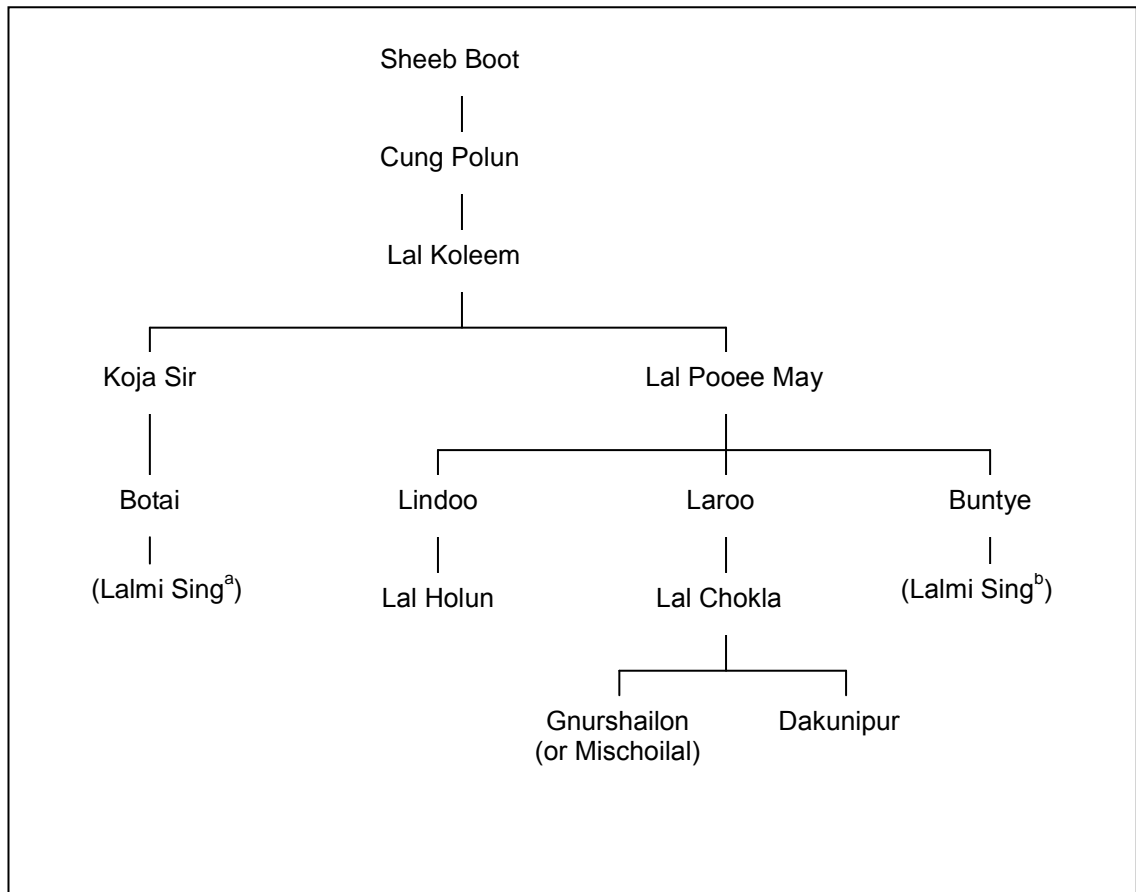
massacre in 1826 who was a brother of Laroo (see Fig.3 on the next page). Conflicting information exists regarding Botai's involvement in the raid: Mackenzie regarded him as one who cooperated with Laroo, while Chatterjee regarded him as the real perpetrator. In addition, Chatterjee argued that he was the father of Lalmi Sing, another Poitoo chief, who offered to lead British troops to Lalchokla's village in return for his father's release.<sup>9</sup> Yet according to Mackenzie, Lalmi Sing was the son of Buntye, who had received blackmail from the zemindars of Sylhet.<sup>10</sup> This shows the lack of precise information regarding the situation in the hills.

Lalmi Sing's support proved to be vital in the success of the expedition against Lalchokla, as it was he who guided the British troops, who left Sylhet on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December and surrounded Lalchokla's village, cutting off supplies. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, Lalchokla surrendered himself to save his people and his village after negotiation through Lalmi Sing. He was then brought to Sylhet, tried for his crime, and transported for life. Two of his sons, Gnurshailon and Dakunipur, were also tried and were imprisoned in Sylhet for a short while. Botai was released soon after the trial, according to Chatterjee, in return for his son's cooperation.

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<sup>9</sup> Chatterjee, 'Mizo Chief', 163.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para.17; Mackenzie, *History*, 290.



**Fig. 3. The Poitoo Chiefs**

<sup>a</sup>. According to Chatterjee

<sup>b</sup>. According to Mackenzie and Edgar

As Chatterjee points out, this was an extraordinary trial as Lalchokla was not a British subject but under the Tripura Rajah's jurisdiction: technically, he should have been tried in Tripura.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Lalchokla was known to have surrendered on the promise that his life would be spared and he would not be kept in captivity. Edgar argues that this promise was not made by Captain Blackwood but by Lalmi Sing of his

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

own accord.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the case, this was obviously treachery in the eyes of the Kukis. Edgar, as well as Woodthorpe, singled this out as the reason why negotiations had later been so difficult with Lushai chiefs during the British war with them in the early 1870s.<sup>13</sup>

After this incident, the Poitoo were weakened and divided themselves among the Lushais, Cachar and Tripura. Yet, the spirit of vengeance sown in the hearts of the sons of Lalchokla did not die without making its impact on the British territories. Gnurshailion, also known as Mischoilon or Mischoilal who became a wanderer and outcast, was said to have sworn vengeance against the British at this moment and spent the rest of his life raiding and encouraging Lushai chiefs to raid British territories.<sup>14</sup> His half-brother, Dakunipur, on the other hand, attacked Lalmi Sing's village in 1847, which was reported to have resulted in up to 150 deaths.<sup>15</sup>

## 2) Continuing Raids in 1840s and the Advent of the Lushai

Blackwood's expedition did not succeed in bringing peace to the frontier. On the contrary, throughout the later half of the 1840s, the number of reports of Kuki raids along the southern frontier of Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur increased. In June 1844,

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para.21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from W. Kemble, esq., officiating Magistrate of Sylhet, to the Commissioner of the Dacca Division, 16 April 1869 (NAI Foreign Political A., nos. 216-92, December 1869, 'Expedition against Lushais') [see annexure: 'Diary kept by W. Kemble during his proceedings against the Lushai from 10<sup>th</sup> February to 30<sup>th</sup> March 1869', 18<sup>th</sup> February; 'Statement of Rungbhoom taken by W. Kemble'; 'Statement of Gour Dhon taken by W. Kemble']; Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para.2, 21; Letter from Edgar to the Commissioner of the Dacca Division, 6 March 1871, para. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Makenzie, *History*, 290-1.

while the investigation regarding Lalchokla's raid was in progress, a band of Kukis headed by a Thado chief from Manipur attacked a Kuki village within Cachar and took eight heads.<sup>16</sup> In this case, one of the raiders had been apprehended, which made it easier to identify the chief involved. The reason for this incursion was to acquire heads for the burial of their chief. Besides, the attacked villagers were known to have emigrated from the attackers' village, making it probable that political enmity had motivated this raid as well.<sup>17</sup> The Session judge of Sylhet, Mr. Stainforth insisted that it was absolutely necessary to depute a party of the Sylhet Light Infantry to convince 'the savages that attacking Ryots of the Company's territory was sure to be followed by a retribution which it was better not to provoke'.<sup>18</sup> The Government, however, was of the opinion that such a punitive expedition would be 'unworthy of a great Government and would probably fail in its object, besides exposing the troops employed in carrying it out to the ill effects of a climate more insidious than the attacks of the enemy'.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the Manipur Rajah was asked to arrest and give up the chief and other Kukis involved in the attack and take appropriate measures to prevent further similar incidents.<sup>20</sup>

Nothing further can be found about the aftermath of this request but it was unlikely

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from the Superintendent of Cachar to the Session Judge of Sylhet, 5 July 1844 (NAI Foreign, F. C., nos. 89-91, 10 August. 1844, nos., 109-112, 7 Sept. 1844 'Correspondence regarding Kookie Outrages in Cachar').

<sup>17</sup> Letter from the Session Judge of Sylhet to Captain Gordon, Political Agent at Manipur, 10 July 1844 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 189-91, 10 Aug. 1844, 109-112 7 Sept. 1844 'Correspondence regarding Kookie Outrages in Cachar'); Mackenzie *History*, 290.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from the Session Judge of Sylhet to The Secretary to Government of Bengal in Judicial Department, 10 July 1844 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 89-91, 10 August 1844, 109-112 7 September 1844 'Correspondence regarding Kookie Outrages in Cachar').

<sup>19</sup> Letter from the Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 25 July 1844, para. 4 (NAI Foreign, no.189-91, 10 Aug. 1844, 109-112 7 September 1844 'Correspondence regarding Kookie Outrages in Cachar').

<sup>20</sup> Letter from the Session Judge of Sylhet to Captain Gordon, Political Agent at Manipur, 10 July 1844.

that Manipur Rajah could have done anything, as the position of Manipur Rajah was again seriously threatened in the same year. Gambhir Singh died in 1834 leaving an infant son, Chandra Kirtee Singh, and Nar Singh, a *senaputty*, ruled Manipur as a regent. In 1844, Chandra Kirtee Singh and his mother attempted to take the throne by murdering Nar Singh. When the attempt failed, they both fled into Cachar and Nar Singh declared himself the Rajah of Manipur, regarding this act as an abdication. The British Indian Government formally recognised him as Rajah in the September as a result of the recommendation of the Political Agent, Lieutenant McCulloch. This, however, instigated more attacks on Manipur by Manipuri princes in Cachar and Burma into Manipur, and the Government had to warn those in Cachar that they would be removed to Bengal if they attacked Manipur.<sup>21</sup>

Manipur was in constant conflict with the Kukis from the southern hills as well.<sup>22</sup> As the Rajah of Manipur had made over the supervision of all the Kuki refugees to the Political Agent, they were under the authority of the British Indian government.<sup>23</sup> In 1846 a group of Kukis attacked a village called Koompee and many of its inhabitants fled to Cachar.<sup>24</sup> This attack caused a serious concern. In the vicinity of this village were several Kuki villages subservient to Manipur. When the defence of Koompee failed, the Kukis of the surrounding villages were also on the point of fleeing, and if they had deserted their position, there would have been no one left between the hostile ‘southern

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<sup>21</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 153-4.

<sup>22</sup> see Mackenzie, *History*, 164; R. Brown, *A Statistical Account of Maipur and the Hill Territories under its Rule*, (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1873; reprint, Delhi: Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975), 71 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>23</sup> Major McCulloch’s Memorandum on Manipur in 1861 (Mackenzie, *History*, 155-7).

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Lt. McCulloch, Political Agent Manipur to Captain Lyons, Superintendent of Cachar, 26 November 1846 (NAI Foreign, nos.164-6, 19 December 1846).



Kukis' and the 'Koupooees'(or Kabuis).<sup>25</sup> The Kabuis were important because they were in charge of the maintenance of the road between Manipur and Cachar.<sup>26</sup>

As a solution, Lieutenant McCulloch suggested establishing more villages of 'well-affected Kukis' on this frontier to shield the Kabuis against the 'southern savages'. McCulloch also calculated that, due to the general similarity of Kuki languages, the villages thus established would be able to gather intelligence of an attack before the actual occurrence and enable the authorities to prevent future attacks or minimise the damage. Besides, this plan was calculated to prevent any population drain into Cachar and bring the friendly Kukis under closer control.<sup>27</sup> The Government approved the 'tenor' of McCulloch's suggestion.<sup>28</sup>

This was in essence the same arrangement as that in the southern borders of Sylhet and Cachar, discussed in the previous chapter. Yet the hope of the Government that the Kuki people would be able to ward off attacks from the other Kukis from further south was not well founded. On 9<sup>th</sup> June 1847, a Kuki village holding land from the Government in Sylhet was attacked and thirty villagers massacred by the 'Hill Kukis'. Then in a series of conflicts, upward of 150 deaths was reported. A team of native officers was sent by the officiating Magistrate of Sylhet to investigate the case. This

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<sup>25</sup> Kabuis, a sub-group of Naga who were located between Cachar and Manipur, known to have been 'very peaceful and contented'. (see Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, 30); but also known as a sub-group of Kukis (Haokip, *Zale 'n-Gam*, 23; Gangte, *Kukis*, 31); regarding their roles in defence of Manipur road see Pemberton, *Report*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Major McCulloch's Memorandum on Manipur in 1861 (Mackenzie, *History*, 155-7).

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Lt. McCulloch, Political Agent Manipur to Captain Lyons, Superintendent of Cachar, 26 November 1846; Letter from Lt. McCulloch to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 26 November 1846 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos.164-6, 19 December 1846).

<sup>28</sup> Letter from the Officiating secretary to the government of India to Lt. McCulloch, 19 December 1846 (NAI Foreign, F.C. nos.164-6, 19 December 1846).

time, the Tripura Rajah protested that the Government should not interfere with the matter as the village was within his territory. He claimed that a relative of Lalchokla had procured this territory from him, but after his trial it had been given to Lalmi Sing: the massacre was actually a result of a war between Lalmi Sing and Dakunipur, a son of Lalchokla.<sup>29</sup>

Such was the state of the boundary at this time. Subsequently much time was wasted in determining whether the village belonged to the Company or Tripura Rajah. In the meantime, another report arrived in January 1848 that a company of Sylhet Light Infantry which had been stationed near the site of the massacre had been surrounded by an unprecedented (and possibly exaggerated) number of 3,000 to 4,000 Kukis who retreated after skirmishes that resulted one death and one casualty among the sepoys.<sup>30</sup>

At this, the Government lost confidence in the Magistrate of Sylhet, Mr. B. W. Cooper, who was reported to lack the 'zeal or ability' to deal with the situation. He was sent to the less important position of Second Joint Magistrate at Mymensing. In his place, Colonel Lister, the Political Agent in the Khasi Hills, was deputed to Sylhet to deal with the situation. A professional surveyor was also sent to determine the boundary precisely. This survey showed that the location was well within the boundary laid down by Fisher.<sup>31</sup>

By this time, however, there was a sudden explosion of reports of Kuki raids into

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<sup>29</sup> Bengal Judicial Department draft, no.2, 5 February 1851 paras.46, 48 (OIOC E/4/808); Mackenzie, *History*, 290-1.

<sup>30</sup> Bengal Judicial Department draft no.2, 5 February, para.48. (OIOC E/4/808)

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*; Mackenzie, *History*, 290-1.

the southern parts of Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur. In Sylhet, woodcutters were massacred, and two villages destroyed, in 1849. In Cachar, several villages of Thado Kukis were attacked, resulting in 29 deaths and 42 captives including a son of one of the chiefs.<sup>32</sup> About the same time, five hundred Kukis attacked a *thana* (police post) of Kala Naga in Manipur.<sup>33</sup>

More Kuki people were also moving into the districts of Cachar and Sylhet from the southern hills. Between the years 1846 and 1847 an especially large immigration of the Kukis was reported in North Cachar, which was then under Nowgong. The Kukis were all encouraged to settle in North Cachar with the hope that prosperity and population would be restored there.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the Thado, Thlangum, and virtually all Kuki groups in the southern frontier of Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur were restlessly moving into the British districts, each driven by another group. The situation is well described in the words of Colonel Lister written in 1853. According to him, first, some Nagas in southern Cachar were driven north by ‘Tangunes’ (Thlangum) who were in turn driven north by ‘Chansen’ (Changsen) and ‘Tadoés’ (Thado); around 1846, Thados came to settle within eight or ten miles south of Silchar driven up by ‘Luchyes, a very powerful tribe’.<sup>35</sup>

After this series of raids and movements of Kuki people, there followed rumours of

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<sup>32</sup> Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 34; see also Letter from Captain Verner, Superintendent of Cachar to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 12 March 1855 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 119-21, 13 April 1855).

<sup>33</sup> R. Brown. *A Statistical Account of Maipur and the Hill Territories under its Rule*, (Superintendent of Government Printing, 1873; reprint, Delhi: Sanskaran Prakashak, 1975) 71 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>34</sup> Bengal Revenue Department draft no.3, 2 April 1851, para.14 (OIOC E/4/809).

<sup>35</sup> Report by Lister in 1853 (Mackenzie, *History*, 287-8).

a stronger people, and it was in relation to the enquiries made about them that the name 'Lushai' became familiar among the British authorities. The Kukis who moved to the North Cachar Hills professed their reason for the movement as 'the oppression of Manipur and the attacks of Lushais'.<sup>36</sup> Lister even stated that the British had first heard of the 'Luchyes' from the movements of the Kuki people.<sup>37</sup> In April 1847, the political agent of Manipur, Captain McCulloch sent a letter asking for information regarding the 'Loosai tribe of Kookies' within Hill Tripura to the magistrate of Tripura H. Fergusson. It was made because of complaints made by Manipur Rajah that the 'Loosais' were protected from the Manipur troops by being within the boundary of Hill Tripura. As usual, the Rajah of Tripura replied that he knew nothing about them, though he had heard of them living 'many days journey away'.<sup>38</sup>

### 3) Lister's Expedition in 1850

Enquiries followed after the series of attacks in 1849. Again Tripura Rajah was asked to apprehend the guilty party, and Colonel Lister was instructed not to be deterred by any territorial claims of the Rajah but if the village was *de facto* under the British, proceed to ascertain the guilty parties and punish them if possible. Intelligence from Cachar alleged that the Lushais were the culprits and more specifically, Lalingvoo and his two sons, Barmoolal and Lalpor. Some of the information gathered through these enquiries proved to be contradictory. Friendly Kukis were also employed by the Sylhet

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<sup>36</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Report by Lister in 1853.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from H. Fergusson, Magistrate of Hill Tripura to W. Grey, Officiating under Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 17 August 1847 (NAI Foreign, P.C. nos.10-2, 4 Sep. 1847).

Magistrate to follow the trails of the offenders, and they brought back the name of the raiders as the 'Khojawal' or 'Kachak' tribe, who formed a part of a larger Lushai clan ruled by three chiefs of Lalingbroom, Khojawal, and Sookpilal.<sup>39</sup>

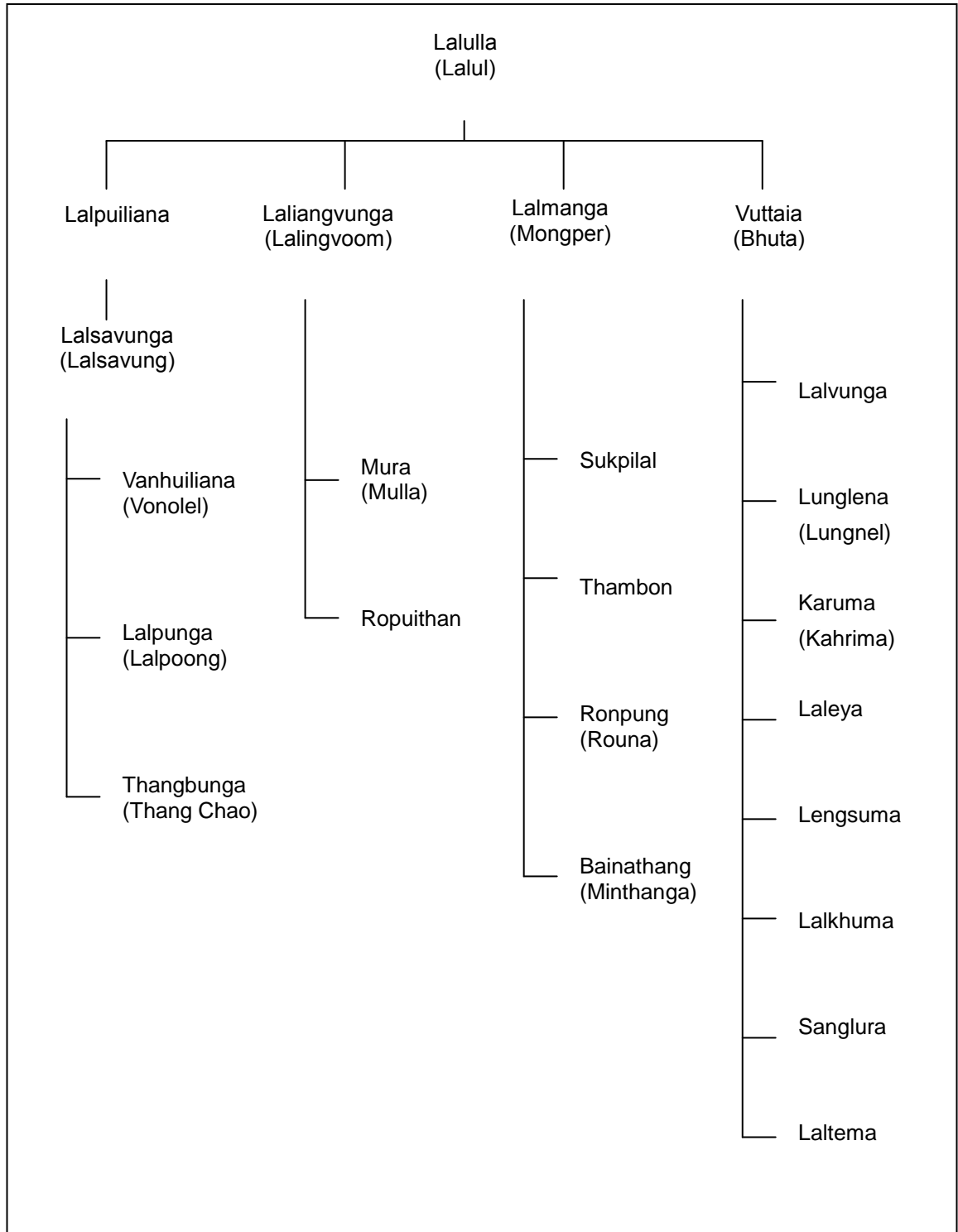
This information later proved to be wrong. Lalingvroom was indeed the father of Mura(or Mulla) and Mura was found out to be the chief who raided a Thado village in Cachar. Yet, Lalpor (or Lalpoong) was not a son of Lalingvroom but a nephew. Sukpilal was a son of Mongper and another nephew of Lalingvroom. The name Khojawal cannot be found among the names of known Lushai chiefs. Besides, 'Kachak', according to Edgar, was only a Kuki term employed to designate 'other Kukis' from further inland.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 292.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, paras. 12, 21, 'List of the Descendants of Lalul'; Elly, *Military Report*, 8, 10.

**Fig. 4. The Sailo Chiefs**



SOURCE: Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, J. Kennedy, 'Genealogical Table of Ruling Lushai Chiefs' (NAI External A March 1889)Elly, Military Report, Nunthara, Mizoram.

Despite this uncertainty regarding the actual identity of the offender, an expedition was ordered when the Kuki scouts offered to guide the expedition to the village of the offenders: once again, the most important factor for the expedition was the cooperation of the friendly Kukis. The British troops left Silchar on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1850 and after a ten days' march of over a hundred miles into the hills, reached the village of a chief called 'Mullah'(Mura) which they took easily. Lister was surprised by the size of the village with 800 to 1,000 houses and concluded that the Lushais were not migratory, as almost all other Kukis were. He attributed the success of his attack to the suddenness of it and to the lack of fighting men in the village, who had gone away, with the chief himself, on another raid.

While in the village, he observed the even larger village of another chief, 'Barmooelin', through his telescope. He estimated that there could be 'not less than three thousand' houses and the scouts reported that this village was full of fighting men including 'three hundred Burmese armed with muskets'. Unlike the Kukis familiar to British officers, the Lushais had firearms among them. This confirmed Lister's belief that the Lushai were 'a cross between the Kookees and the Burmese', and quoted a universally held belief that the Burmese troops who had come to Cachar in 1824 had never gone back but had settled in the jungle among the Lushais. The substantial manner in which the Lushais built their houses was for him another piece of evidence supporting this.

He stayed the night in the village but early next morning he hurriedly returned to Cachar after burning the village with its stores of grain and cotton. The Lushais in the

neighbourhood had already started building stockades to cut his route back. Lister reported that the Lushais were experts in using *dah* and could quickly construct stockades in the most shrewdly calculated position, making best use of the terrain.

In the end, apart from inflicting summary punishment on the village itself, this expedition failed to apprehend the chief or the raiders. As a justification of his actions, he found an *abkaree* (the licence to distil or sell spirituous liquor) with the name of a man belonging to a village attacked in Sylhet in the previous year: this proved that the village Lister had destroyed was that of the offender. Another ‘gratifying circumstance’ was that 429 captives of the village, mostly Thado Kukis, made their escape from the villages dependent on Mura. From this he hoped that the expedition would have crippled Mura sufficiently to keep him from another raid for sometime; but he himself confessed that the expedition ‘would have had little real effect on this tribe at large, further than shewing that it was possible for us to penetrate their jungle’.<sup>41</sup>

Back in Silchar, Lister wrote to the Government that expeditions of such small scale, destroying several villages, would not have any effect other than to entice the Lushais further, but at the same time, ‘unless something decisive is done the whole of Cachar south of the Barak and probably south of Sylhet will become a desert’.<sup>42</sup> The best option, in his view, was to employ troops on permanent duty on the frontier while building roads from Cachar with depots along the road. He recommended keeping three thousand in all: five hundred to a thousand to keep the road from Cachar open and to protect depots, and the rest for carrying on operations in the country. Yet he doubted

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<sup>41</sup> Report by Lister in 1851 (Mackenzie, *History*, 292-5).

<sup>42</sup> Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 34.



whether the Government would commit such resources to this frontier, and as a temporary measure, he recommended establishing a Kuki Levy, armed with muskets, trained and commanded by a European officer, to be placed in stockades at the spots where Lushais made frequent inroads.<sup>43</sup> He also suggested arming the frontier villages with condemned muskets to defend themselves against the Lushais.<sup>44</sup> Of these, the Government sanctioned the establishment of a Kuki Levy but no other action was taken.<sup>45</sup>

## b) Southern Frontier

### 1) Abolition of Slavery and Changes in Arakan

As seen in the last chapter, during the early years of the British administration, the Government's control over the northern hills of Arakan had only been nominal. Under these circumstances, raids between different villages of the Chin people took place unchecked by the authorities even within British territory. Phayre recorded one such raid in April 1837 by a Kumi chief on the Koladyne River committed against a 'Khyen' village on the Lemro River, both of whom were within British jurisdiction.<sup>46</sup> He also added that it was the last incident in which a tribe within the British border had attacked another, implying that from this year British control over the frontier improved.

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<sup>43</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 295; Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 294-5.

<sup>45</sup> Bengal Military Draft, no.34, 2 April 1851 (OIOC E/4/809).

<sup>46</sup> Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', 705.

By 1837 the administration in Arakan seems finally to have reached a state of stability, as there were no more reports of local rebellions, and a modified revenue administration had been introduced to the satisfaction of the Directors in London.<sup>47</sup> In relation to the villages in the hills as well, the Government began printing receipts for the taxes from the hill people at around the same time, bringing further control and regulation in their management of the frontier.<sup>48</sup>

A more significant change, however, was introduced by the abolition of slavery in India. In early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, evangelical revivalism among the middle class had joined with the liberal and reformist factions in British politics and had together formed a movement against slavery. Spearheaded by the Clapham Sect, which included Zachary Macaulay and William Wilberforce, the movement found supporters from all over Britain and put pressure on Parliament with a new method of political activity, the politics of pressure groups, using such methods as hustings, mass petitions, and newspaper campaigns.<sup>49</sup> In 1807 they succeeded in passing the ‘Abolition of Slave Trade Act’ but the public was not satisfied with this, and movements for the abolition of slavery continued. At the same time, public demands for the reform of Parliament grew stronger. In 1832, the Government caved in to this pressure, and when the reformed Parliament first sat in 1833 the ‘Abolition of Slavery Act’ was passed.<sup>50</sup>

The triumph of the anti-Slavery legislation in Britain had immediate repercussions

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<sup>47</sup> India Revenue Department, no.13, 11 October 1837, para. 41 (OIOC E/4/752).

<sup>48</sup> ‘Report on the Progress of Arakan Under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869’, para. 91.

<sup>49</sup> Ferguson, *Empire*, 118; Simon Schama, *A History of Britain vol.3: 1776-2000 The Fate of Empire*, (London: BBC, 2002), 107-8; Rebecca Fraser, *A People’s History of Britain*, (London: Pimlico, 2004) 525-32; John Pollock, *Wilberforce: God’s Statesman* (East Burn: Kingsway, 1977).

<sup>50</sup> Pollock, *Wilberforce*; Ferguson, *Empire*, 116-8.

in India. The Clapham Sect had close links with the administration of India, since two of its prominent members, John Shore and Charles Grant, had been chief advisers to Cornwallis, and many members of the Clapham Sect were personal friends of the Directors of the Company.<sup>51</sup> Besides, during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous societies sprang up in Britain to press for reforms in India, and petitions poured into Parliament from all over Britain.<sup>52</sup>

Then, starting from 1830 when the Select Committee of the House of the Lords heard the evidence of Indian officials,<sup>53</sup> Parliament itself began to show concern over slavery in India. Moreover, section 85 of the Charter Act of 1833 laid down that ‘the Governor-General in Council shall and is hereby required forthwith to frame Laws and Regulations for the extinction of Slavery’ throughout British Indian territories.<sup>54</sup>

Eventually, the Indian Government was pushed by Parliament and the Court of Directors to show its commitment to the gradual extinction of slavery in India. The resulting Act V of 1843 did not abolish slavery in India directly; rather, it mainly made it illegal for the British officers to assist the maintenance of slavery. First, it prohibited British officers from allowing the sale of slaves for the realisation of revenue arrears or any other public demands. Second, it prohibited them from dealing with any cases on

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<sup>51</sup> Stokes, *English Utilitarians*, 27; D. R. Banaji, *Slavery in British India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and enl. (Bombay: D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1933), 334.

<sup>52</sup> See for example: House of Commons, *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 68 (1812-3), vol. 85 (1830), vol. 93 (1838), vol.94 (1839), vol. 95 (1840), vol. 96 (1841), vol. 97 (1842).

<sup>53</sup> D. R. Banaji, *Slavery in British India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and enl. (Bombay: D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1933), 334..

<sup>54</sup> ‘Government of India Act 1833’, Section 85 (House of Commons, ‘Bill for effecting Arrangement with East India Company for better Government of India (as amended on Report)’, *Bills*, vol.2, no. 558, (1833): 201-236).

behalf of a master against his slaves. Third, all slaves were given right to own properties they had acquired. Finally, as a result of the insistence of the Governor-General, any acts that would be a penal offence if done to a free person also became punishable if done to a slave; therefore, making it impossible for a master to discipline a slave.<sup>55</sup>

Indirect though it may have been, the effect of this Act on the owners of slaves was clear: it became virtually impossible for any slave owner to impose servitude on their slaves.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, slavery had already been curtailed even before the proclamation of this act. In Bengal, Regulation X. of 1811 was promulgated, in the aftermath of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain, to guard against the importation of slaves from Assam. For this purpose, it had declared it a criminal offence to 'remove slaves' from territories outside British rule into territories under the British for the purpose of trafficking. The wording in this regulation caused a problem when Assam became part of British India, since the importation of slaves from Assam into Bengal, both of which were now under the British, was not illegal any more. After a series of discussions among local officers and secretaries of the Government, it was finally decided to declare all sale and purchase of slaves illegal, regardless of where the slaves originated, and Regulation III. of 1832 of the Bengal Code was promulgated for the extension of the provisions of Regulation X. of 1811.<sup>57</sup>

Then in 1836, as part of the preparation for the 'Rules for the Administration of

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<sup>55</sup> Legislative Despatch from Secretary to Government of India to Secretary at India-House, April 1843, (House of Commons, *Accounts and Papers*, vol.58, no.525, (1843): 13-4).

<sup>56</sup> Banaji, *Slavery*, 403.

<sup>57</sup> Extract Judicial Letter from Bengal, no.28, 31 December 1832, para.23 (House of Commons, 'Correspondence between Directors of East India Company and Company's Servants in India and Ceylon on Slavery and Slaver Trade: Orders, Regulations and Proceedings', *Account and Papers*, vol.51, no.697 (1837-8): 1-623), 37; see also other correspondence in *ibid.*, 37-39, 344-65.

Civil Justice in Assam', all the frontier officers were asked to submit their opinions and suggestions, regarding the best mode of abolishing slavery. The local officers, even though none disputed the general idea of gradual abolition of slavery, could not agree on the best mode to put this into practice, and the whole matter was in the end left to the process of the general rule being prepared by the central Government.<sup>58</sup>

Slavery in Assam, as all the officers agreed, was of the most benign form, if it could be called slavery at all: slaves in Assam were treated better than domestic servants in England at the same period, and many of them sold themselves voluntarily as slaves during times of exceptional need. In fact, Scott had openly advocated slavery in Assam by allowing freemen to sell themselves and parents to sell their children as slaves, and he also allowed individuals to fulfil their revenue arrears through the sales of slaves during a severe famine in Assam.<sup>59</sup> When the children were sold as slaves, he emphasised, they were in such circumstances that the only way to preserve their lives was by selling their liberty.<sup>60</sup> In a similar vein, Jenkins argued that the immediate abolition of slavery would certainly cause serious injustices both to the slaves and their owners.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> House of Commons, 'Correspondence', 346-65; House of Commons, 'Report of the Indian Law Commissioners, January 1841, on Slavery in East Indies', *Account and Papers*, vol. 28, no.262 (1841), 408-13.

<sup>59</sup> Letter from A Bogle, Assistant Commissioner, Zillah Kamroop, to Captain Jenkins, Commissioner of Circuit, 5 April 1836, para.25 (House of Commons, 'Correspondence'), 354; Barooah, *David Scott*, 159.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General in the North-East Frontier, to George Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government of India, 10 October 1830, paras. 10-13. (House of Commons, 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners', 402-6), 403-4

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Captain F. Jenkins, Commissioner of Circuit Assam, to Mr. Pierce Taylor, Deputy Register of the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut, Fort William, 22 July 1837 (House of Commons, 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners', 696).

Nevertheless, in the course of these enquiries more than six thousand slaves were emancipated by the authorities in Assam.<sup>62</sup> Besides, Jenkins pointed to the indirect, but definite, effect against slavery that had already been done and wrote to the Chief Civil Court (*Sudder Dewanny Adawlut*) in 1837 that:

I consider that the Government, by withholding a regulation making it legal to have recourse to the criminal courts for the apprehension and restitution of slaves, have virtually abolished slavery; the means of escape from their owners being so great, and the difficulty and expense of recovery through the civil court being so great, that no slaves above the age of childhood need be detained in bondage except with their own free will.<sup>63</sup>

In Arakan, the local officers went further than those in Assam. The issue of slavery in Arakan first came to light through the reports by Jenkins and Pemberton in 1831. While praising the efficiency of the 'Mugh Levy' or Mugh *Sebundy* Corps, they reported that 'among the sepoys of the Mug Levy were two Munipoorees, who had been sold as slaves while they were in Kachar'.<sup>64</sup> This provoked an immediate reaction from the Governor-General who ordered an enquiry into the conditions under which they were permitted by their masters to engage in such employment and what proportion, if any, of their salary went to the master.<sup>65</sup>

Lieutenant Boscawen, former commander of the Mugh Levy, replied that the Manipuris had generally been claimed as slaves by merchants from the neighbourhood

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<sup>62</sup> Extract Remarks, by Captain Jenkins, Commissioner, on the Rules for the Administration of Criminal Justice in Assam, Section X – Slavery (House of Commons, 'Correspondence') 354.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Captain F. Jenkins, Commissioner of Circuit, Assam, to Register of the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut, Fort William, 24 May 1837, para.9 (House of Commons, 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners'), 690; see also Minute by the Governor-General on Slavery in India, 6 May 1841, (House of Commons, 'Letters from Governor General of India, May 1841, and Minute on Slavery in East Indies', *Accounts and Papers*, vol.3, no.54 (1841 session 2):109-112), 110.

<sup>64</sup> Hall, 'Journey from Manipur', 77; 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners', 381.

<sup>65</sup> Minute by W. C. Bentinck, Governor-General, August 1831 (House of Commons, 'Correspondence', 51-2).

of Ramoo, Akyab and other places on the coast. He had been told that the merchants had purchased them when young, either from the Burmese, who constantly carried off the women and children from villages to sell them as slaves, or from their own parents, in times of want and distress. These latter, who had been sold by their parents, were Manipuri refugees in Sylhet and Cachar and they stated that there were three to four thousand Manipuri slaves in Arakan who became slaves under similar circumstances. Lieutenant Boscawen made a compromise with the owners and deducted two three or four rupees from the pay of the sepoy until the fixed sum was liquidated.<sup>66</sup>

When further enquiry was made by Lieutenant Boscawen's successor, Captain Robert Innes Delamain, most of the Manipuris denied being slaves. They told him that their parents gave them up to any individual who could feed and clothe them, but according to custom they became free to seek other services on reaching a certain age and paid a portion of their pay to those who had 'supported them in early life'.<sup>67</sup> This change is likely to have been caused by the fear that they would be removed from the service. When another enquiry was made a month later, none of them admitted to sending a portion of their salary to their former masters, fearing that they might be discharged from the service, and only five admitted to being in a state of bondage and they did so 'under some difficulty on the part of the commanding officer'. They were all known to have become totally naturalised to the Arakanese culture and did not wish to return to Manipur where they would be regarded as having lost their caste.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Letter from Lt. H. A. Boscawen, Commanding Mugh Sebundy Corps, to Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government of India, 14 October 1831, para. 1-6 (House of Commons, 'Correspondence', 54).

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Captain Robert Innes Delamain, in charge of the Mugh corps, to the Commissioner of Arakan, 16 September 1831; Letter from N. J. Halhed, Commissioner of Arakan, to Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government of India. (House of Commons, 'Correspondence', 55-7).

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Halhed to Swinton, 31 October, 1831 para.6 ('Correspondence on Slavery in India 1838', 59-61); Letter from Captain Robert Innes Delamain to N. J. Halhed, Commissioner of Chittagong,

The Governor-General was satisfied and reported to the Court of Directors that these individuals could not be considered to be slaves, and no private rights were infringed by retaining them in the service.<sup>69</sup> The Directors, however, ordered a full enquiry into the nature of slavery in Arakan.<sup>70</sup> In the meantime there had already been communications on the subject of slavery between the Commissioner of Arakan, Mr. H. Walters and the officers in Arakan in 1833. Mr. Walters specifically asked for their opinions regarding two measures he suggested for the mitigation of slavery in Arakan. First, in line with Regulation X 1811 of the Bengal Code, he proposed to prohibit the sale and purchase of slaves imported from other districts and countries. Second, he proposed to release any persons from their bondage as slaves if they made a petition to the Criminal Court, while any person illegally restraining them would render himself liable to punishment.<sup>71</sup>

Captain Dickinson, the Superintendent of Arakan, was worried that such measures would create a considerable sensation among the more influential classes,<sup>72</sup> but Captain White, Assistant Superintendent at Sandoway, disagreed with Captain Dickinson and wrote that ‘slavery or domestic slavery throughout this province might be entirely

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25 October 1831, (House of Commons, ‘Correspondence’, 60-1).

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government, to H.T. Prinsep, Secretary to Governor General, 25 November 1831, para.5 (‘Correspondence on Slavery in India 1838’, 62); Extract Political Letter from Bengal, no.2, 2 April 1832, para.9 (House of Commons, ‘Correspondence’, 11).

<sup>70</sup> Extract Political Letter to India, no.13, 3 December 1835, para.113-4 (House of Commons, ‘Correspondence’, 16); see also OIOC E/4/742.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from Mr. H. Walters, Officiating Commissioner of Akyab, to Captain T. Dickinson, Superintendent of Arracan, 4 April 1833 (House of Commons, ‘Report of Indian Law Commissioners’, 652).

<sup>72</sup> From Captain Dickinson, Superintendent of Arracan, to H. Walters, officiating Commissioner of Arracan, 3 September 1833 (House of Commons, ‘Report of Indian Law Commissioners’, 653).



checked by the enforcement' of the two measures suggested by the Commissioner.<sup>73</sup> Mr. Walter concurred with White and ordered the Superintendent to declare all slaves and bondsmen free, if he thought he could do so with safety. According to Captain Bogle, who became the Commissioner of Arakan in 1837, this proclamation occasioned considerable dissatisfaction, but no disturbance was created. Some petitions from former slave owners were presented to Bogle, but he discouraged the petitioners, fearing the encouragement of similar cases.<sup>74</sup>

The changing ethos of an empire seeking to improve the living conditions of its people was bound to cause a deeper intervention into the lives of the people than any of the routine bureaucracy of the administration. Moreover, when such action was taken without a close understanding of the context, it inevitably resulted in unforeseen difficulties for the people.

The abolition of slavery in Arakan affected debt-slaves as well as slaves captured during raids and sold. As Lewin later observed, the custom of debtor-slaves was in fact a form of labour-sharing which benefited less fortunate people who could choose to serve as menial servants until the debt was paid or cancelled.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Buchanan had commented that this institution was 'a more rational way of treating debtors than that prescribed by the Law of England'.<sup>76</sup> Besides, such arrangements were used by hill

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<sup>73</sup> Letter from Captain M. G. White, Assistant Superintendent Sandoway, to H. Walters [reply to the circular by Walters], 1 October 1833, para.2 (House of Commons, 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners', 653).

<sup>74</sup> Evidence no. 35, Captain Bogle, Commissioner of Arracan (House of Commons, 'Report of Indian Law Commissioners', 485-6).

<sup>75</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 90 (18 April 1798).

chiefs who could borrow labour in return for the services that a chief could perform for the individual or the village. As a result of indiscriminate emancipation of slaves such customs were shaken to their roots. The poor among the hill people then became an easy prey to money-lenders who, knowing that the hill people understood little of the law or the language of the courts, expounded the law to their own advantage. Besides, the hill people could no longer seek assistance from their chiefs, and with the demise of the chiefs' authority on labour, collective works could not be carried out at all, and when the government wanted to cut a road, they had to import labourers from other districts.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, the hill people from outside British jurisdiction continued to attack villages and take people for ransom or for trade as slaves. One such case came to the notice of the British authorities in 1835. Two men were held in a jail in Arakan, sentenced to seven years with labour in irons, for purchasing two slave girls in Chittagong. The officers in Arakan, upon enquiry, found out that these two women had been captured from a hill village in Arakan during a *dacoit* raid in which four men and nine women had been killed and twenty females had been carried off as slaves.<sup>78</sup> One of the men lodged a petition to the Chief Criminal Court (*Sudder Nizamut Adawlat*) pleading ignorance of the circumstances in which these two women became slaves and T. C. Robertson, who was then a Judge in the Chief Criminal Court, decided the case in favour of the petitioners, as the proceedings of the trial appeared to have been very irregular. Also, in view of the prevalence of slavery in Chittagong, Robertson ordered them to be released immediately as the period they had served in jail was enough for

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<sup>77</sup> Lewin, *Wild Races*, 85-91.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to T. J. M. Reid, Register of the Court of Nizamut Adawlut at the Presidency., 11 February 1835 (House of Commons, 'Correspondence', 344).

their guilt of purchasing without knowledge of the circumstances.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, within British jurisdiction, even benign forms of slavery were abolished and those who purchased slaves were jailed, but the British officers could not protect their own taxpayers from being taken and sold as slaves. Phayre mentions one anecdote in which a 'Khyeng' chief whose slaves had been freed had to till the field by himself, which he had not done for so many years that he lost one of his fingers, and showed this mutilated finger to Phayre as a protest.<sup>80</sup> The pressure therefore became greater on the British officers to protect the people under their rule against marauders.

## 2) Expeditions in Arakan

The first expedition sent by the Company against a group of Chin people in Arakan was in this context: to retrieve people who had been taken as slaves. In October 1838, a chief of 'Lung-khes' attacked a village of a Kumi chief named Hleng-kreing on the Koladyne. Between thirty and forty people were killed, and thirty-eight women and children were taken as slaves. The Government immediately sent eighty sepoy led by a *havildar* on a punitive mission, but when the troops arrived at the site of the village, the villagers had fled into the depth of the hills together with their captives. Later intelligence confirmed that these slaves had been sold to a hill chief in the Chittagong

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<sup>79</sup> Minute recorded by Mr. Robertson in revising the proceedings in the case of Ongyajain., found in the letter from the Register of the Nizamut Adawlut at the Presidency, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 27 February 1835; also Letter from R. D. Mangles, Secretary to Government of Bengal, to the Register to the Nizamut Adawlut at the Presidency 7 April 1835 ('Correspondence on Slavery in India 1838', 1838, 344-5).

<sup>80</sup> Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', 701.

Hill tracts. Upon this, Phayre requested the Magistrate of Chittagong for help and thirty three slaves were recovered from Chittagong: of the other five, two were killed during the retreat and three sold to the 'Shendus' living further inland.<sup>81</sup>

Shortly after the recovery of the slaves, Leng-Khung, the chief who was responsible for the raids, and his brother came to Phayre in order, according to Phayre, to 'answer for their crimes'. Nevertheless, no punishment was meted out to these two, who boasted of the success of their attack. As in the case of the raids in the northern frontier, he justified the attack as a revenge for former maltreatment.<sup>82</sup> Soon after this meeting, however, Leng-kung was killed in an attack by another group and his people dispersed among other groups.<sup>83</sup> Whatever had been arranged between Leng-Kung and Phayre in the first recorded meeting between a Kuki-Chin chief and a British officer was thus nullified.

Raids continued to disturb the northern hills of Arakan, and another expedition was sent against a section of Kumi named 'Waklaings'(or 'Walleng' as spelt by Fytche) in 1842. Phayre and Fytche directed this expedition, and it was the first time that European officers accompanied an excursion into the Kuki-Chin Hills.<sup>84</sup> The progress of this expedition is described in Fytche's memoir of Burma published later in 1878.<sup>85</sup> The troops, consisting of 80 men of the Arakan Local Battalion accompanied by Kumi

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<sup>81</sup> Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', 708; 'Report on the Progress of Arakan under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869', para. 90.

<sup>82</sup> Phayre, 'Account of Arakan', 709-10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 710-1.

<sup>84</sup> 'Report on the Progress of Arakan under the British Rule from 1826 to 1869', para.91.

<sup>85</sup> Albert Fytche, *Burma: Past and Present*, vol.1 (London: C. Kegan Paul & co., 1878) 90-2.

guides, left Akyab on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1847. Soon after their departure they were caught up in heavy rains, which interrupted their journey up the Koladyne, and after 12 days of struggle up the swollen stream, they gave up the original plan of wading through the river and decided to take a more difficult route over the hills. After two days' march through the jungle, they confronted some Walleng fighters who hurled down 'numerous masses of rock, trunks of trees, and other missiles' as well as occasional volleys of muskets. The Walleng fighters were so well hidden that the British troops could not see any of them: the only clue for their position was the smoke from the guns. Fytche ordered the troops to detour from the main road and the Kumi guides proved most helpful in this as they skilfully cut through the bamboo jungle with their *dahs*. When they finally reached the village, the Wallengs had already evacuated to the summit of a hill, where the troops could not follow. All that the British troops could do was to burn the site of the village and return. This only emphasised the difficulties of an expedition through the hills.<sup>86</sup>

In 1846, Phayre planned another expedition against an Anu Kumi village on the Koladyne that had attacked Mru villages in Arakan and in Chittagong. Lieutenant Hopkinson carried out this plan in the following year.<sup>87</sup> Hopkinson's expedition, which left Akyab in December 1847, consisted of fifty sepoy with native officers, with musketeers and *burkundazees*. After a seven-day boat trip up the Koladyne, the troops started an arduous march over the hills: through streams, stumbling over the boulders and leaping down a 'frightful precipice'. The guides, people from the Mru villages that had been attacked, themselves got lost several times. After two days' march in such

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<sup>86</sup> Despatch from Lieutenant Phayre to Captain Bogle, the Commissioner of Arakan, 1 January 1842 (Fytche, *Burma*, vol. 2, Appendix A: 215-8).

<sup>87</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 333, 335.

conditions they finally located the village of the Anu Kumis named Akhoung on Christmas day.<sup>88</sup>

Until musket shots were fired upon the troops Lieutenant Hopkinson did not believe that they had found the village itself. Most of the resistance came from ‘block houses’ built on top of tall trees overlooking a deep valley, connected by a bamboo suspension bridge. On the approach of the troops the women and children were ushered into these structures with a few fighting men as escorts who kept firing on the troops. Others hid themselves on the hillsides and fired on the British troops. When the troops entered the village, Hopkinson ordered his men to fire into the block houses and during the skirmishes he captured a ‘six to seven year old boy’ being ‘aware of the importance of any capture’. This boy proved to be a son of the headman of the village and just before sunset two headmen of this village came up to make a peaceful settlement.

A ceremony of oath took place, in which these headmen pledged entire submission to the Company: to pay tribute and to become dutiful and obedient subjects. On the British side there were three casualties – one dead and two injured – and fourteen on the side of Kumis, including seven deaths and two mortally wounded. Afterwards Hopkinson had leisure to inspect the defences of the village, which, he remarked, ‘four resolute men might have maintained against a whole battalion’: his success was attributed to good fortune, and the surprise with which the attack was carried out.<sup>89</sup>

On the next day Hopkinson began a tour of the other Anu villages in the vicinity

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<sup>88</sup> Report of Hopkinson’s Expedition up the Koladyne, 1847-1848 (Mackenzie, *History*, Appendix G:525-30), 525.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 528.

accompanied by the chief of the village he had just brought under submission. In one sweeping march, he visited three Anu villages and received tokens of submission. Nevertheless, by the time the troops started for home, the sepoys were already showing signs of extreme fatigue: 'unable to carry their muskets, walking lamely with a stick, and so on.'<sup>90</sup> More than half the original number was found to be incapacitated, and the entire troop had to halt to recover in the middle of their return journey. During this halt, a deputation arrived from the 'Khons', through whose land had lain the route to the Shendu, and who were known to be second only to the Shendu in power and influence. The chief of this people expressed his wish to place himself under British protection and settle within the British frontier on the bank of the Koladyne. Hopkinson reported this as a more important event than the submission of the Anu, because the Anu were 'but feudatories of the Khons'.<sup>91</sup>

Such vivid descriptions of the difficulties of expeditions into the hills provided by Fytche and Hopkinson excited more alarm than praise in Calcutta. After receiving Hopkinson's report, the Commissioner of Arakan commented on the unconquerable nature of the hills and the Governor-General pointed out the folly of punitive expeditions.<sup>92</sup> As in the northern frontier, after the failure of these expeditions in the 1840s, the Government's policy became even more firmly against further expeditions. The situation remained the same as before: the frontier area was left unprotected with no finite boundary of the authority of the British Government. As Hopkinson summarised later in 1856, along the Koladyne, and as one moved further north, there were first

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 530.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 336.

Kumis acknowledging British rule, then Kumis who had thrown off their allegiance or never sought any alliance with the British, and finally those unknown people for whom the name 'Shendu' became familiar to the British.<sup>93</sup>

While succeeding in approaching those near the Shendus, the expeditions failed to make any impression on the Shendus, who were by this time known as the powerful people behind all the raids in Arakan and Chittagong. Raids continued on the Arakan, and, to the embarrassment of the government, a sepoy from the Arakan Local Battalion was kidnapped in 1850, and the Government had to issue sanction for reimbursement of the 150 rupees paid by Fytche for the ransom.<sup>94</sup> Again in 1855 the Government paid another ransom of 190 rupees to a Shendu chief to retrieve captives.<sup>95</sup>

In the meantime, the situation in the Chittagong Hills also became unstable. During the 1830s the country of the Phru was undergoing a period of political chaos similar to that of Manipur. After the death of Satung Phru (or 'Sa-du Phru' the eldest son of Kaung-la Phru mentioned in Buchanan<sup>96</sup>) the Marma country of the Pru family was made over to Om Phru, a brother of Satung Pru. During Om Pru's rule the Pru family disintegrated, and conflicts for supremacy ensued among members of the family with different villages of Phru families raiding each other, assisted by other hill people. As Mackenzie surmised, the raids by Mrungs, Kumis or Bonjugis on Pru villages in the

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<sup>93</sup> Hopkinson's Review of Policy on the Chittagong Frontier in 1856 ( Mackenzie, *History*, Appendix H: 531-6)

<sup>94</sup> Despatch from the Court of Directors No.4 of 1850, (NAI Foreign, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1850 )

<sup>95</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 341.

<sup>96</sup> Van Schendel, *Francis Buchanan*, 34.



1830s were in fact part of these family feuds.<sup>97</sup>

Such a crisis on the frontier threatened the villages in the foothills as well, but action from the government did not come swiftly. The Government preferred a stable Marma polity under one leader who would voluntarily take up the defence of this frontier. Interference was not even contemplated until the second half of the 1840s. In 1846, however, new troubles began in the hills when Om Phru died and his son Komalagnio Phru succeeded him. As the incursions of the hill people increased, the Government requested information regarding the defence of his people from Komalagnio. In reply, he informed the Government of the existence of a line of stockades constructed by his predecessor, which he was willing to repair and maintain with the help of the Government. The Magistrate of Chittagong, Henry Ricketts, agreed to this and recommended a remission of 1,000 rupees to provide for 'the defence of his own estate'. At this, the Government directed the Magistrate of Chittagong to make enquiries into the whole subject of the defence of the eastern frontier of Chittagong.<sup>98</sup>

The report by Henry Ricketts came in 1848. First of all, he recommended upholding Komalagnio as the chief among his people, regardless of his actual influence over them: in his own words, 'we [the British Indian Government] must manage through him or not at all'. Other than through the Phrus, he could see no way of managing these inaccessible territories and it would be far easier if the Phrus were under one chief. For this purpose, he suggested strengthening Komalagnio to stop the family feuds among the Phrus and insisting that the chieftainship become 'an impartible

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<sup>97</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 333.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 334-5.

heritage'. This, he recommended, should be accompanied by clarification of the position of his territories within the judicial and administrative system of British India, and by demarcation of the boundary between his territory and that under the British. Additionally, as the Government was transferring its duty of defence to its subject, he argued, a remission of Rs. 1,645 from the revenue should be made to cover the cost of that defence. The Government sanctioned those recommendations on the defence and the remission, but other points were left unheeded.<sup>99</sup>

This, however, did not have much effect in stabilising the frontier. From the information supplied by officers in Arakan, it was obvious that the problems in both places were related, since raiders moved freely between the provinces attacking both sides and retreating out of the British reach; but after the failure of the expeditions in Arakan, the officers on both sides of the frontier were at their wits' end as to how to deal with the situation. Every now and then, local officers suggested measures such as the demarcation of a boundary, another punitive expedition into the heart of Shendu country, or the establishment of a line of defensive posts garrisoned by the 'Mugh battalion' in Arakan and the 'Jumeea police' in Chittagong, under hill chiefs.<sup>100</sup> The Government's opinion, on the other hand, was clarified in a review of policy regarding the Chittagong frontier made in 1854. First of all, matching force for force was rejected, as it would only be 'fatal to the forces'. Second, the demarcation of a boundary between the settled part and the 'joom tract' of Chittagong, and rendering only the settled part under Government responsibility, was rejected on the ground that the 'joom tract' had always been 'a part of the British dominion' and the responsibility of the government could not

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 337-8.

be shaken off. In addition, the expenses and difficulties involved in the operation of laying down the boundary made it impracticable. Third, separating the hill tracts from the settled district and from the operation of the civil and criminal regulations was opposed because of the abnormality of having two regulations in one district and also the same difficulties of demarcating the boundary. Fourth, opening up communication with the Shendus from Arakan and subsidising the chiefs to refrain from raids was also suggested, much in line with the policy of blackmailing, but was not regarded as a reliable method. In the end the only policy that received government's favour was the same as Mr. Ricketts' settlements in 1848: strengthen the paramount chiefs of the Chakma and the Phru, arm them with muskets and 'manage' the country indirectly through them.<sup>101</sup>

## 2. British Knowledge of the Kuki-Chin People

### a) Kuki-Chin Categories

By coincidence, in both the northern and southern Kuki-Chin frontiers, there were expeditions against the Kuki-Chin people in the 1840s. In both cases, these expeditions were possible through the help of the Kuki-Chin people, who guided the troops to the villages of the offenders. In this sense, the British ignorance of the geography of the frontier was compensated for by the existence of the Kuki-Chin people who were friendly to the British Indian Government, which in itself was a result of the consolidation of administration in the plains. These expeditions all failed to guarantee the security of the frontier, but they were not totally without their fruits; at least, the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 338-9.

frontier authorities now had a better idea of the people they were facing in the hills. In fact, one of the priorities of an expedition was to discover the identity of the offender, and through these enquiries the frontier officer became aware of the names of peoples and chiefs, their locations, and their political relationships.

Besides, on the northern Kuki-Chin frontier, with the influx of more Kuki people into the administered area, new categories of the Kuki were identified, such as Thado, Changsen, Rankul, Cheelu, Tewtang and Lushai.<sup>102</sup> These categories were, without exception, regarded as sub-groups of the Kuki. The practise of suffixing them with 'Kuki' in the documents demonstrates this. Even the term 'Lushai' was linked to the Kuki as 'Loosai tribe of Kookies'<sup>103</sup>, or 'Luchye Kukis'<sup>104</sup>.

In this manner all these names were related to each other by being related to the term 'Kuki'. Any attempt to find what kind of affinity is represented by the term 'Kuki' is impossible, precisely due to this: because, as a term given by outsiders, the limits of the term 'Kuki' at this period depends not on the people meant by the term but on the people who use this term, and the different individuals used it with different *extensions*. Yet the frontier officers found it a more convenient term with which to designate the people rather than having to explain each and every group of whom they hardly knew anything. Besides, the vagueness of the term 'Kuki' also meant that the term could be applied to others without causing much contradiction. In this manner, the word Kuki became an umbrella term for all these categories or, in other words, it was given a status

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<sup>102</sup> Report by Lister in 1853 (Mackenzie, *History*, 287-8).

<sup>103</sup> Letter from H. Fergusson, Magistrate of Hill Tipperah to W. Grey, Offg. Under secretary to the Govt. of Bengal. 17 August 1847 (NAI Foreign Political Consultations nos. 8-12, 4 September 1847).

<sup>104</sup> Report by Lister in 1853 (Mackenzie, *History*, 287-8).

of a higher category over the others, which were regarded as sub-categories of 'Kuki'.

'Lushai' was also a name given to the people by others. This term first appeared in documents in the context of the movement of the Kuki people, who themselves pointed to a people called Lushai as a stronger people from whom they were fleeing. Therefore, as in the case of Kuki, this name could not have been co-extensive with a real unit of people in any sense – political, linguistic, cultural or ethnological – but it described, from the outsiders' point of view, a general, stereotyped image of 'enemies'. This indeed was the same image the British officers developed in their subsequent relationship with the Lushai: that they are *a* group of powerful enemies.

One notable fact about the category 'Lushai' is that over a relatively short period of time it became the most prominent subject of official correspondence from the northern Kuki-Chin frontier. As a result, by the time Lister came back from his expedition, 'Lushai' became familiar enough not to need 'Kuki' attached to it. In other words, the term 'Lushai' began to break out of the umbrella of the term 'Kuki' and become an independent term. Lister's observation of the Lushais, that they are 'a cross between the Kukis and Burmese', assisted the tendency to regard them as a separate people from the Kukis. In this, he did not mean the existence of intermarriage but that they were more powerful than the Kukis, that they were more sedentary with more permanent settlements and better organised in political and military terms with better equipment including fire-arms. Therefore, in the differentiation of Lushai from Kukis, the stereotype of them as being a 'powerful tribe' played a major role.

The situation on the Arakan and Chittagong frontier was different from that in the

northern Kuki-Chin frontier. ‘Khyen’, which had been the most noted term, if not the umbrella term, for the hill people north of Arakan during the early days of annexation up to the 1830s, was not even mentioned in relation to the events in the 1840s. The difference in the location of the people seems to have affected this. In fact, the category ‘Khyen’ in Arakan was applied for those hill people near Burma – on the Aeng Pass or towards the source of Talak – while ‘Mru’ and ‘Kumi’ were used for the people towards Chittagong near the source of Koladyne to the north. With the withdrawal of the district headquarters from Aeng in 1837, the British administration also seems to have withdrawn their interest on this tract and no more mention can be found in the British documents about the ‘Khyen’ during the 1840s.

On the other hand, ‘Kumi’ and ‘Mru’ were the categories that appeared most frequently in relation to raids. Some sub-categories of the ‘Kumi’ were also found such as ‘Waklaing’ and ‘Anu’. Yet in Arakan and Chittagong, there was no one single name that was used as a generic term, like the term ‘Kuki’ in the north. Rather, names such as Kumis, Mrus, Khyen, Khons, Lung-khes, Bonjugi were used as equally generic terms without any suggestion of hierarchy among them. There was no incidence when a Mru or Kumi group was referred to as ‘Mru-Khyen’ or ‘Kumi-Kheyn’, nor were they related to ‘Kuki’ in the way that it happened in the north, in such construction as ‘Thado Kuki’. The words ‘Mru’, and ‘Kumi’ were both names given by the people to themselves, from the word meaning ‘man’ in their own languages. It is therefore likely that closer interaction between these people and those in the plains resulted in the adoption of these categories by the people of Arakan and Chittagong, and subsequently by the British officers.

Apart from the administrative reports, there were three articles in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* during this period that contained descriptions of the Kuki-Chin people.<sup>105</sup> All of these referred to powerful people deep in the hills of Arakan and Chittagong: the Shendu or the ‘Bonjogi’. Phayre’s article provides the most complete view of the ethnic categories in Arakan, listing ‘Khyoung-tha, Kúmé or Kwé-mé, Khyeng, Doing-núk, Mroong and other tribes’ as the ‘hill tribes’ of Arakan.<sup>106</sup> In the later part of his article he provides a detailed description of a tribe called ‘Lung-khe’, based on the testimony of Leng-Kung, the chief who had visited him. Lung-khe, Phayre wrote, was the name given to the tribe by the Kumi and Arakanese, but they were also called ‘Boung-ju’ and ‘Bound-jwe’, which is apparently the Bawm-zo or ‘Bonjugi’. Phayre’s conclusion, however, was that ‘Lung-khes’ and ‘Boung-ju’ had been separate people but were conquered and reduced to slavery by a third, or ‘Shindu’. Leng-Kung, the chief of ‘Lung-khes’ told Phayre that he was from one of the clans of Shindu and had conquered the Lung-khes whom he called ‘slaves’ of his family. Therefore, though the people were still called ‘Lung-khes’ by the Kumis, they were in fact ruled by a small number of Shendu conquerors.

Leng-Kung himself did not use any generic terms but ‘*Que-sak*’, meaning ‘upper people’, to describe those that Phayre called Shendu. The word ‘*Que-sak*’ here appears as the same word as ‘*Kachak*’ used for the Lushai by the Thadoe Kukis, both of which designate ‘others from further inland’ without specifying a particular entity. According to Phayre, ‘Shindu’ or more properly ‘Tsen-du’ was the Kumi corruption of what he

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<sup>105</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’; S. R. Tickell, ‘Notes on the Heumá or “Shendoos,” a tribe inhabiting the hills North of Arracan’, *JASB*, vol.21, no.3 (1852): 207-13; Rev. M. Barbe, ‘Some account of the Hill Tribes in the interior of the District of Chittagong, in a letter to the Secretary to the Asiatic Societ’, *JASB*, vol.14, no.161. (1845): 380-91.

<sup>106</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 680.

wrote as ‘Hlaing-ji-u, Hlaing-chou, Hling-ju, and Hleng-tchyó’, which was simply the name of a clan among twelve others of the same nation mentioned by Leng-kung:

- |               |                              |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Tjin-dza   | 7. M’lhul                    |
| 2. Za-tang    | 8. Tinglhoul                 |
| 3. Keng-lot   | 9. Ti-a-dai                  |
| 4. Lhon-shin  | 10. Rul-bu                   |
| 5. Til-teng   | 11. Boi-kheng                |
| 6. Rwol-lweng | 12. Chung-ngla               |
|               | 13. Hlaing-ju <sup>107</sup> |

Most of the names in the above list seem to have been forgotten in history, but the description of the Shendu lands found in the article suggests a link between the Shendu and the Lai-Chins: they were known to have horses; build substantial houses in timber; and, more crucially, to trade with ‘Yan’,<sup>108</sup> which can be none other than a misspelling of ‘Yau’ or ‘Yaw’ in Burma.

Another article regarding the Shendu people by Captain S. R. Tickell<sup>109</sup> supports the liaison between Shendu and the Lai Chin even further. This article was occasioned by a visit of two men - a chief named ‘Lebbey’ and his follower -, from the people called Shendu who came as ‘emissaries or spies’ to a hill village of Arakan in 1850. The visiting party identified themselves as ‘Heumá’, which was a part of the ‘nation’ of the Shendu. Lebbey told Tickell the following names as ‘the others of his nation’:

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Bookee (Lebbey)              | 6. Yanglyng (Khenoung)              |
| 2. Thubbau (Tynkho and Wantlye) | 7. Hoothe (Kheachoo)                |
| 3. Lalyang (Tawho)              | 8. Mowtoo (Gebbo)                   |
| 4. Tumboo (Khooloung)           | 9. Tantlang (Whuhnyn)               |
| 5. Roongfe (Shíko)              | 10. Hekká (J’hachow) <sup>110</sup> |

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 710.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 709-711.

<sup>109</sup> Captain S.R. Tickell, ‘Notes on the Heumá or “Shendoos.” A tribe inhabiting the hills North of Arracan’, *JASB*, vol.21, no.3 (1852): 207-13.

<sup>110</sup> Tickell, ‘Notes on the Heumá’, 208 (names of chiefs are in brackets).



‘Bookee’ was the nearest village to the British frontier, where the informants came from. From here the above names of villages were stated in geographic order from the one nearest to Arakan to the farthest in the north-east. The last three names of the villages mentioned by Tickell, i.e. Mowtoo, Tantlang, and Hekká, correspond with Matu, Thlantlang and Hakka of the current Chin State in their pronunciation as well as geographic locations. Beyond this last village was the Yo country of Burma. Lebbey himself told Tickell that he had only travelled so far as Mowtoo but gave a description of Hekká from what he had heard<sup>111</sup>, which was identical to the description of the ‘Shindu lands’ by Leng-Kung.

More conclusive evidence is the sketch of Lebbey that accompanies the article (see Illustration 1 on the next page). In this picture Lebbey is depicted as holding a spear and a shield of the sort commonly found among the Haka Chin chiefs; wearing a blanket, tied on his left shoulder to make a cross in front of him as was the custom when they were travelling; and, most important of all, wearing a headdress peculiar to the Lai people of the Haka area. These are the unmistakable marks of a Lai Chin chief.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 208-10.



**Illustration 1. Lebbey, the ‘Abéu’ or Chief of the Bookee Clan of the Heumá or Shendu  
(from Tickell, ‘Notes’)**

Parry wrote that the term 'Lakher' was the Lushai term for the 'Māras' and that the Arakanese also called the same group 'Shendu', though in the latter sense it included 'all the Hakas'.<sup>112</sup> According to Bareights, the oral tradition among the 'Lautu', another group of the Lai Chin, tells of 'others' who had occupied the current site of the Lautu but moved southwards at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Among these were a chief named Tanku who ruled over a village named Taungbu and Bareights identifies both of these names as 'Tynkho' and 'Thubbau' in the above list given to Tickell. Furthermore, this village was said to have been two days journey away from another village named 'Heuma'. The villagers of Heuma then moved further towards the west and others occupied this village and changed the name to 'Mala'.<sup>113</sup> This word 'Mala' is later taken to be the name of the 'Lakhers' or 'Mara'.

Summing up all these explanations, it could be conjectured that a certain group of people, who were somewhat related to each other, moved from the current Chin State towards the Arakan-Chittagong frontier. There does not appear to have been one name that the people themselves used, but they were named 'Shendu' by the hill people in Arakan, possibly a corruption of the name of a village, which term was adopted by the British. The term 'Lakher' seems to have been a Burmese corruption of the name of a chief or a section of the people called 'Lung-khe', which was in fact a people conquered by those called 'Shendu'. From Lung-khe the Bengali corruption 'Lunctas' originated and from another name of the conquered people 'Bawm-zo', another Bengali corruption 'Bonjogi' originated, which was then adopted by British officers in Chittagong. The term 'Mara' also seems to have originated from a section of this people. While there are

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<sup>112</sup> N. E. Parry, *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (Shillong: Assam Government press, 1928; reprint Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976) 1, 5 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>113</sup> Bareights, *Les Lautu*, 55-6.

certain grounds for believing that all these terms were used to denote those who had some affinity with the Lai group of Chin people, any efforts to identify these terms with any actual groups and equate them to the groups as we know them now seems futile, since all these terms were used in such a confused manner by different people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Nevertheless, the term ‘Shendu’ was used as a definite stereotype, if not with definite *extension*, by the British officers – that of rapine and plunder. In this sense, it was similar to ‘Lushai’ in the north: they were used to denote whoever came from a certain unknown position and were dreaded for their raiding propensity. Despite the inaccuracy of the terms, by the end of the 1840s, they came to be assumed as names of definite groups by the British officers. What the administrators needed was, in fact, any term that can name a situation conveniently: the complicated reality was not the main interest for them when they were reporting on subjects such as raids.

#### b) The Movement of the Kuki-Chin People

Apart from the fact that they were names given by outsiders, such terms as ‘Kuki’, ‘Lushai’ and ‘Shendu’ were prone to lead to problematic conclusions when they were regarded as the names of ‘tribes’. This was related to the ‘multi-ethnic arrangement’ of villages and the British administrators who had a deeper knowledge of the Kuki-Chin people, Lewin and Edgar, pointed to the folly of regarding these categories as the names of separate groups.

Lewin rejected using such words as ‘tribe’ or ‘clan’ to describe various

denominations of the Kuki-Chin people because the similarity of manners, customs, and religion suggested by the word 'tribe', and of common ancestors suggested by the word 'clan', did not exist among the Kuki-Chin people. Rather, he observed:

They seem to recognize some sort of division of race or blood among themselves; but in one village you will find eight or ten different 'castes': one man will say 'I am a Puntay', another, 'I am a Poitoo', a third will be a Lushai; all these different 'castes' have individually special peculiarities of language and custom which render them easily recognizable among themselves. It does not, however, seem to follow that a village should be composed wholly of Poitoos of Rang, Tehaks, or indeed of any one caste; they are all mixed up together.<sup>114</sup>

Edgar also pointed to similar situations: the people in the village of a Thado chief in Cachar were in fact the same as those under a Poitoo chief in Sylhet or under a Lushai chief in Tripura. The people from Lushai villages constantly came and settled in villages within the British jurisdiction and people from British territory from time to time joined the Lushai chiefs; moreover, at times whole villages, with their chiefs, moved in and out of British jurisdiction.<sup>115</sup>

Such a situation had already been noted by some of the frontier officers during the 1840s. Thus, Lister observed that the Lushai were not one but a 'set of people consisting of Lushais, Chilings, and Gattaes' collectively called Lushais and their fighting force consisted of Lushais, Burmese, as well as 'refugees and outlaws from Manipur and our own frontier'.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Phayre had noted that the people of Leng Kung, though under a Shendu chief, consisted of Lankhes or Lakhers. The whole truth of the process

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<sup>114</sup> Letter from Captain T. H. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts to the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division. 28 June 1872, paras. 6-8 (NAI Foreign Political A. nos. 247-275, September 1872, 'Defence of Eastern Frontier of Bengal')

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para. 18.

<sup>116</sup> Report by Lister in 1853; in Mackenzie, *History*, 291, 293.

leading to the emergence of such mixed polities is not available from the British documents, but what is implied in all these cases is the existence of a constant war of conquest among the Kuki-Chin people. Lewin wrote of the politics of the Kuki as follows:

Certain families among them are recognized as pre-eminent, and from these families only chiefs appear to be chosen. Whether a man shall be powerful or an insignificant leader rests with himself. If a powerful chief has able sons, family ties keep them together, and each son, as he sets up a village of his own, adds to the joint power of the family.<sup>117</sup>

This was the state of things in the northern Kuki-Chin frontier area. The Sailo family of the Lushais became prominent in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and began to expand, conquering and driving other Kukis into the British districts of Sylhet and Cachar. In the case of such political expansion of a family of chiefs, the conquered and the conquering usually came to constitute one village. A part of the conquered people may have moved out of their original place together with their own chiefs but an entire people seldom migrated *en bloc* chased by their enemies. Edgar described this situation as below:

When one Chief became more powerful than any of his rivals, the latter used to move up into Cachar, taking with them as many of their people as remained faithful: but the majority of the clan generally went over to the village of the stronger Chief. It was just as if in a feud between the Campbells and the Mcgregors, the former had proved better men and had driven the Macgregor chief, with some of his clan, to take refuge in the lowlands; the Campbells taking all the clan lands and inducing the greater number of Macgregors to remain on them and acknowledge the head of the Campbells as their chief.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, the Lushai raids of the late 40s were not just for head-hunting or taking slaves: they were wars of conquest, and in a Lushai conquest the conquered soon came

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<sup>117</sup> Letter from Captain T. H. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts to the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, 28 June 1872, paras. 9 (NAI Foreign Political A. nos. 247~275 Sept. 1872 'Defence of Eastern Frontier of Bengal').

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Edgar to Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, 13 March 1871, para. 10.

into the fold of the Lushais. The 429 Thado ‘captives’ who had made their escape from the villages dependent on Mura’s village during Lister’s expedition were more likely to have been such remnants of the former chief who took the opportunity of the destruction of his main village to make a belated escape into Cachar, rather than people taken from their village during the raids.

This situation provided the basis for what is often called ‘the northward movement of the Kuki-Chin people’. Carey and Tuck provide one of the examples. Discussing the affinity among the Chin, Kuki and Lushai, they conjectured, ‘without any pretension to authority’, that these people lived as one people in Tibet before they moved south into Burma; then they added:

As far as the Chins are concerned, we know from our own experience, as well as from the records of Manipur, that the drift of migration has changed and is now towards the north. The Nwitè, Vaipé, and Yo Chins, who within the memory of man resided in the Northern Chin Hills, have now almost entirely recrossed the northern border, either into the hills belonging to Manipur or to the south of Cachar, and their old village sites are now being occupied by the Kanhow clan of Sokte Chins, which also is steadily moving northwards.<sup>119</sup>

What is neglected in the above statement is that the movement of the people was not, as implied by the authors of the above passage, an *en bloc* migration describable as the ‘drift of migration’. Moreover, there are evidences that such movements happened towards the south and south-west as well. Leng-Kung provided an obvious example of such conquest and Phayre wrote that the Kumi tribes represented themselves as being driven further south each succeeding year by ‘fiercer tribes beyond them’.<sup>120</sup> This was repeated in a note Phayre supplied to Hodgson which was published in 1853, in which

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<sup>119</sup> Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 2.

<sup>120</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 684.

Phayre wrote that the Kumis had driven Mrus, and ‘were themselves pressed forward in a westerly and southerly direction by Khyengs and other powerful tribes’.<sup>121</sup> Tickell described the ‘Heumá’ as being at war with a tribe in the north east and east with a people who were said to have ‘their legs tattooed like the Burmese’, who were probably Lushais with Burmese musketeers as reported by Lister.<sup>122</sup> Rev. Barbe, in his article regarding the ‘Banjogi’ or the Bawm-zo wrote that they were being pressed by the Kukis who, being stronger and more numerous, subjected the Bawm-zo to their yoke.<sup>123</sup> Bareights concludes from oral tradition and British records during the colonial period, that ‘it is certain that Khumi and Mru of Chittagong and Arakan Hills lived in the hills peopled by Lakhers and Lautu at present’.<sup>124</sup>

The reason why the northward movement has been better noticed than the southward or south-westward movement seems to be related to the different conditions of the boundaries at the two ends of the Kuki-Chin frontier. As the boundary was better demarcated and therefore more exposed in the northern frontier, the movement was more likely to have been noted by the British authorities than in the south, where such movements would have been absorbed by the existing hill chiefs through whom the British dealt with the frontier indirectly. Carey and Tuck were not able to grasp this situation as they had ‘knocked out’ the narratives regarding Arakan<sup>125</sup> because Arakan was not related to the British conquest of the Chin Hills in the 1890s which was the topic of their work.

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<sup>121</sup> Hodgson, ‘On the Indo-Chinese Borders’, 16 (footnote by Phayre).

<sup>122</sup> Tickell, ‘Notes on the Heumá’, 211.

<sup>123</sup> Barbe, ‘Some Account’, 385.

<sup>124</sup> Bareights, *Les Lautu*, 56 (translation mine).

<sup>125</sup> Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 17.



Behind each of these movements was a stronger group. Every group told of stronger people pressing them from behind: Kukis moving into Cachar alluded to the Lushais; Kumis were pressed by Shendus; Chakmas and Marma in the Chittagong Hills alluded to a powerful people called the Bonjugis while the Bonjugis were also pressed by other Kukis from the north; Heumás by those from north and north east; even Lushai themselves told Lister about a more powerful tribe call 'Poi' to the south who exacted tribute from the Lushais.<sup>126</sup> In another interesting coincidence, those powerful others such as the Shendu and the Poi were invariably represented as having trade relationships with Burma, or more specifically 'Yaw country'. From this, it appears that a certain development had taken place that strengthened those around the central Chin Hills, the traditional centre of the Lai, resulting in the expansion of certain families of chiefs outwards. The likely reason, from the evidence of documents, is the acquisition of firearms.

When the British first annexed Cachar, the Kukis to the southwards were represented as not acquainted with the use of fire-arms, and who thus held such weapons in great awe. This convinced Fisher that by providing fire-arms to Cachari *chowkidars* or Manipuris the Kuki raids would be deterred. Yet in 1832, when Jenkins was on the survey mission in Cachar he met a group of Kuki settlers who told him that they were fleeing from others to the south who were 'well armed with their common weapons but having besides a few musquets.'<sup>127</sup> Twenty years after the first annexation of Cachar, the British finally came face to face with this musket-bearing people: the

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<sup>126</sup> Report by Lister in 1853 (Mackenzie, *History*, 287-8).

<sup>127</sup> Private Journal Kept by Captain Jenkins, 1 December 1831 (OIOC F/4/1446 56957).

Lushai. In fact, when Sukpilal came down to visit Lister in December 1850, he was accompanied by two ‘Chillings’ who had American-made muskets with the name ‘G. Alton’ on the lock. The Bengali interpreter Gobind Ram, said that there was ‘one of these muskets in each house in the raja’s village’ and the Lushais told Lister that they procured the muskets from the Pois in exchange for slaves. Though not always on friendly terms, the Lushais had a trading relationship with the Pois who in turn traded with Burma where they acquired these muskets.<sup>128</sup>

The situation was different in Arakan. While Lieutenant Trant reported that the Khyeng in the vicinity of Aeng were not acquainted with the use of fire-arms,<sup>129</sup> the Junior Commissioner in Arakan wrote in the *Calcutta Gazetteer* that ‘the Khyang’ in Talak had matchlocks among them though they did not understand how to manufacture powder.<sup>130</sup> Then in 1841 Phayre wrote that ‘even the most distant Kumis now possess muskets, which are conveyed up the Kola-dan by petty merchants, and thence passed from tribe to tribe far into the interior’.<sup>131</sup> Tickell also confirmed such an arms trade when he wrote that the Heuma bought, among others, ‘muskets, lead and powder’ from the people nearer to the plains.<sup>132</sup> Later on in 1853, Henry Yule, then on special survey duty of the Arakan Yoma after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, wrote that ‘nearly all Kyengs possess fire-arms’.<sup>133</sup> Ten years later in 1863, Phayre, then Chief Commissioner

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<sup>128</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 296.

<sup>129</sup> Trant, *Two Years*, 438.

<sup>130</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 11 February 1828.

<sup>131</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 705.

<sup>132</sup> Tickell, ‘Notes on the Heumá’, 210.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from H. Yule, esq. on Special Duty to Lieutenant-Colonel R. J. A. Burch, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department, 5 July 1853. para.15 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 122-7, 28 April 1854, ‘Survey and Report upon the Araccan Mountains’).

of British Burma, reported the difficulties of preventing the practice of supplying firearms to the Kukis in the Chittagong hills through Arakan.<sup>134</sup> In 1864, the Inspector General of Police of British Burma reported that ‘Maro, Kumi, Koon-tso (or the Khons) and Shendu have flint muskets in large numbers and these they keep in good order and ready for use’.<sup>135</sup>

It seems that the kind of control on the firearms mentioned in the Calcutta Gazette in 1790<sup>136</sup> had made it relatively easier for the Kuki-Chin people near the southern frontier to acquire firearms. If firearms were being traded from Arakan, more could have been expected in fact from Burma. Yule reported the Yaw people as ‘the chief peddlers and carriers of northern Burma’ and that they had communications with the people in the Koladyne Valley.<sup>137</sup> This trade is also well described by Lehman and it was the Lai people who dominated all the trade routes from both east and west.<sup>138</sup> The Lai people therefore became stronger through their trade with Burma and began to expand outwards.

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<sup>134</sup> Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel A. P. Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burmah and Agent to Governor General, to the Officiating Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, dated 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1863, (NAI Foreign, P.C., no.5 Augut 1853).

<sup>135</sup> Letter from Captain H. T. Duncan, Inspector General of Police, British Burmah, to Captain H. Nelson Davies, Secretary to Chief Commissioner of British Burmah, 11 May 1864, para. 22(NAI Foreign Political A. nos. 123-4, August 1864, ‘Proposal of Chief Commissioner to open a friendly intercourse with the Shindoo and other tribes beyond the British border’).

<sup>136</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 4 November 1790.

<sup>137</sup> Yule, *Narrative*, 279.

<sup>138</sup> Lehman, *Structure*, 167-9.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE LAST DECADE OF THE COMPANY: the 1850s

#### 1. Rapprochements with the Kuki-Chin People

##### a) Development of Relationships on the Northern Frontier

##### 1) Opening Communications with the Lushais

In 1850, following Lister's recommendations, the Government raised the Kuki Levy and placed it under the command of Lieutenant Robert Stewart. It was also intended to give employment to Kuki youths, whose love for fighting, it was hoped, would find a legitimate use in defending the British frontier, but not enough Kuki recruits could be found and half of the number had to be filled with Cacharis.<sup>1</sup> The Government also urged Lister and other frontier officers to open up communications with Barmooeelin, the powerful chief mentioned in Lister's report, who they thought would have been overawed by British arms on this occasion. The British frontier officers, however, did nothing to follow up this suggestion. In the meantime, overtures for peace came from the Lushais first and in October 1850, a *muntri* (a minister or high official) of Sukpilal came to Silchar, together with messengers from four other chiefs. This unexpected turn of events ushered in a new era of dialogue between the British administration and the Lushai on the northern Kuki-Chin frontier.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from J. W. Edgar, to the Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, 13 March 1871, para. 40 (NAI Foreign Pol. A. nos. 576-653, May 1871, 'Lushai Raids'); Barpujari, *Problems*, vol.2, 36-7.

The messengers from the Lushai chiefs told Lister that they wished to place themselves under the protection of the Company against the Pois to the south, in return for tribute. Lister deferred the decision and sent them back saying that the chiefs would have to come in person to discuss such arrangements. He knew very well that protecting the Lushais, who were out of the British jurisdiction, would be impractical, therefore he suggested that the government should reject their overtures to become tributaries. On the other hand, he thought it necessary to take this opportunity to achieve some form of control over the Lushais. To this end, he recommended measures such as laying down a boundary and binding the Lushais to a treaty to give up offenders. He also suggested taking 'hostages among young chiefs' who might be sent by the Government to school to receive a western education. The central authorities, however, did not allow Lister to make any further engagement with the Lushai other than inducing them to respect the boundaries while continuing the momentum of friendship.<sup>2</sup>

Those five chiefs who sent the messengers were recorded as Sukpilal, Barmooeelin, Boottai, Langroo, and Lalpoo.<sup>3</sup> Of these only Sukpilal came in person in December 1850. The rest did not come with him fearing that they might meet the same fate as Lalchokla. Sukpilal admitted the enmity between his people and the Kukis, which had resulted in the raids of 1849. Had the Lushais known that the Kukis were under British protection, argued Sukpilal, they would not have attacked the Kukis. He assured Lister that the Lushai chiefs did not wish to be at war with the British Indian Government and promised, on behalf of all the Lushai chiefs, that they would not molest the Kukis under the British. Furthermore, he promised to search out and restore all British subjects in

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<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 295-6.

<sup>3</sup> See Fig.4 in chapter 6, page 224 above.

captivity in his country when he returned to his village. As a token of friendship, or 'submission' in Lister's words, Sukpial gave Lister an elephant tusk and Lister presented him with some woollen clothes in return.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the friendly atmosphere of this meeting, nothing concrete came out of it: Sukpial failed to acquire Lister's assurance on British protection and Lister received no guarantee regarding the security of the frontier other than the verbal commitment of one chief. The recovery of captives also did not happen despite Sukpial's promise.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, this first meeting between these two was meaningful as the first step towards building confidence. The effect of peace was not felt immediately, but according to Captain G. Verner, who succeeded Lister as the Superintendent of Cachar, regular trade started between Sukpial's people and the inhabitants of Cachar close to his village soon after this meeting.<sup>6</sup>

Four years later, in 1854, three more Lushai deputations visited Cachar. The first was only identified as a group of Lushais that came to Cachar in May 1854, but no more detail can be found in the records.<sup>7</sup> Then in November the same year, Sukpial again sent a deputation and, at around the same time, the third deputation arrived from the 'Rajah of Moara', or Mura whose village had been destroyed in 1850. The purpose of these visits was to confirm the Indian Government's friendship and, as before, to seek

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<sup>4</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 296.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from G. Verner to the Secretary to the Government of India, 26 December 1854 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos.227-8, 19 January 1855, 'Bill for return presents and dieting the deputation from the Loosai Chiefs').

<sup>7</sup> NAI Foreign, Despatch to the Court of Directors, no.42, 13 May 1854, 'Despatch of one of the Chiefs from the Loosai Kookie to ascertain the friendly disposition of our Government'.

protection against the Pois. The Lushai chiefs also proposed moving their villages nearer to the border to facilitate trade with the inhabitants of Cachar. In reply, Captain Verner assured them that the Government was friendly disposed as long as the Lushais refrained from raiding its territories, but reiterated that the Government could not defend the Lushais against the Pois.<sup>8</sup> All three deputations presented elephant tusks and Captain Verner did not neglect his part of hospitality as the bill submitted by him shows: 182-14-2 rupees were realised by the sales of the elephant tusks while 163-3-10 rupees were spent on presents and food for the visitors.<sup>9</sup> Captain Verner reported these visits as a great gain on the part of the Government and remarked that this would 'no doubt tend towards the development of this district' by encouraging settlement of the southern tracts.<sup>10</sup>

After the visit of the messengers from Mura, Verner sent a return mission to this village; Mura then sent another deputation led by his brother 'Mang or Leng Mang Rajah'. When this 'Leng Mang Rajah' arrived at Cachar, Captain Verner requested him to release a son of one of the Thado chiefs, who had been captured during the raids back in 1849. This time, the release of the prisoner was swiftly carried out and Leng Mang returned with the young man a few days later. There was a reason for such a swift release. At this time, a Lushai chief named Belging, known to be a maternal uncle of Barmooeelin, was in jail in Manipur and the Lushais hoped that the British Government would press the Manipur Rajah to release him in exchange for the release of the son of

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from G. Verner to the Secretary to the Government of India, 26 December 1854.

<sup>9</sup> NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 61-2, 23 December 1854, 'Expenses incurred on account of a deputation sent by one of the Chiefs of the Lyuche Kookee tribe'; NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 227-8, 19 January 1855, 'Bill for return presents and dieting the deputation from the Loosai Chiefs.'; NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 119-21, 13 April 1855, 'Deputation sent by Moora Raja, one of the chiefs of Luchij Kookie tribe requesting the mediation of the British Government for the release of Belging, a Chief of that tribe'.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from G. Verner to the Secretary to the Government of India, 26 December 1854.

the Thado chief. Leng Mang also promised, on behalf of the other Lushais chiefs, that the Lushais would never attack Manipur again if this chief were to be freed.<sup>11</sup>

According to Verner, Manipur and the Lushais were at enmity for years and seldom a season passed without Lushai attacks on one or another village dependant on Manipur. In early 1853 a group of Lushais had attacked Naga villages around the Manipur-Cachar road, burned several villages and carried away many captives. A party of Manipuri troops was despatched to Kala Naga to prevent further raids and by a stroke of luck, they met the raiding party led by the said chief, Belging. It was on this occasion, that the Manipuri soldiers captured Belging and five others.<sup>12</sup>

Chandra Kirtee Singh, the Rajah of Manipur, later recalled the same incident, or the capture of an uncle of a Lushai chief, but, according to his account, the name of the captured chief was 'Nuntoorow' who was a maternal uncle of 'Vonolel'.<sup>13</sup> From this, it appears that Barmooeelin, whom Lister recorded as a powerful chief to the south of Mura, was the same as Vanhuiliana (or Vonolel), son of Lalsavunga, whose identity was confirmed during the Lushai Expeditions of 1871-2. How 'Belging' and 'Nuntoorow' or Nunthara could have been one person is a mystery, as well as who Mura and Leng Mang Rajah were. According to Edgar, Mura, the chief of the village destroyed by Lister, died soon after the expedition itself. He left an infant son, Vompilal, and during the latter's boyhood the village was managed by the widow of Mura, Impanu. It is

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Dr. R. Brown, Political Agent, Manipur, to the Assistant Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, 22 March 1869, para. 4 (NAI Foreign Pol.A nos. 216-92, December 1869, 'Loosai raids on the Eastern frontier of Bengal and Munnipore').



possible that Impanu invited Vanhuiliana, who was the nearest chief, to protect her village during this period. This was the normal custom among the Lushai chiefs, and Impanu was recorded to have asked the protection from another chief named Bhuta in 1870 when Vonpilal died at the age of twenty.<sup>14</sup> In this case, it is possible that the deputation from 'Mura' received by Captain Verner was actually from Vanhuiliana, Mura being the name of the village rather than the chief.

There were many such uncertainties regarding the identity of chiefs who sent deputations. This is no surprise as British relationships with the Lushai chiefs had only just started. Of the five chiefs that sent deputations in 1850, Sukpilal's identity is the best established due to his continuing relationship with the British till his death in 1880: he started British-Lushai rapprochements and remained the main channel of communication between the Sailoo chiefs of the Lushai and the British, despite occasional implication in raids.<sup>15</sup> Of the other four, it seems fairly certain that Boottai was also called Vutta, an uncle of Sukpilal,<sup>16</sup> but there is no other evidence for this than the similarity of the sounds. The remaining two, 'Langoo' and 'Lalpoo', seem to be Lunglena, a son of Vutta, and Lalpoong, a son of Lalsavung, respectively, but these are only conjectures even wilder than that for Boottai.

In any case, the communication thus started was an important development in the British relationship with the Lushais, and Captain Verner urged the Government to make

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from J. W. Edgar, to the Commissioner of circuit, Dacca Division, 13 March 1871, para. 12; Letter from F. B. Simson, Officiating Commissioner of Dacca, to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 18 March 1869 (NAI Foreign Political A. nos.216-92, December 1869 'Loosai raids on the Eastern frontier of Bengal and Munnipore').

<sup>15</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 297-324 passim.

<sup>16</sup> See Fig.4 in chapter 6, page 224 above.

representations to the Rajah of Manipur through the Political Agent for the release of Lushai chief Belging.<sup>17</sup> This suggestion was forwarded to Captain McCulloch, the Political Agent in Manipur, in March 1855; however, McCulloch was not inclined to follow this suggestion. In fact, McCulloch had already started negotiations with the Lushai chiefs soon after the capture of Belging in 1853. The negotiations, however, fell apart as the Lushais refused to return Naga captives. Lushai raids into Manipur recommenced and Moirang was attacked in October 1854 with many killed and captured. In the meantime, Belging, seeing no hope of being ransomed by his relatives, made an attempt to escape with two others, but the Kukis under Manipur found them near their village. Belging escaped into the hills but two of his followers were killed and Belging himself was recaptured.<sup>18</sup>

The matter was left at this stage until November 1854 when deputations from the Lushais arrived in Cachar. Obviously, the Lushai chiefs hoped to secure the release of Belging through the Cachar authorities with whom they were on better terms than with the Manipuris. McCulloch was not idle either: when he heard of the contacts between the Superintendent of Cachar and the Lushais, he urged the Rajah of Manipur to send a message to the Lushai chiefs through Captain Verner. Then he himself volunteered to negotiate with the Lushai chiefs in Cachar bringing Belging along with him, but from the following passage found in his letter to the Government, it appears that this scheme was foiled by Captain Verner's refusal to cooperate:

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<sup>17</sup> Letter from Captain G. Verner to the secretary to the Government of Bengal, 12 March 1855 (NAI. Foreign Consultation, nos.119-121, 13 April 1855)

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Captain McCulloch, Political Agent Manipur, to Cecil Beadon, esq., Secretary to government of India, Foreign Department, 7 May 1855 (NAI Foreign, F.C., nos.79-80, 1 June 1855, 'suggestion of Superintendent of Cachar that Government should mediate with Raja of Manipur in obtaining release of Belging, a Looshai Chief')

This [bringing Belging to Cachar] I did without consulting Captain Verner, thinking that he would not object to, but would promote my object. In this I was mistaken and though the Rajah had sent Belging and he had come as far as Kala Naga I ordered him back.<sup>19</sup>

For some reason, the Superintendent of Cachar did not want to enter into negotiations on behalf the Rajah of Manipur, with Belging physically present. Perhaps Verner wanted to keep the negotiation with the Lushais under his own control and secure the release of prisoners from Cachar first. In any case, when the tables were turned and Verner suggested the release of Belging in 1855, McCulloch was not disposed to act according to Verner's wishes. Besides, there had already been contacts between the Manipur Rajah and Vanhuiliana, and McCulloch reported that the intervention of the British Government in obtaining the release of Belging at this time was unnecessary.<sup>20</sup> The Manipur Rajah later released Belging on the promise that the Lushais would not molest the Kukis in Manipur any more. The Lushais kept this promise till the very late 1860s.<sup>21</sup>

Sukpilal again came to Cachar in 1855 for the same purpose as before: to solicit British support against other hill chiefs, claiming to be a tributary to the British Government, since he had presented elephant tusks.<sup>22</sup> Yet the Government did not recognise the exchange of gifts as an agreement for the protection of Sukpilal's country: Verner reiterated that the Government could not defend Sukpilal against hostile tribes in the jungle and no such overtures to become a 'Company's *ryot*' would be accepted as

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 296.

long as Sukpilal's people remained outside the boundary. Reviewing the series of exchanges between Cachar and the Lushais, the Directors concurred with Verner, and emphasised that the Lushai could only be protected if they moved their villages within Cachar to become subjects of the Government.<sup>23</sup>

The rapprochements between the British and the Lushais made Cachar free of raids for twenty years after Lister's expedition. During this period of peace, cultivation expanded towards the southern hills of Cachar. In addition, an indigenous variety of tea was found in Cachar in 1855 and Europeans began opening tea plantations in the southern hills of Cachar.<sup>24</sup> Edgar commented that this was a result of the success of Lister's expedition, which made 'such an impression on the Lushai' through 'its rapidity, secrecy, and boldness'.<sup>25</sup> On closer inspection, however, the friendly intentions of the Lushai should be acknowledged not as a fear of further retribution from the British, but as a result of their reassessment of the situation in which they regarded the British as a potentially useful ally in their political struggle against the others, notably, the 'Pois'.

## 2) Relationship with the Kukis in Manipur

Judging from the proceedings relating to the release of Belging, it appears that the

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<sup>23</sup> Political Despatch to India, no.57, 18 August 1858, para.10 (NAI Foreign, Political Despatch from the Court of Directors no. 57, 18 August 1858, 'Visit of a party of Lushais to the Superintendent of Cachar')

<sup>24</sup> A. S. Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land* (Calcutta: Thacker and Spink, 1893, reprint, Aizawl: FIRMA KLM, 1976) 8. (page citations are to the reprint edition); Percival Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, (London: Wedenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 88-91.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from J. Edgar, Civil Officer with Left Column, Lushai Expeditionary Force, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 5 June 1872 (NAI Foreign Pol. A., nos. 247-5, September 1872 'Lushai Expedition and Future Arrangement').

communication between British officers, and the coordination of their activities by the centre, were poor. Yet this was precisely what was needed if the Government wanted to deal with the problems caused by the Kuki-Chin people effectively. Another incident between Manipur and Cachar that had happened about the same time as the capture of Belging demonstrates this as well.

In May 1853 a Thado chief from Manipur named Kooding kai, with his brother Thoohel raided a village of Thlangum Kukis in Cachar called Koombie, and took two villagers as well as the chief of the village named Pael as captives.<sup>26</sup> Verner immediately requested McCulloch, the Political Agent, to arrest and deliver the offenders and procure the release of captives. A month and a half later, on 19<sup>th</sup> July, having heard no news of progress from McCulloch, Verner sent another letter to urge action by the Manipur government. Captain McCulloch had his own excuses for the delay. The Manipur Rajah had immediately sent an officer to Kooding kai's village, but this person was reported to have died on the way back. Another group had been sent, but contact had been lost due to the flood. McCulloch believed that the prisoners had been released but under the circumstances he could not confirm it. Verner sent another letter in September that Pael and his followers had not returned to his village. Similar events continued and officers were repeatedly sent to capture Kooding kai but it was only on 11<sup>th</sup> December that Kooding kai, Thoohel and two other Kukis were finally delivered to Cachar. Pael and the other captives returned on the 20<sup>th</sup> December: the delay was caused because, as a defeated chief, he could not return to the village without an appropriate ritual.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> NAI Foreign, F.C., no.39, 24 February 1854, 'Dacoity by Kookie Chiefs or Rajas of Munnipoor upon the Kookie village in the Cachar District'.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Captain Verner, Superintendent of Cachar to Captain McCulloch, Political Agent at

Koodingkai was tried in Cachar. He defended himself by saying that this attack was a retaliation for past grudges: some eight years before this raid, Koodingkai stated, his people were fleeing from the Lushais into southern Cachar and asked the Thangum Kukis for help, but the Thlangum Kukis maltreated them instead. After hearing the case, Captain Verner released the Thado chiefs on the promise that they would not seek further retribution. The result was as recommended by Captain McCulloch who pleaded on behalf of the Thado chiefs that the Kuki custom demanded retaliation as an absolute necessity.<sup>28</sup>

In this instance, the delay was caused by the inefficiency of the administration of Manipur. Around this time, the chronic problem of Manipur, and the insecurity of the kingship had again erupted. In 1850 Nar Singh died and his brother Debindro Singh succeeded the throne. At this, Chandra Kirti Singh, who had been in exile in Cachar, collected a sizeable force and marched to Manipur to claim the throne. He was arrested in Cachar and the Government ordered him to be removed to Dacca; however, he managed to escape from his guards and when McCulloch realised that Chandra Kirti Singh's cause was gathering popular support, he urged the Government to make a volte-face and acknowledge him as the Rajah of Manipur.<sup>29</sup> Thus the tables were turned against Debindro Singh and he began making attempts at the throne together with his

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Manipur, 13 December 1853; Letter from Captain Verner to Captain McCulloch, 22 December 1853; Letter from Captain Verner to F. Snipwith, Superintendent of Police in Sylhet, 10 January 1854 (NAI Foreign, F.C., no.39, 14 February 1854 'Dacoity by Kookie Chiefs or Rajas of Munnipoor upon the Kookie village in the Cachar District').

<sup>28</sup> See correspondences between Captain Verner and Captain McCulloch between 1 June 1853 and 7 January 1854 (NAI Foreign, F.C. no.39, 24 February 1854 'Dacoity by Kookie chiefs or Rajas of Manipur upon the Kookie village in the Cachar District').

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

brothers.

According to Captain McCulloch, Manipur was lapsing out of control and the situation resembled the years immediately before the First Anglo-Burmese War. As a solution, he suggested stationing European troops in Manipur to maintain stability as the best method, but, knowing that the government would not agree to such a financial burden, he requested that a public declaration should be made confirming the government's intention to uphold the Rajah, by force if necessary. Therefore, in 1852, after years of non-intervention in the internal matters of Manipur, the Government made a public avowal 'to uphold the present Rajah, and to resist and punish any parties attempting to dispossess him'. This public declaration seems to have had little of the desired effect, as Mackenzie observed, but the Directors were more worried that through this declaration the Government might be bound to guarantee the tyranny of the Rajah.<sup>30</sup>

Under these circumstances, villages at the fringe of Manipur, those of the Kukis and Nagas subservient to Manipur, were subjected to frequent raids from the hill people to the south, the 'southern Kukis' and the Lushais.<sup>31</sup> The trouble with the Lushais ceased by the mid-50s due to the circumstances relating to Belging as described above, but during the second half of the 1850s, another new powerful people began raiding the southern part of Manipur: the Soktes.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 153-5.

<sup>31</sup> See for example NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 67-8, 15 August 1851, 'Aggressions of the Southern Kookies bordering on Munnipoor on a Friendly Kookie Village'; NAI Foreign, F.C., nos. 107-8, 18 March 1853, 'Attack by a party of Lushai upon a Naga Village Close to the Munnipoor Road'.

<sup>32</sup> NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 181-3, 13 February 1857, 'Report of the disgraceful result of the expedition undertaken by the Raja of Manipur against the Soote tribe'.

In 1856 the Soktes committed a particularly serious raid, and the Manipur Rajah decided to send a punitive expedition. McCulloch solicited Government support for this mission by providing ammunition to 1,500 Manipuri troops, and the Rajah himself led the expedition into the area, currently part of the Chin Hills. The result, however, was 'disgraceful': Manipuri troops were lured deep into the jungle where they got totally destroyed and the Rajah barely escaped.<sup>33</sup>

The opinion of the Directors was that such hostilities, or 'oppression' in their own words, by the Manipur Rajah might adversely affect relations between the British and the Kukis, and warned McCulloch not to encourage another expedition, especially because part of the expense was covered by the British Government in the supply of ammunition.<sup>34</sup> Despite such warnings, McCulloch continued to support the Manipuri throne through thick and thin and the government again supplied powder and ammunition to the value of 2,500 rupees in 1859 against the Soktes.<sup>35</sup>

In 1861, when the discontinuation of the post of Political Agent of Manipur was under discussion, Major McCulloch wrote a memorandum on his duties. In this memorandum, he mentioned the Lushai and Sokte as 'powerful and dangerous', though both of them professed friendship at the time of writing. Nevertheless, he was of the opinion that Sokte chiefs should be attacked if possible. As an alternative measure, he wrote that he and the Rajah of Manipur had established villages of Kukis to the south, armed by the Government. These were not to be restricted in terms of cultivation but

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid; Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, 17, 120-1.

<sup>34</sup> NAI Foreign, despatch from the Court of Directors, no. 45, 18 August 1858, 'Two expeditions sent by the Raja of Manipur against hill tribes'.

<sup>35</sup> Mackenzie, *History*, 155.



they were to perform the duties of scouts during the dry season. Called 'sepoy villages', they were 'not quite settled' yet, but he reminded the government that 'by care they might be brought to a proper state of usefulness.'<sup>36</sup> With the failure of the expeditions, policy in Manipur returned to defence through the establishment of Kuki villages.

## b) Developments in the Southern Frontier

### 1) The Annexation of Pegu

The origin of the Second Anglo-Burmese War was very different in many respects from the first. Whereas Burmese territorial expansion and the ambition of Bagyi-daw were in part responsible for the first war, the second was a result of the downright imperialism of the Governor-General, Marquess of Dalhousie, and Commodore Lambert; there had not been a single security threat over the borders or any other polities involved in the events leading up to the war; and diplomatic efforts to avoid the war seemed to have been shortened to the length of the temper of a naval officer. There was, however, one common factor for the two wars. In a minute arguing for the necessity of a war, Dalhousie wrote:

British power in India cannot safely afford to exhibit even a temporary appearance of inferiority. . . The Government of India cannot, consistently with its own safety, appear for one day in an attitude of inferiority; or hope to maintain peace and submission among the numberless princes and people embraced within the vast circuit of the empire, if, for one day, it gave countenance to doubt of the absolute superiority of its arms, and of its continued resolution to assert it.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Memorandum by Major McCulloch (Mackenzie, *History*, 156-7), 157.

<sup>37</sup> Minute by Governor General, 12 February 1852 (William F. B. Laurie, *The Second Burmese War* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1853), Appendix I: 223-34).

In this statement, which echoed John Malcolm to the letter, the necessity of maintaining the prestige of British invincibility was argued more clearly and consciously than any of the statements that had been made during the years leading up to the first war. Thus, it was not merely for the sum of a thousand pounds, but to repair the damaged pride of the British in India, that the Governor-General opted for another war with Burma.

The British pride, or their arrogance, had indeed been strengthened during the intervening years. One basis for such pride was the view that British, or European, civilisation was superior to that of the natives, which had been expressed in the ‘Anglicist’, as opposed to the ‘Orientalist’, view regarding the management of India. This, coupled with utilitarian ideas, which viewed the land and people against the criteria of the realisation of their potential utility, provided another justification for the war. William Laurie, in his contemporary account of the Second Anglo-Burmese War, hailed the war as an agent to advance ‘the cause of civilisation’ in Burma.<sup>38</sup> The land of Burma was represented as ‘fertile and beautiful’, but wasted under the mismanagement of Burmese despotism, which ‘like other oriental despotisms before it, is worn out by its own vice and tyranny’, propped up by ‘a few blustering Burmese officers, the representatives of a self-interested rabble’. In this view, the British war effort was all for the peace and prosperity of Burma and the Burmese, which he trusted might ‘be so employed until peace secures in her fair dominions the entire human family.’<sup>39</sup>

At the beginning of the war, the plan was to occupy three ports – Rangoon, Bassein, and Martaban – and wait for the King to submit during the rains. This was a

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<sup>38</sup> Laurie, *Second Burmese War*, ii.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Pegu: Being a Narrative of Events during the Second Burmese War from August 1852 to Its Conclusion in June 1853* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1854), 3-4.

miscalculation. The ports were easily captured in April 1852, but the King did not submit, and in July, Dalhousie visited Rangoon to discuss a new course of action. Annexation of the whole country was regarded as pointless on military and economic grounds, but the annexation of Pegu was thought to be the best option as it deprived the Burmese kings of their main economic assets, weakening them further. Besides, it would link Arakan and Tenasserim, making it easier to manage the isolated province of Tenasserim.<sup>40</sup> Economic gain was a major factor that attracted both the Government and other observers of the war. Laurie quoted a pro-East India Company magazine - the *Friends of India* - and argued that unlike the financial drain of Tenasserim, or the 'swamps of Arakan', the province of Pegu was rich with 'inexhaustible forests of teak, its fertile soil, its noble rivers, its mineral resources, and its industrious population'. In addition, the British could secure four to five million 'consumers of our manufactures'.<sup>41</sup> The moral justification was that if placed under British control, the whole province would prosper for the 'infinite delight of Peguese'.<sup>42</sup>

During the ensuing cold season, new campaigns began for the conquest of Pegu. Prome was taken on the 10<sup>th</sup> October and Pegu on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> December the entire province of Pegu was announced to be a British province with Arthur Phayre as the first Commissioner.<sup>43</sup> Such actions were taken unilaterally without treaty or negotiation, as Pagan Min showed no sign of submission. At this point, the question for the British was how to end the war: marching troops to Amarapura and

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<sup>40</sup> Hall, *Burma*, 113.

<sup>41</sup> Laurie, *Second Burmese War*, 196.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 18-9, 196; idem, *Pegu*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Hall, *Burma*, 114.

toppling the King was not regarded as the best option as this would mean the annexation of the whole country, but there seemed to be no other option.

While the British troops were preparing for a final march against Amarapura, with reinforcements of 300 elephants conveyed through the Arakan Yoma, a new development took place within the Burmese palace: Mindon Min, who had been the head of a palace faction opposed to continued fighting, staged a successful coup in February 1853. Immediately after his accession to the throne, Mindon Min sent a delegation to Phayre and peace talks began. In March, Phayre met a Burmese delegation with a ready-made treaty including the cession of the province of Pegu to the British. The northern boundary was to be drawn north of Meaday. Prome was regarded too unhealthy and the British could not leave the thick teak forest between Meaday and Prome. The Burmese objected strongly and peace talks broke up in May, but the British went ahead with their occupation and Mindon Min had no alternative than to accept this as a *fait accompli*.<sup>44</sup> Eventually, there was peace between two countries without official recognition and in 1862, the province of Pegu, together with Arakan and Tenasserim, became a province named 'British Burma' with Phayre as the Chief Commissioner.

## 2) Chin Police of Arakan

The military actions of the Second Anglo-Burmese War were confined to the Irrawaddy Valley, so the war had even less implication on the Kuki-Chin people than the first war. There was, however, one important event during the war that introduced a

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<sup>44</sup> U Thant Myint, *Making*, 126.; Maung Htin Aung, *Stricken*, 52-4; Hall, *Burma*, 113-4; Bruce, *Burmese Wars*, 148.

new development in the British-Chin relationship. Towards the close of the war, a Chin chief named Nga Kee Kay<sup>45</sup> voluntarily came to Major C. Maling, the commanding officer in Arakan, with a piece of intelligence that the Burmese were building a stockade at Naragain on the Aeng Pass. He even offered to lead British troops to the exact location, and Captain Barry, commanding the Arakan Sebundy Battalion, set out to turn the enemies out of the position. The assault did not take place owing to 'circumstances over which Nga Kee Kay had no control.' Nevertheless, in December 1852, Major Maling requested the government to reward Nga Kee Kay for his assistance. He added that the attack would have been perfectly feasible with better management and more time to allow the troops to move.<sup>46</sup> The Government sanctioned a sum of 150 rupees as a reward in Jan 1853.<sup>47</sup> This stockade at Naragain was captured by Captain Nuthall in January 1853, again with the assistance of Nga Kee Kay. On this occasion, Captain Nuthall rewarded Nga Kee Kay with an additional 150 rupees from his own pocket and the Government reimbursed this sum and presented Nga Kee Kay with a sabre and a rifle.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Different documents spell his name differently: 'Nga Kyiek Kay' was the way Tickell and Sparks, the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Arakan, spelt his name in December 1852; in later dates, however, 'Nga Ka Kee' became a standard spelling among the British officers with variations such as 'Naga Ka Kee' (an obvious confusion by Secretary to the Government of Bengal), 'Nak-ee-kay' (Captain Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan, in 1853), 'Nakeekay' (Henry Yule, 1854), 'Nga-Kee-Kay' (Captain Ripley, 1858) and so on.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Major C. Maling, Commanding in Arakan to Captain T. R. Sparks, Assistant Commissioner of Kyauk Phyoo, 10 December 1852. (NAI Foreign Consultations, nos.180-2, 7 January 1853, 'Reward of Rupees 150 to a hill chief for intelligence procured regarding the Burmese stockade at Nyragyn in the Aeng Pass').

<sup>47</sup> Letter from the secretary to the Government of India to Commander Arracan, 7 January 1853 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos.180-2, 7 January 1853, 'Reward of Rupees 150 to a hill chief for intelligence procured regarding the Burmese stockade at Nyragyn in the Aeng Pass')

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Captain Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 18 October 1853; Letter from Foreign Department to the Commissioner of Arakan, 18 November 1853 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 26-7, 25 November 1853, 'Reward granted to Kyeng Chief Nak-ee-kay'); Report by Henry Yule on the defences of the Arracan Frontier and other matters connected therewith, part 2., para. 15, 1853. (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 122-7, 28 April 1854, 'Survey and Report upon the Araccan mountains').

At the cessation of hostilities, Captain Henry Yule was ordered to survey the Arakan Yoma on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1853. Like the earlier work of Jenkins and Pemberton, this was mainly for the purpose of defence. Yule's report revealed that virtually nothing had been done regarding the defence or management of the Aeng Pass and its vicinity. He remarked that the region was generally deprived of population, which was the main difficulty for the security of the area. The populated – though not populous – areas ended as soon as one entered into the outskirts of the long spurs of the Yoma and from thence only intermittent Chin villages and their *jhooms* were observed becoming scarcer towards the interior of the mountains. From the top of the central ridge of the Yoma, there was hardly any visible sign of human inhabitation.<sup>49</sup> Yet the traffic along the road was still alive with travellers, merchants, drovers with bullocks and buffaloes, emigrants from Burma and so on.

Safety of these travellers was the problem. All those who passed through, according to Yule, complained of such 'grievous instances' as robberies. The offenders were identified as the Burmese bands and the 'Araings' or 'wilder Kheyngs of the northern districts'.<sup>50</sup> Even the sepoy of the British Indian Army were not safe from the marauders. Captain Henry Hopkinson, the commissioner of Arakan, wrote that the Chins on either side of the Aeng Pass had. . . :

. . . for a long time infested the road and interrupted communication between the military out-posts, plundering travellers, and carrying off the coolies employed with the troops into captivity, so that the pass could not be traversed except under a strong armed escort.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Report by H. Yule on the Defence of Arakan, part.2, paras. 3-5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., para. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Captain Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan, to Secretary to the Government

The coolies and sepoy thus captured had to be ransomed as expeditions were regarded as impossible. This made kidnapping ‘unsuspecting sepoy or over-burdened coolies’ a lucrative source of income for the Chin people around the Aeng Pass and Hopkinson observed that every ransom paid induced more to be kidnapped.<sup>52</sup> The Aeng Pass and its vicinity was practically out of the Government’s control.

As a remedy for this situation, Yule recommended the employment of, none other than, the ‘shrewd and energetic man’ Nga Kee Kay. He also recommended employing 20 to 25 men of ‘his own race’ under permanent pay - the chief at 25 rupees, one *Jemadar* at 15 rupees and 24 men at 7 rupees each.<sup>53</sup> Provided with good muskets from the government, these men were to patrol the passes constantly and watch Burmese movements under the supervision of a district officer who was to keep an eye on Nga Kee Kay so that his men did not abuse their increased power. Such a measure, Yule calculated, would encourage others, who had deserted their *jhooms* in fear of the ‘Araings’ to the north, to return to the vicinity of the Aeng Pass, making the area more populous and therefore safer for the travellers. With yet another war with Burma in mind, Yule also suggested binding all the Chin population in the vicinity, nearly all of whom possessed fire-arms, to come out *en masse* on extraordinary occasions when summoned by Nga Kee Kay.<sup>54</sup>

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of Bengal, 28 February 1854 (NAI Foreign, S.C., no10-11, 28 April 1854).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Nga Kee Kay (25 Rs.)            25 Rs.  
       1 Jemadar (15 Rs.)           15 Rs.  
       24 Men (7 Rs. each)        168 Rs.  
    Total        208 Rs.

(Report by Yule on the Defence of Arakan, part.2)

<sup>54</sup> Report by Yule on the Defence of Arakan, part.2, para. 15.

This was a radical suggestion that had no precedent. It was different from the Kuki Levy of Cachar, which was under European command and was within the structure and command of the British Indian military. According to Yule's suggestion, Nga Kee Kay was to become a commander of his own people who were to be armed and paid from the Company's treasury, while the role of a British officer was to be that of supervision after events, without practical control over his conduct.

Naturally, the Government hesitated to reach a conclusion. In the mean time, the humiliation of British forces in Arakan continued in the Aeng Pass. In one occasion, four coolies who had been transporting supplies to Captain Barry of the Arakan Battalion were captured by the 'Araings' or 'Khyen Yaings' in May 1853. As Captain Sharp, the Principal Assistant to the Commissioner at Ramree, noted in his letter to Captain Hopkinson, this was only one of the many similar occasions in which those in the British Indian army were kidnapped. No retribution had been attempted because the offenders' villages were thought to be unreachable.<sup>55</sup>

In January 1854, while Captain Sharp was at Aeng with Captain Sutherland of the Arakan Local Battalion and Major Maling, two of the captives escaped and returned to Aeng. They identified the village to which they had been confined as Ayetso, and, in addition, gave the names of two other villages – Singan and Moonyain – which cooperated in the kidnapping. Having thus identified the offenders, the officers decided to destroy these villages in retaliation for the years of humiliation the British suffered from the Chins, but for this they needed a reliable guide. At this moment, Nga Kee Kay

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<sup>55</sup> Letter from Captain Sharp to Captain Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan, 12 February 1854. (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos. 10-11, 28 April 1854).



again came forward to help the British. Another sum of 150 rupees was promised on the spot and they marched against the three Chin villages without further delay.

Captain Sharp proceeded with Nga Kee Kay on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February and Captain Sutherland followed a day later with a party of the Arakan Battalion. A hundred Chin fighting men collected by Nga Kee Kay from around Talak accompanied them. After much caution and delay they reached the neighbourhood of the three villages on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup>. They were small villages: Singan and Moonyain contained fifteen houses each and the Ayetso just seven. All three villages had stockades, but when the British troops found them, they were neither guarded nor maintained but left in a dilapidated condition: the villagers obviously did not expect an attack.

At daybreak next morning, the British troops attacked and destroyed the village of Moonyain. The surprise was complete and no resistance was reported. One man was shot by the Talak Chins and another by the sepoy: these were the only casualties reported. Captain Sharp wanted to take some hostages, hoping to exchange them for the remaining British subjects still under captivity. He had ordered Talak Chin men to surround the rear of the village and capture the fleeing 'Araings', but the Talak Chins, who were sympathetic to the 'Araings' did not even try to surround the village. This did not affect Captain Sharp's appreciation of Nga Kee Kay, who appeared to have done his best to carry out the order. In fact, the Talak Chins were not under the authority of Nga Kee Kay nor had they known him before.

In spite of this, Captain Sharp managed to capture one old woman and a little girl of 3 or 4 years wounded in the leg while at the village of Moonyain. They also found

another woman hiding in the jungle and these three were carried back as hostages. The villagers from the other two villages had already defected into the jungle before the British troops reached them. Thus, after burning down all three villages, British troops returned and reached Talak after a day's march on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> February.

In addition to these three captives, Captain Sharp also took six other Chins on his return march and briefly kept them hostage. These were not in any way related to the raids, but were Chins from a village named Kyontso who were coming down to Talak to trade buffaloes. Nga Kee Kay stopped them and Captain Sharp took six of the nine traders and sent the remaining three back to their village with word that those six would only be freed if the villagers of Kyontso ransomed British captives known to have been kept in their neighbouring village Phetso. He knew that this measure was not 'strictly justifiable' but nonetheless he thought it to be a clever way of retrieving British captives without using Government's resources.

Of course, there was no way to justify Captain Sharp's detention of the Kyontso Chins. Upon receiving this report, Captain Hopkinson ordered them to be released immediately. Yet regarding the captives from the village of Moonyain, Captain Hopkinson was particularly hopeful that, in future, the 'Araings' would refrain from taking more captives, as they would realise that instead of bringing in 100 to 200 rupees per head, it would only result in the destruction of their villages and being taken prisoners themselves.<sup>56</sup> The Government also sent 'great praise' to those concerned in the expedition.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Letter from Captain Hopkinson to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 28 February 1854 (NAI Foreign, S.C., nos.10-11, 28 April 1854).

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Secretary for the Government of India to Captain Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan.

This was the first report of success from the Aeng Pass against the Chin. As a result of this success, Government's trust in Nga Kee Kay increased. Two months after the return of Captain Sharp, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1854, the Government ordered Captain Hopkinson to employ Nga Kee Kay and 25 of his followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass and its vicinity. It was done as Yule had suggested, except that the payment for the twenty-four followers of Nga Kee Kay was reduced from 7 rupees to 6 rupees per month per person.<sup>58</sup> This reduction was in line with the normal payment for the *sebundies*, or the irregular native soldiers: sepoy's normally received 7½ rupees per month, while the *sebundies* received 6 rupees.<sup>59</sup> The Government, however, was still hesitant to commit itself fully to this extraordinary measure and made a compromise by making it an experiment subject to revision two years later.<sup>60</sup>

When the prescribed two years expired in November 1856, the government was still not ready to decide on the permanent employment, and authorised another two years' extension of the experimental employment. At the same time, British officers in Arakan were ordered to draw up reports regarding the feasibility of the retention or otherwise of Nga Kee Kay and the 'Khyeng Police'.<sup>61</sup> Another two years passed, and in November 1858, Captain T. W. Ripley, the Principal Assistant Commissioner of Ramree,

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7 April 1854 (NAI Foreign S.C., nos.10-11, 28 April 1854).

<sup>58</sup> Nga Kee Kay (25 Rs.)	25 Rs
1 Jemadar (15 Rs.)	15 Rs
24 Men (6 Rs. each)	144 Rs
Total	184 Rs.

<sup>59</sup> Yule, *Hobson-Jonson*, s.v. 'Sebundy'.

<sup>60</sup> NAI Foreign F.C., nos..37-9, 31 December 1858, 'Sanction to the permanent employment of the Kyeng Chief, Naga Keekay, and 25 followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass'.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

submitted a report concluding that the employment of the Chin Police of Nga Kee Kay had been successful. Captain Ripley wrote that the efficiency of the police had been sufficiently proved, since not a single crime had occurred in the portion of the District covered under Nga Kee Kay's men, in contrast to other parts where bandits still rampaged.<sup>62</sup> He not only solicited sanction for permanent employment, but also suggested an increase in the number of the Chin Police with one more Jemadar and 16 more men at the same rate of payment. According to him, the inhabitants from neighbouring villages had petitioned for the increase of Nga Kee Kay's force to cover a wider area and he supported this request.<sup>63</sup>

This report was conveyed to Major G. Verner, the officiating Commissioner of Arakan, then it was forwarded to the Government of Bengal and from there to the Government of India. Major Verner was of the same opinion as Captain Ripley. Apart from the 'great success' of the scheme, he added that the military officers of the Arakan Battalion and others had been speaking of Nga Kee Kay and his force in the highest terms since he took his office. Regarding the increase in numbers recommended by Ripley, he went further and suggested the creation of more Chin Police parties throughout the District of Akyab where dacoities committed by the hill tribes were of frequent occurrence.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Letter from Captain T. W. Ripley, Principal Assistant Commissioner Ramree, to Major G. Verner, officiating Commissioner of Arakan, 15 November 1858. para.1. (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 37-9, 31 December 1858, 'Sanction to the permanent employment of the Kyeng Chief, Naga Keekay, and 25 followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass').

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. para. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Major G. Verner, officiating Commissioner of Arakan, to the Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 22 November 1858 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 37-9, 31 December 1858, 'Sanction to the permanent employment of the Kyeng Chief, Naga Keekay, and 25 followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass').

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal also concurred and stated that the absence of trouble should be sufficient evidence for the excellence of the force, and solicited sanction for further employment as suggested by the local officers.<sup>65</sup> At this, the Government finally sanctioned the permanent employment of Nga Kee Kay and twenty-five of his followers on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1858. Regarding the increase, however, the decision was deferred. They merely stated that it would be ‘considered should it be found needful’.<sup>66</sup>

Next April, Major Verner requested an increase in the ‘Khyen Police’ to 63 men, at a monthly cost of 455 rupees, but in July he further requested permission for 16 more men, totalling 79 men of all ranks at a monthly cost of 592 rupees. It was almost double the number that had been previously proposed by Captain Ripley. The reason for this increase was the increased need for armed police, created by the withdrawal of the military post at Naragain, and the reduction of the Arakan Battalion.<sup>67</sup> In addition, Major H.M. Garstin, commanding officer of the Arakan Battalion, made yet another suggestion, that the Khyen Police should be increased to 114 men at a monthly cost of 1,002 rupees and placed under the military.<sup>68</sup> Verner and Garstin could not narrow their

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<sup>65</sup> Letter from A. R. Young, secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, 15 December 1858 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 37-9, 31 December 1858, ‘Sanction to the permanent employment of the Kyeng Chief, Naga Keekay, and 25 followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass’).

<sup>66</sup> Letter from R. B. Chapman, esq. officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India to A. R. Young, esq., Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 29 December 1858 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 37-9, 31 December 1858, ‘Sanction to the permanent employment of the Kyeng Chief, Naga Keekay, and 25 followers as a police force in the Aeng Pass’).

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Major G. Verner, Commissioner of Arakan, to the officiating Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 19 July 1859; Letter from Verner to Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 10 September 1859 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 41-3, 30 December 1859, ‘Application from the commissioner for further addition to the Kyeng Police Force for the better protection of the Arracan frontier’).

<sup>68</sup> Letter from H.M. Garstin, Commanding Arracan Battalion, to Verner, 11 September 1859; Letter from Captain Ripley to Verner, 5 September 1859 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 41-3, 30 December 1859).

differences on the necessary scale of increase, or the nature of the duties to be performed by Nga Kee Kay's men. In the end two proposals were laid before the Government, which decided in favour of Major Verner and the increase he had proposed in April – i.e. 63 men at 455 rupees per month – was sanctioned but a further increase was deferred again as it was not a matter in the hands of civil authorities.<sup>69</sup>

The whole affair relating to the employment Nga Kee Kay shows an interesting contrast to the abolition of slavery a decade earlier. Whereas the authorities in London and Calcutta had pressed for the abolition of slavery, hesitation by the central authorities delayed the employment of Nga Kee Kay, which was regarded as essential by all those immediately engaged in the management of the frontier. In fact, the abolition of slavery was an exceptional case among all the administrative actions that affected the Kuki-Chin frontier during the Company's period. Most of the measures for the defence of the frontier had been initiated from the frontier officers in consideration of the local situation. The conciliation and cooperation between the British and the Kuki-Chin people in Cachar and Arakan during the 1850s produced the unprecedented effect of peace on the frontier, but in both cases it was the Kuki-Chin people who first approached the frontier officers. The Government, especially the central authorities, were not willing to take initiatives for the peace of their own frontier, and, overall, the British administration remained defensive, passive, and hesitant to implement policies along the Kuki-Chin frontier.

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<sup>69</sup> Letter from H. U. Browne, Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the officiating Secretary to the Government of India, 3 November 1859; Letter from H. U. Browne to Verner, 3 November 1859; Letter from H. U. Browne, Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 12 December 1859 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 41-3, 30 December 1859).

### c) The Mutiny and the Kuki Levy of Cachar

According to Lawson, indecision and hesitation was not confined to the frontier policy but was a general feature of the Company's rule in India. This, he argues, originated from an intrinsic flaw in the structure of the Company: it was a commercial establishment that had to operate as a ruling body in India. This latter role outgrew its original purpose. In 1813, with the renewal of the Charter Act, the Company lost all the trade monopolies in India, but was left with 'the least glamorous function of all', which was to provide 'bureaucrats as agents of royal power in India'.<sup>70</sup> As a result, the Company became, in effect, a department of state, ruled by an all-powerful Governor-General, running bureaucrats whole and complete in itself. The flaw in this structure, as Lawson says, lay in the lack of a unified purpose motivating all those involved in its operations: 'everyone wanted to make the eastern empire profitable but hardly any group in the civil and military administration possessed a unitary vision of how to achieve this goal'. The Directors wanted a low-cost, lean and efficient bureaucracy, but in reality, as Dalhousie perceived, the military were at the core, holding the whole territory and continuing to expand, absorbing all trade surpluses and adding financial pressure to the Company.<sup>71</sup> The final undoing of this drifting institution came from a crisis created within this core aspect of its rule through the Mutiny of 1857-8.

In the year 1857, what many British had feared came true. The inability of the British officers to satisfy discontented Indian soldiers led to a rising at Meerut. Then,

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<sup>70</sup> Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, (London: Longman, 1997) 137.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

once the British were defeated in Delhi, it exploded into an emergency for the whole of British rule in India. The war lasted more than a year and shook the morale of the British in India to its foundations.<sup>72</sup> When the storm of the Mutiny had died down, Viscount Canning, who had held the office of Governor-General from 1856, continued to hold that position, but in November 1858 he was made a Viceroy of Queen Victoria – no more a servant of the Company but a representative of British sovereignty in India. With this, what had long been the actual state of affairs was finally acknowledged: British India was no more a territory under a company's management but a political entity under the British Empire.

British districts in the Kuki-Chin frontier area were little affected by the Mutiny. Arakan was generally quiet except for a case of alleged insubordination by a naval brigade at Akyab<sup>73</sup>; King Mindon of Burma suppressed suggestions to strike at British Burma while they were at their weakest<sup>74</sup>; no mutiny took place among the native soldiers in Cachar and Sylhet; the Rajah of Manipur and the chiefs of the Lushai remained friendly to the Company. In Chittagong, however, the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry rose against the British late in 1857. The suppression of the mutiny is worth mentioning in some detail here, as it involved Sylhet and Cachar, where the mutineers were finally mopped up by the joint forces of the Sylhet Light Infantry, the Kuki Levy and other Kuki volunteers.

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<sup>72</sup> Spear, *History*, 142-4.

<sup>73</sup> A.R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 30 April 1858, para. 28 (*Further Papers Relative to the Insurrection in the East Indies*, no.9, Cmd. 2779, 1858: 548-52), 551; Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 12 May, 1858, para. 24 (*Further Papers*, no.9, 554-56), 556.

<sup>74</sup> Hall, *Burma*, 117.



The news of the mutiny first reached Dacca on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 1857. The Government responded by sending a naval brigade and volunteers, who disarmed most of the sepoys in Chittagong, but the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry, numbering over two hundred and fifty, resisted with force and fled after a battle.<sup>75</sup> The mutineers crossed the Fenny on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November and made their way into Hill Tripura, intending to proceed through the hills either to Sylhet or to Manipur and thence to Nepal or westwards.<sup>76</sup> They had freed convicts from jails, who accompanied them as coolies. Among these were several Kuki prisoners who guided them through the hills.<sup>77</sup> They had also looted cash amounting to 280,000 rupees from the Chittagong Government – enough to hire hill people to guide or to cut roads for them.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, the mutineers were bound to come to the plains to look for food. There were also women, children and other dependents who were not physically well enough to bear the toilsome marches in the jungle. Therefore, the Government asked the authorities in Sylhet and Cachar to intercept them before they reached Manipur and sent Her Majesty's 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment to Sylhet for this purpose. At the same time, the Government asked the Rajah of Tripura and the chiefs of Chakma for any information relating to the movement of the mutineers.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 12 December 1857, (*Further Papers*, no.9: 331-7).

<sup>76</sup> Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 22 January 1858 , para. 33 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 350-6), 352.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from H. Metcalfe, Judge of Tipperah, to A. R. Young, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 23 November 1857 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 311-2)

<sup>78</sup> Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 12 December 1857, para. 24 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 331-7), 333; Special Narratives of Events in Bengal, 19 December 1857, para.19 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 337-43), 340.

<sup>79</sup> Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 12 December 1857, para.25-6 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 331-7), 333.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, J. Allen, officiating collector at Sylhet, received intelligence that the mutineers had been spotted in the jungle south of Sylhet, moving towards Manipur. Fearing the influence of the mutineers on the native soldiers, the Government had ordered Mr. Allen to disarm the Sylhet Light Infantry on the arrival of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Yet the progress of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment was very slow, much encumbered by tents and baggage, and they were not expected in Sylhet before the 19<sup>th</sup> of December. At this, Mr. Allen wrote to the commander of the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment not to proceed to Sylhet but post his troops at Ajmiriganj and Chhatak, in case the mutineers changed their direction towards the northwest. He had every confidence that the Sylhet Light Infantry would remain loyal to the Government. Moreover, there was a large detachment of Sylhet Light Infantry on duty in Cachar to defend this 'prosperous and improving province', so if he went on to disarm those in Sylhet, taking advantage of the presence of European troops, the defence of neighbouring Cachar would immediately be disorganised.<sup>80</sup>

His confidence in the men of the Sylhet Light Infantry was fully justified. Without any support from European regiments, the Sylhet Light Infantry routed the mutineers in a series of skirmishes from 17<sup>th</sup> December 1857 to 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1858. The first encounter was near a village called Latu on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1857.<sup>81</sup> The mutineers came down to acquire food but were repelled back into the jungle. They then joined in a large group and moved eastwards into the hills south of Cachar. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December Lieutenant Ross, commanding the Sylhet Light Infantry, attacked the main body of mutineers near a Kuki village called Mohunpore south of Hailakandi in Cachar.

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<sup>80</sup> Letter from Mr. J. Allen, officiating member of the Board of Revenue, on deputation at Sylhet, to A. R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 8 December 1857, (*Further Papers*, no.9: 641-2)

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Allen to Young, 18 December 1857 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 667).

The mutineers were beaten back into the jungle. Reporting this, Mr. Allen commented that the Lushais would attack them if they went further south, both for the sake of plunder and to show their friendship to the Government. Thus, instead of pursuing them into the jungle, troops under Lieutenant Stewart, commander of the Kuki-Levy and the officiating Superintendent of Cachar, were placed at the foot of the hills to intercept them when they re-emerged from the jungle.<sup>82</sup>

Both for the British Indian Government and for the mutineers of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry, it was important to acquire cooperation from the denizens of the hills. In this respect, the British had the upper hand. They had already won over the Kukis who worked as scouts, armed with government muskets. In addition, the Government had issued a reward of 50 rupees for every armed mutineer killed or captured. Thus, Kuki scouts followed the mutineers in the jungle and reported their movements to the Government as well as killing stragglers. Lieutenant Stewart especially praised the conduct of Kuki scouts from a village in the estate of the Cachar Tea Company who, directed by the manager of the Company, kept Stewart continually supplied with most reliable information on the movement of the mutineers.<sup>83</sup>

The condition for the mutineers in the jungle was extremely miserable. The Kuki scouts came across several of them who had died of hunger and disease, and found the bodies of their children, whom they had dashed on the ground, being unable to carry.<sup>84</sup> When they came nearer to the plains, there were the combined forces of Sylhet Light

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<sup>82</sup> Letter from Allen to Young, 21 December 1857 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 722-2).

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Lt. Stewart, officiating Superintendent of Cachar, to A. R. Young, Secretary to the Gvment of Bengal, 2 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 759-60) 759.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Infantry and Kuki Levy waiting for them, leaving no other choice but to flee back into the jungle. This pattern continued into January, during which time the mutineers kept moving eastwards, obviously with the intention of entering Manipur.

According to Stewart, the Manipuri princes in the hills saw this as an opportunity to promote their own interests by seizing the throne of Manipur. Some of them were even known to have joined the mutineers. To prevent this, Stewart had kept six of the Manipuri princes in jail. This action further estranged the Manipuri inhabitants in the Cachar Hills.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the Manipur Rajah was firmly on the side of British India. He had sent four hundred soldiers and placed them at the disposal of Lieutenant Stewart while strengthening the defence of his own territories to intercept mutineers or any incursion of Manipuri pretenders.<sup>86</sup> Though appreciative of the Manipur Rajah's support, Stewart was doubtful about the fidelity of the Manipuri soldiers in Cachar: according to him, they were unwilling to take arms against a Manipuri prince and did not mind a change of dynasty in their own country.<sup>87</sup>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1858, the mutineers, joined by a Manipuri prince and his followers, appeared at a small village west of Binnakandi, near the hills that separated Manipur from Cachar. The Sylhet Light Infantry and the Kuki Levy immediately engaged them and the mutineers were beaten from house to house, at last dispersing and fleeing back into the jungle to the south. On this occasion a total of twenty mutineers

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Stewart to Young, 13 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 760-1); see also, Letter from Allen to Young, 25 March 1868 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 250-1).

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Stewart to Young, 2 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 759-60).

<sup>87</sup> Letter from Stewart to Young, 13 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 760-1); see also Letter from Allen to Young, 25 March 1868 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 250-1).

were killed: seventeen were killed during the action, two taken prisoner and executed, and one straggler killed by scouts. The victory not only dispersed the mutineers but also disheartened the Manipuri, who totally deserted the mutineers.<sup>88</sup>

The survivors of Binnakandi were divided into two groups, thirty or forty each; one group remained in the dense jungle south of Binnakandi, and another fled southwards. The former were attacked again on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January, with the help of a Kuki chief named 'Marijihow'. He was described to have been 'particularly active and zealous in tracing and attacking the mutineers' and, together with his followers, he killed no less than sixteen mutineers during this attack. The Manipur Rajah also seized five of the mutineers who tried to flee into his country.

After this battle, Allen reported, there were only forty or fifty left of the mutineers. They were bound to die of starvation if they remained in the jungles where they had been last seen; if they came out, they would be destroyed by the military force; and if they broke up and dispersed, they would be either killed or captured by the Kukis. Therefore, he concluded that nothing more needed to be done about the mutineers from Chittagong.<sup>89</sup> In March, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal reviewed the official correspondence and concluded that only 20 out of 253 of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry were unaccounted for, but some could have died in the jungle before they reached Sylhet and, therefore, an even smaller number had escaped alive.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Letter from Stewart to Young, 13 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 760-1); Letter from Captain J. H. Stevens, Commanding Sylhet Light Infantry, to Allen, 17 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 793-4).

<sup>89</sup> Letter from Allen to Young, 28 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 793).

<sup>90</sup> Special Narrative of Events in Bengal, 6 March 1858, para.13 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 393-7), 394-5.

There was one case in which a Kuki chief was found harbouring two mutineers in his village and providing food to those in the jungle,<sup>91</sup> but, overall, most of the Kukis in Cachar cooperated with the Government and their support was vital for the success of British operations against the mutineers in the hills of Cachar. Stewart described the role played by the Kuki during the operations in the most favourable terms. Apart from the services of the Kuki Levy, Kuki villagers, who had been given arms and employed by Stewart as scouts, killed or brought in as many men of the mutineers as were killed in action by British troops.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, in a letter reporting the end of operations in Cachar, Stewart strongly urged the Government to increase the size of the Kuki-Levy from 200 to 640 men. This, he thought, would provide for the effectual defence of Cachar and the frontier in general at less expense. He also intimated that the Kukis had ‘neither political power nor prestige’ and were therefore less likely to stage another mutiny, but they were, at the same time, ‘naturally brave and inured’ to the climate and to the warfare of the frontier of Cachar. The Kukis, he continued, could act as a better check against the Manipuris, since they had ‘no sympathy with the caste or creed of any other in Hindoostan’, but were bound to the British for protection, which they had received ever since they came into the British territories.<sup>93</sup>

The Government, however, was not as confident as Stewart of the capabilities of

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<sup>91</sup> Letter from Captain J. H. Stevens to Mr. Allen, 17 January 1858 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 793-4)

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Stewart to Young, 20 February 1858, (*Further Papers*, no.9: 448-9).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

the Kuki as soldiers. The Governor-General thought the Kukis in particular, and the 'warlike tribes in Assam' in general were more suited to police duties than military service. Earlier, in June 1857, men and officers of the Kuki-Levy had come to Stewart and volunteered to become a General Service Corps, ready to be stationed at any part of India,<sup>94</sup> but the Governor-General objected to this on the above grounds.<sup>95</sup> The same position, in fact, was reiterated when suggestions for enlisting Nga Kee Kay's men under the military was made by Major Garstin, the Commander of the Arakan Battalion, at the withdrawal of the military post at Naragain.<sup>96</sup>

The proposal by Stewart for the increase of the Kuki Levy seems to have received a similar rejection. In 1863, the Kuki Levy was amalgamated with the police. Yet the Kukis proved ill-suited as police: they could not adapt themselves to the organisation of the police, and their fellow native officers looked down upon them as people without caste, while people regarded them with both 'contempt as hill men and hatred as policemen'.<sup>97</sup> As Edgar commented later, this made the Kukis, whom both Lister and Stewart praised for their pluck and love of fighting, 'the meekest and most inoffensible' of constables.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from R. Stewart, officiating Superintendent of Cachar, to A. R. Young, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 22 June 1857 ('*Appendix A to Further Papers Relative to the Mutiny in the East Indies*', no.5, Cmd.2302, 1857: 255), Narratives of Events in Bengal, 15 August 1857, para.90 (*Further Papers Relative to the Mutiny in the East Indies*, no.5, Cmd.2295, 1857: 1-10), 8.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from Colonel R. J. H. Birch, Secretary to the Government of India, to A. R. Young, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 22 September 1857 (*Further Papers*, no.9: 80-1)

<sup>96</sup> Letter from H. U. Brown, under Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department, 3 November 1859 (NAI Foreign F.C., nos. 41-3, 30 December 1859).

<sup>97</sup> Woodthorpe, *Lushai Expedition*, 14-15; Letter from J. W. Edgar, to the Commissioner of circuit, Dacca Division, dated 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1871, para. 40 (NAI Foreign Pol. A. nos. 576-653 'Lushai Raids')

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Edgar to the Commissioner of Circuit, 13 March 1871, para. 40.

## 2. Ethnic Categories of the Kuki-Chin People

### a) British Administrators and the Categories of the Kuki-Chin

In general, the same observations as the previous chapter can be made for the 1850s: i.e. 'Kuki' continued to be the generic term in Cachar and Manipur with 'Lushai' somewhat distinguished from the 'Kuki'; and in Arakan, 'Khyen', 'Shendu', 'Mru', 'Kumi' and 'Kami' were used as distinctive categories.

In Cachar, with the establishment of the Kuki Levy, Lieutenant Stewart, as the commander of the Kuki Levy, developed a deeper knowledge of the Kuki people and contributed an article to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.<sup>99</sup> In this article, Stewart made the first explicit distinction between 'New Kukis', who had recently arrived, and the 'Old Kukis' who had been around Cachar for a long time. This distinction became standard practice throughout the colonial period. Independent of Stewart, the Manipuris had maintained a similar distinction, calling the 'Old Kukis' by individual clan names but using 'Khongjai' as a blanket term to cover all the 'New Kukis'.<sup>100</sup>

Other than this new distinction, the practice of suffixing 'clan names' or 'sub-categories' with 'Kuki' continued. 'Lushai' was not an exception, as 'Luchey Kukis' was the term used by Captain Verner for the people. Yet continuing talks with the chiefs had confirmed the family relationship among the Lushai chiefs and this, coupled with

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<sup>99</sup> Robert Stewart, 'Notes on Cachar', *JASB*, vol.24 (1855): 582-701.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.; Dun, *Gazetteer*, 32.



the idea that Lushais were more powerful and better organised than the Kukis, encouraged the separation of 'Lushais' from other sub-groups of the Kukis. The following remark by the Directors in 1858 on the progress of talks between Captain Verner and the Lushais shows this tendency most clearly:

The Superintendent very properly informed the Loochais, that your Government could not defend them against hostile tribes in the jungles, but that if compelled to take refuge in Cachar, they would be protected in the same manner as the Kookies.<sup>101</sup>

In the above passage, the term 'Loochai' was used as an independent category from the 'Kookies'. Moreover, it is clear that the Directors understood 'Lushai' as the ones outside British jurisdiction in contrast to the 'Kukis' who were now subservient to the Company. Thus, the understanding of different political relationships between the Company and the Kuki on the one hand and Lushai on the other affected the development of differentiation between the Kuki and the Lushai in the context of Cachar. It is also important to note that it was the Directors, who had no first-hand knowledge of the frontier, who developed a clearer idea of distinction between Lushai and Kuki, while the local officer still used 'Lushai' as a sub-category of 'Kuki'. The further from the actual context, the easier it was to adopt simplified forms of existing categories.

In Arakan, the category 'Khyeng' appeared most frequently in the official documents during the 1850s, while no correspondence took place regarding the people around the Koladyne River, such as 'Kumi', 'Mru' or 'Shendu', who had dominated official correspondence in the previous decade. This was due to the sudden change in

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<sup>101</sup> NAI Foreign Political Despatch from Court of Directors no.57, 18 August, 1858, 'Visit of a party of Loochais to the Superintendent of Cachar' para.10.

the situation around the Aeng Pass produced by the cooperation of Nga Kee Kay, in contrast to the stalemate created towards the Koladyne River. Obviously, this does not mean that the raids from the 'Shendu' had stopped in Arakan and in Chittagong; rather, it seems that after the failure of expeditions in the 1840s, described in the previous chapter, British officers seem to have lost interest in ameliorating the relationship with the Kuki-Chin people towards the source of Koladyne.

The overall situation of the ethnic categories in the Arakan Hills continued to be described in the same way as by Phayre: the British officers still used those categories of 'Khyeng', 'Kumi', 'Kami', 'Mru' and 'Shendu' as principal categories, when describing the situation of the Arakan Hills as a whole.<sup>102</sup> The same situation continued until at least the early 1880s. In the *British Burma Gazetteer*, published by the Government of Burma in 1880, the Chin people were discussed under two separate classes, one definitely of 'Burma stock', such as 'Khami' and 'Mru' and other 'outlying tribes' whose 'tribal relations are doubtful' such as 'Khyeng', 'Anoo or Khoun-tso', 'Khyaw', 'Toungtha' and even 'Kookie'.<sup>103</sup> The broad classification of these categories into two was based on the familiarity of each group to the British officers, distinguished by their *known* ethnic affinities; therefore, it was similar to the division of independent and subjected Chin as held by the Burmese. Yet in essence, all these categories were regarded as separate groups from each other, in other words, there was no concept of

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<sup>102</sup> Letter from Captain H. T. Duncan, Inspector General of Police, British Burmah, to Captain H. Nelson Davies, Secretary to Chief Commissioner of British Burmah, 11 May 1864, para. 22 (NAI Foreign Political A. nos. 123-4, August 1864, 'Proposal of Chief Commissioner to open a friendly intercourse with the Shindoo and other tribes beyond the British border'); Letter from Colonel A. P. Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burmah and Agent to the Governor General, to E. C. Bayley, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, 21 May 1866 (NAI Foreign Political A. nos. 124-9, July 1866, 'Supervision of the Hill Tribes in Northern Arracan').

<sup>103</sup> H. R. Spearman, ed., *British Burma Gazetteer*, [reprinted under the title *Gazetteer of Burma*] (Rangoon: Government Press, 1880. Reprint Delhi: Cultural Publishing House, 1983), 153, 183-8 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

‘sub-’ or ‘supra-’ category regarding the Kuki-Chin people in Arakan.

This was in part because all the officers and authors based their judgement on Phayre, particularly his articles in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*: as the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, as well as one who had first published articles on this topic out of personal experience of the people, his opinions remained unchallenged. Yet not all this continuity can be reduced to the personal influence of Phayre’s authority. Unlike the Bengalis in the northern Kuki-Chin frontier who used the term ‘Kuki’ as a blanket term, the dwellers in Arakan plains do not seem to have employed ‘Khyen’, or any other term, as a generic term inclusive of other known categories.

In this, geographic difference seems to have been a main distinguishing factor. As in Phayre, the categories in Arakan continued to be distinguished mainly according to geographic location. ‘Khyeng’ was used to denote the people along the Arakan Yoma, especially near the Aeng Pass and those who lived around and east of the Talak River; while Kumi, Mru, and Shendu were used for the people around the Koladyne River. Thus, there were two, geographically distinguished, contexts in Arakan: one was the area around Arakan Yoma to the east where the distinction of ‘independent’ and ‘subjected Kheyng’ dominated, and another was around the Koladyne River and towards the source of it, where ‘Kumi’ and ‘Mru’ denoted those nearer to the plains, while ‘Shendu’ was the category for the remote marauders. A political relationship was also implied in this categorisation. ‘Shendu’ represented the remote marauders out of British control towards the source of the Koladyne, while in the Arakan Yoma it was the terms ‘Khyen Yain’ or ‘Araings’ which were used in contrast to the ‘Khyen’ such as the

people of Nga Kee Kay.

From this it can be deduced that the geographic differentiation was related to the different political situations in different parts of Arakan. Around the Koladyne River, the Kumi and Mru of the Kuki-Chin people had a closer relationship with the plains, and hence they were known by the names they called themselves, while those further inland were known to the British by the name the Kumi had given, 'Shendu'. In Arakan Yoma, however, the strong influence of the Burmese distinction coupled with the long neglect of the issue by British officers, resulted in the continuation of the Burmese distinctions of the Kuki-Chin people.

The map compiled by Yule (see M8 on the next page), which accompanies his *Narratives of the Mission to the Court of Ava*, displays this distribution most explicitly. Following the tradition of Pemberton, Yule filled the blanks of the map with the names of people known to reside in the area. Of the Kuki-Chin people, there were, from north to south, 'Kookees', 'Looshae', 'Wild Khyens', 'Mrus', 'Kami and Kumi' and 'Khyens'. Yule, however, did not adopt the term 'Shendu', or 'Poi' alluded to by the other officers, but instead wrote of an 'unexplored Mass of Hills inhabited by a great many tribes of Indo-Chinese type in low stages of civilisation', to the east of Hill Tripura around the Blue Mountain. Apparently he did not regard the rumoured and unconfirmed information regarding Poi or Shendu to be accurate enough to place on the map. On the other hand, he was the first to argue for the affinity between the Kuki and Chin. This was based on the name of the divinity the people worshipped. Lieutenant Stewart had noticed that the 'New Kukis' recognised 'one all-powerful God as the author of the universe', whom they termed 'Puthein'. Yule compared this with the

‘Pasine’, the name of the deity worshipped by the ‘Khyens’ around the Aeng Pass as reported by Trant, and concluded that they must be closely related to each other.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Yule, *Narrative*, 278 (footnote).



## b) Rise of Ethnology and the Kuki-Chin Categories

As seen so far, by the mid-nineteenth century, there were a fair number of publications on the Kuki-Chin, mainly by the administrators. These included, on the one hand, those who freely wrote of the ‘curiosities’ they observed, such as Robert Lindsay or T. A. Trant; and on the other, those, such as Francis Buchanan, or Arthur Phayre, who, through more devoted research and a longer stay, could accumulate a more intimate knowledge of the Kuki-Chin people. The contents as well as the reliability of the information in these works necessarily varied, but taken together they provided a wide range of information on the physical appearance, customs, religion, political and civil institutions, and language of the Kuki-Chin people to their readers in Britain and Europe.

Some of these authors did more than provide facts about the Kuki-Chin people, and included analysis of their own. One common topic of analysis was the affinity of the Kuki-Chin people both among themselves and with others. The interest itself was most clearly expressed by Francis Buchanan, who suggested employing the method of comparative philology to reveal the ‘migrations and connections of nations’.<sup>105</sup> As already shown, Buchanan stopped at providing lists of words and suggesting the directions for further research; however, there were others who approached the same topic from different angles.

Pemberton related the Kuki to the Malay, and traced their origin to the south on the evidence of appearance and the impression of their spoken language. This was in

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<sup>105</sup> Buchanan, ‘A Comparative Vocabulary’, 220.

contrast to the Naga, whom he regarded as of ‘Tartar stock’.<sup>106</sup> Phayre disagreed with Pemberton on this, and argued that the Kuki-Chin people were akin to the ‘Myam-má’ race and distinct from the Malay. The evidence, Phayre argued was, first the oral tradition of the Khyens and Kumis, and second that the Malays had only recently moved to Malacca and Kedah, and therefore, could not have come further north into the eastern hills of Bengal.<sup>107</sup>

On this topic John Crawford was partly of the same opinion as Phayre and partly as Pemberton. He argued that all the nations of Burma – including Burmese, Mon, Shan, Karen, Chin and so on – had the same ‘physical type’ which differed widely from the ‘Chinese and Hindoos, and approached more nearly to the Malays’. Yet he immediately added that they also differed from the Malays ‘so considerably that even a stranger may distinguish them without difficulty.’<sup>108</sup> For Crawford, physical appearance was the most important factor in determining affinities among people, and from such evidence he related the Chin people to the other nations of Burma. All of these then were related to the ‘Indo-Chinese’ which was distinguished from Chinese, Indian or Malay.

Such analytical interest in the affinity of people was not confined to the Kuki-Chin or the people in India, nor was such interest held by just a couple of British officers in India. In fact, it was an almost obsessive pursuit of the Europeans of the time, in relation to the other peoples of the world. By the end of the eighteenth century, a large and still growing amount of information regarding non-Europeans had already been accumulated

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<sup>106</sup> Pemberton, *Report*, 17.

<sup>107</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 684.

<sup>108</sup> Crawford, *Journal*, 372.



within Europe through the activities of traders, travellers, explorers, missionaries, administrators and soldiers. This stimulated a vigorous interest in, and debates on, the diversity of mankind which, in the early nineteenth century, was summed up under one discipline named ‘ethnology’, which, according to Stocking, was ‘the most general scientific framework for the study of the linguistic, physical, and cultural characteristics of dark-skinned, non-European, “uncivilised” peoples.’<sup>109</sup>

The beginning of ethnology is usually traced to the formation of the Ethnological Society of London in 1843.<sup>110</sup> Yet, as seen through the examples regarding the Kuki-Chin people, similar interests had long been prevalent among the intellectuals of Europe, and James Cowles Prichard, the leading ethnologist of the time, had already begun publishing his magnum opus, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, back in 1836.

The paramount interest of Prichard was to explain observed human diversity with the theory of the unity of the human race. The influence of religion was obvious in his approach to the subject, since it was intended to defend the biblical ‘monogenism’ as found in Mosaic Records against the ‘polygenism’ of French ‘philosophes’ based on comparative anatomy.<sup>111</sup> For Prichard the main task of ethnology was:

to trace the history of the tribes and races of men from the most remote periods which are within reach of investigation, to discover their mutual

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<sup>109</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 47, chapter 3 ‘travellers and savages’, 78-109 *passim*.; idem, Introduction to *Researches into the Physical History of Man 5 vols*, by James Cowles Prichard, reprinted with introduction by G. W. Stocking (London: Sherwood Gilbert and Piper, 1836-47; reprint Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), xxxv (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>110</sup> Stocking, Introduction to *Researches*, xxiv; Peter Pels, ‘From Texts to Bodies: Brian Houghton Hodgson and the Emergence of Ethnology in India’, in *Anthropology and Colonialism in Asia and Oceania*, Jan van Bremen and Akitoshi Shimizu, eds. (Surrey: Curzon, 1999) 65.

<sup>111</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 74; idem, introduction to *Researches*, xvii, xx, lii-lv.

relations, and to arrive at conclusions, either certain or probable, as to their affinity or diversity of origin.<sup>112</sup>

For such an enquiry the ‘direct authority of history’ furnished but ‘very imperfect insight into the origins of nations’, so he suggested employing the indirect evidence reflected in languages, civil and religious institutions and mythologies, manners and customs. The most important and reliable of these was the comparison of languages.<sup>113</sup>

The *Researches*, however, were hardly successful in this task. The only comprehensive argument on human affinity in the whole series was that between the ancient Egyptian and the Indian, which he argued through the affinity in languages, political and religious institutions, and myths. The least satisfactory of all was the last chapter concerning ‘the other principal races of men, and their connexion in origin with the foregoing’, which dealt with the Scythian, Goth, Celtic and lastly, ‘the Mongoles and other races resembling them in form’. Regarding the Mongols, he started by quoting several articles that had appeared in *Asiatic Researches* at the turn of the century, including the article on the Kuki by John Rawlins, and made a broad observation that: ‘the natives of several mountainous districts of India, whether from the influence of local causes or other less obvious circumstances, are observed to vary considerably in their figure, and especially in the outline of the face, from the character common in the low country.’<sup>114</sup> Apart from this, as he admitted, he was unable to trace their origin satisfactorily due to the lack of information concerning the ancient history of the natives.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 51.

<sup>113</sup> Prichard, *Researches*., 243-4, 248.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

The problem for Prichard was that the data for his argument were often inadequate. Prichardian ethnology was an exercise exclusively in the 'study' not in the 'field', so the ethnologists relied on published sources supplied by travellers, explorers, administrators and missionaries who wrote what they had observed during their travels. Inevitably, the individual differences in content and the reliability of the information made it difficult to adopt them for uniform analysis. Prichard was aware of this problem and much concerned as well. In 1839 at a meeting of the *British Association for the Advancement of Science*, he read a paper regarding the 'Extinction of some varieties of the Human Race'.<sup>116</sup> In this paper he pointed out:

. . . the irretrievable loss which science must sustain, if so large a portion of the human race, counting by tribes instead of individuals, is suffered to perish, before many interesting questions of a psychological, physiological and philological character, as well as many historical facts in relation to them, have been investigated.<sup>117</sup>

Therefore, 'to rescue and to preserve these from oblivion' for the interest of 'science and humanity', he prepared a list of questions as a guideline for travellers in the field. It comprised 89 questions divided into 8 sections: 49 questions regarding 'Physical Characters'; 3 questions on 'Buildings and Monuments'; 2 questions on 'Works of Arts'; one question on 'Domestic Animals'; 13 questions on 'Government and Laws'; 7 questions on 'Geography and Statistics'; 2 questions on 'Social Relations'; and 13 questions on 'Religion, Superstitions, & c.'

It was an attempt from 'studies' to control the process of the collection of data in

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<sup>116</sup> J. C. Prichard et al. 'Queries respecting the human race, to be addressed to traveller and others, drawn up by a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, appointed in 1839, London' in *JASB* vol.13, no.155, (1844): 919-32. [reprinted from the original proceedings in 1839 by the editors of *JASB*]

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 919.

foreign 'fields'. Britain was not alone in this either. The Ethnographical Society of Paris had also printed a set of questions on the same subject for the use of travellers, with similar contents. Naturally, there was a sense of competition that occurred among the British whenever the French were associated with the same project. The committee added that:

Britain, in her extensive colonial possessions and commerce, and in the number and intelligence of her naval officers, possesses unrivalled facilities for the elucidation of the whole subject; and it would be a stain on her character, as well as a loss to humanity, were she to allow herself to be left behind by other nations in this inquiry.<sup>118</sup>

The same article was reprinted in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1844. The editors of the journal introduced this list as an important paper, 'as pointing out to so many residents in India a kind of knowledge which they may so easily acquire and communicate, and which offers so many points of interest to every thinking mind'. Special attention was drawn to 'the more savage races of India' including those of the Eastern Frontiers, from the study of which many 'scientific laurels' were to be gathered, eventually to become 'useful knowledge with many humane results.'<sup>119</sup>

It is doubtful, however, that any of the British officers in India had enough time and energy to follow this instruction item by item. On the other hand, similar interests had already been widespread among British officers independent of Prichard or his list. Buchanan, Phayre, and John Crawford had already shown a similar interest in the connections between people as already shown, and the interest in the developmental stage of civilisation of different peoples was commonly found among the surveyors and

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 920

<sup>119</sup> See preface by editors to Prichard et al., 'Queries Respecting the Human Race', 919.

administrators after the First Anglo-Burmese War. If there indeed was an observable current among different writers that can be termed as a ‘Prichardian paradigm’ it was not because others followed Prichard’s lead but because Prichard’s work itself was based on the popularity of this particular interest.

In this sense, the contribution of Prichard to ethnology was through the amalgamation of already existing interests and tendencies in a way that provided the broadest framework for the history of the dispersion of mankind. Similarly, it included, within its analytic purview, most of the contemporary disciplines of human science, or the ways of seeing different human groups: such as anatomy, philology, mythology, zoology, and the undercurrent of strong consensus on the developmental stages of human civilisation. On top of this was the attraction of Prichardian monogenism, which was acceptable to the religious sentiments of the British middle class.

On the other hand, the popularity of this paradigm did not end within the study and conference halls, but inspired non-expert travellers with the idea of ‘science’ regarding non-European foreigners. For example, recalling his encounter with ‘very extraordinary looking specimens’ of the human race at Tonghoo, William Laurie wrote in his narrative of the Second Anglo-Burmese War:

It struck the Author that it would be time well spent were a medical man to commence in this new country a series of practical investigations regarding the varieties of mankind, starting from the general conclusion that all the human races *may have had* a common origin. Then, after this, would come an inquiry into the bearing of philological evidence upon the question, the zealous student finishing his labours by persuading live specimens to accompany him to London!<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Laurie, *Pegu*, 306-7 (italics in the origin).

‘Specimen’, ‘varieties of mankind’, were the terms for the natives, and the one who was proposed to engage himself in this ‘practical investigation’ was a ‘medical man’; this was the confident rhetoric of ‘science’. Moreover, this science was to be carried out on the basis of the ‘general conclusion’ which was Prichard’s starting-point. In other words, such study was designed to contribute to the completion of Prichard’s grand project by adding another part of the jigsaw. The influence of the ‘Prichardian paradigm’ on Laurie is also made clear when he later quoted the divisions of ‘Asiatic Nations’ as suggested by Robert Latham, who was an advocate of Prichard.<sup>121</sup>

Laurie observed in Burma that the Burmese had the physical and linguistic features that resembled more nearly the ‘Hindu’ than the Siamese who were themselves nearer to the ‘Chinese.’ This, he argued was proof that the changes within the ‘Seriform stock’ of people were gradual. ‘Seriform stock was a category suggested by Latham to include all the people over ‘China, Thibet, the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, and the base of the Himalayan range of mountains’. The obvious problem for such a category was the difference among those included, but, by pointing to the gradual changes, Laurie was defending the category ‘seriform stock’ as genuinely one family despite the difference between the ‘Chinese’ and the ‘Hindu’.<sup>122</sup>

In the above argument, the Indo-Chinese formed the key to the affinity between the Chinese and Indians. John Crawford’s already quoted argument, that the ‘Indo-Chinese’ was a distinctive group from the ‘Chinese’ or the ‘Hindus’, was an anti-thesis to what

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<sup>121</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 47, 53

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

Laurie argued, following Latham.<sup>123</sup> This debate was the main theme of Brian Houghton Hodgson, who provided a more researched article on the same question.

From 1847, the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* started publishing a series of articles on the ‘aborigines of India’ written by Hodgson, a former Resident to Nepal.<sup>124</sup> The first article, titled ‘A Brief Note on Indian Ethnology’, summarised his intention to build on the success of comparative philology in the demonstration of ‘the unity of the Arian family, from Wales to Assam’, and carry out a similar investigation among the ‘Tamúlian’ or non-Arian population of India<sup>125</sup>. The first object of such a study was to ascertain when, and under what circumstances, this dispersion of ‘the ancient owners of the soil’ took place and the second was to determine the stage of the progress they have made in moral and material terms.<sup>126</sup>

He advocated using physical, linguistic and cultural evidence for this study. Among these, language was the most important tool that could display accurately ‘the point of advancement which the aborigines had reached in thought and in action’. He was convinced that every distinct effective idea must have an appropriate word to express it; therefore, presence and absence of certain concepts in the vocabulary could demonstrate

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<sup>123</sup> Crawford, *Journal*, 372

<sup>124</sup> Brian Houghton Hodgson, ‘On the aborigines of the sub-Himalayas’, *JASB*, vol. 16, (1847): 1235; idem, ‘On the Aborigines of Central India’, *JASB*, vol. 17-2 (1848): 550; idem, ‘A Brief Note on Indian Ethnology’, *JASB*, vol. 18, (1849): 238; idem, ‘Ethnography and Geography of the Sub-Himalayas’, *JASB*, vol. 17-I (1848): 544; idem, ‘Aborigines of Southern India’, *JASB*, vol. 18 (1849): 350; idem, ‘On the aborigines of North-East India’, *JASB*, vol. 18 (1849): 451; idem, ‘On the Indo-Chinese Borders and their connexion with the Himalayans and Tibetans’, *JASB*, vol 22, (1853); see also Pels, ‘From Text’, 78.

<sup>125</sup> Brian Houghton Hodgson, ‘A Brief Note on Indian Ethnology’, *JASB*, vol.18, (Mar. 1849), 238-45 [originally written in 1846 in Darjeeling].

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

the moral and physical status of each people.<sup>127</sup>

His analysis of the Kuki-Chin people appeared towards the end of the series in 1853 under the title ‘On the Indo-Chinese Borders and Their Connexion with the Himalayans and Tibetans’. As the title suggested, the main point he made was the affinity of the Kuki-Chin people with the Indo-Chinese or the oneness of the Indo-Chinese people including the Kuki-Chin group. Most of the data he used was from Phayre, whom he regarded as a ‘warrant for authenticity’.<sup>128</sup> In fact half of the article was a mere reprint of the notes on ‘Khyeng’, ‘Kami’, ‘Kúmi’, ‘Mrú’ and ‘Sák’ supplied to Hodgson by Phayre.

The contents of the portion written by Phayre were not much different from Phayre’s own article on Arakan published ten years earlier. The only notable addition was that here he provided accounts for the names when available. Here, Phayre argued that not only the names ‘Kumi’ and ‘Mru’ but also ‘Khyeng’ were based on their own words meaning ‘man’. He stipulated that ‘Khyeng’ probably was a corruption of *Kláng*, their word for ‘man’: according to Phayre, an Arakanese interpreter wrote the word from the mouth of a man of this race as ‘Khyeng’, but it sounded to him closer to ‘Kláng’.<sup>129</sup>

Hodgson’s idea on the origin of the names, however, differed from Phayre. In a footnote, Hodgson added that ‘Kyáng’ or ‘Khíang’ was a well-known ethnic designation

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 242-3.

<sup>128</sup> Brian Houghton Hodgson, ‘On the Indo-Chinese Borders and their connexion with the Himalayans and Tibetans’, *JASB*, vol 22, (1853).

<sup>129</sup> Hodgson, ‘On the Indo-Chinese’.



among Chinese, Tibetans and many Indo-Chinese. He drew particular attention to the fact that similar elements appear in the names of the people around the region. For example, 'Ká' appeared in 'Kambojian', 'Ká Khyen' and 'Kariens', while the Kambojian 'Kyo' reappeared in the 'Kho' of the 'Koladyne' River and Siamese or 'Tai' appeared again in the 'Moi-Tay'(or Meithei) which was the ethnic name of the Manipuris. All of these, he argue testified for the affinities among them.

In a similar way, he interpreted the name 'Khyeng' as related to 'Khyi' or 'Khyáng' of Chinese,<sup>130</sup> which he used as a proof of the affinity between the two.<sup>131</sup> Also, when Phayre wrote of a 'curious tribe' called 'Khyau'(Cho, apparently the same as the 'Kio' of Buchanan), Hodgson added a note that this must be the 'Kyo' of Kambodia. He then extended his analysis to include Kuki and conjectured that 'Khyi', 'Kyo', 'Khyen', and 'Kuki' might be 'radically one and the same term', all of which derived from one word similar in sound and widespread among the nations of Indo-China: 'Khyi, Kyi, Ki, or Ku' meaning dog, which, in his opinion, was the epithet bestowed on them by the dominant races of Indo-China. 'Ka' of 'Kami' was easily interpreted in the same light as to mean 'men of the Ka tribe'. Then Hodgson's ever-vigilant mind related this to the Himalayas and Tibet where 'Ka', mutable to 'Ki' and 'Ku' was a prefix widely prevalent as the word 'mi' for man is widespread among the people of the Arakan Hills.

This was, in fact, a sub-plot to his main argument: contrary to the conventional view that the people living at the fringe of Indo-China were related either to the Chinese (or Tibetan) or to the Himalayans (or Hindus), Hodgson argued, from the analysis of the

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<sup>130</sup> It is difficult to ascertain the modern equivalent of this term Hodgson was using here, but from the context it is probable that he was alluding to the Zang (藏) people or the Tibetan.

<sup>131</sup> Hodgson, 'On the Indo-Chinese'.

vocabularies of less than three hundred words from each tongue, that there was ‘one type of language prevailing from the Káli to the Koladân, and from Ladakh to Malaca, so as to bring the Himálayans, Indo-Chinese and Tibetans into the same family.’

Hodgson’s approach, when contrasted to that of Phayre, reveals the defining characteristics of the ethnology of the period. Of these two, Phayre was the one who had a closer understanding of the people through his personal experiences. His approach was to learn from the people and his opinion on the topic of the affinity of the people was based primarily on the traditions among the people themselves. Therefore, he concluded that the Khyeng and Kumis were an off-shoot of the ‘Myam-má race’ based on the evidence of their own tradition.<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, Hodgson regarded the ‘fanciful ideas of the past’ as remembered by people at what he regarded as a low stage of civilisation as unreliable; so he gave priority to his own analysis: an analysis of words taken out of context, dissected and processed for universal comparison. The same, in fact, was true of Buchanan, who had adopted the same method for the people of Burma. For both Buchanan and Hodgson the language was regarded as having a one to one relationship with the people who used them, and each of these groups was presumed to have a homogeneous culture and physical type. This was why Buchanan was confused when he found such a number of different languages among the people with similar physical and cultural traits.<sup>133</sup>

This is what Pels noted as the changing academic current from the ‘Orientalist’ to the ‘Anglicist’ approach. Whereas the orientalist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century learned the

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<sup>132</sup> Phayre, ‘Account of Arakan’, 684.

<sup>133</sup> Buchanan, ‘A Comparative Vocabulary’, 220.

languages of the natives and studied their manuscripts, the ethnology of Hodgson involved the study of languages dissected into their component parts, without paying heed to the context, or even trying to learn the languages as such. History was no more derived from the texts or how people remembered them, but reconstructed from the comparative analysis of words in the universal, or 'scientific' context of ethnology.<sup>134</sup>

In this sense, Pels pictures Hodgson as one who introduced the transition of subjects from 'texts' to 'bodies'. To judge Hodgson like this, however, is an over-projection of the scientific racism of the late nineteenth century onto a trend just emerging from the amalgam of different interests about the natives of India. On the one hand, Hodgson's main material was still words, if not texts, rather than bodies. The interest in vocabulary and affinities among different groups had already been visible in the works of Francis Buchanan half a century earlier. There was no abrupt transition: in fact, the person who had sparked off Hodgson's interest in affinities, by providing the basis for the hypothesis of the unity of Indo-European languages, was none other than the most representative of the orientalist, William Jones.<sup>135</sup> Besides, the contemporary interest in 'bodies', as seen in Pemberton or Crawford, was not yet based on measurements, but on impression; therefore, Hodgson as well as Prichard regarded language rather than bodies to be the scientific basis upon which to build the affinity of the people and the history of their migration.

It was, however, the notion of 'science' that set Hodgson apart from the others. The influence of natural science, especially zoology and botany, was strong in the way he

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<sup>134</sup> Peter Pels, 'From text'.

<sup>135</sup> J. M. Edmonds, *An Introduction to Comparative Philology: for Classical Students* (Cambridge: University Press, 1906), 6.

pictured human affinities. As in the works of Prichard, behind such a hypothesis of human affinities was the analogy of a tree with trunk and branches that had been modelled after the division of the animal world: the system of kingdom, class, order, family, genus, and species. Moreover, unlike Pemberton, Crawford or Phayre, Hodgson's works had data for analysis with a clear methodology, and unlike Buchanan, he had a clear orientation: to prove the unity of the non-Arian population of India as a contribution to similar studies over the whole of mankind.

One such global framework was provided by Christian Bunsen in 1854 in his *Philosophy of Universal History*.<sup>136</sup> Here he subsumed most of the languages that cannot be tied to the Indo-European languages to a category called 'Turanian', which included not only the bulk of Asian languages, but also the American, Malayan, Polynesian, and even the Papuan and Australian as well. 'Turanian', together with Iranian, was understood to be a sub-branch of the 'Japhetic race' and the 'Japhetic race' was one of the three main divisions of the whole human language: the other two were 'Chamitic' and 'Semitic' – from the names of three sons of Noah in the Book of Genesis. Bunsen regarded these three as 'three steps of development of one and the same stock'. With this, he encompassed all the languages of the world under one single monogenetic framework that matched the explanation in the Mosaic Records of the Bible.<sup>137</sup>

It was Friedrich Max Müller, a German philologist who came to London in 1846 to consult East India Records, who provided a chapter on the 'Turanian Language' to Bunsen's *Universal History*. Facing a vexing diversity among all the languages classed

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<sup>136</sup> Christian Charles Josias Bunsen, *Outlines of the Philosophy of universal history, applied to language and religion*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1854); quoted in Stocking, *Victorian*, 58.

<sup>137</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 58.

under ‘Turanian’, Müller based his explanation on the morphological classification of languages.<sup>138</sup> In the three-way classification of languages into ‘isolating’, ‘agglutinative’ and ‘inflectional’, Turanian languages were classed as agglutinative, i.e. expressing grammatical relations by prefixes and suffixes.<sup>139</sup> The diversity of the Turanians was then explained by this structural principle of agglutination, which led to rapid differentiation of dialects under the conditions of nomadic life.

The three-way division of language also implied developmental stages, which was then related to the migration of people. According to Müller, from the common centre of all mankind, the first group went to China where the development was arrested at the first stage of the development of language, then came the migration of Turanians and, at last, the migrations of the Semites and ‘Arians’, whose languages had passed out of the stage of ‘mechanical crystallisation’, and achieved ‘such settled principles and such intense individuality in grammar and dictionary, that the national character . . . of its descendants could never obliterate or efface the stamp of their common parent.’<sup>140</sup>

Müller subdivided the Turanian family of language into Northern and Southern divisions.<sup>141</sup> The Southern division of the Turanian family was again divided into ‘Taïc’, ‘Malaic’, ‘Gangetic’, ‘Lohitic’, ‘Munda’, and ‘Tamulic’. Of these, Lohitic included the languages spoken by the people in the Eastern Frontier of India and Burma, along with the six categories of the Kuki-Chin people – Kuki, Khyeng, Kami, Kumi, Shendus, and

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Edmonds, *An Introduction*, 11-2.

<sup>140</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 58-9.

<sup>141</sup> See Appendix B. ‘Genealogical Table of the Turanian Family of Language – Southern Division’, pp. 345-6 below.

Most of the data Müller used to describe this family of language was from Hodgson, whom Müller regarded as ‘our highest living authority and best informant on the ethnology and phonology of the native races of India.’<sup>143</sup> As Hodgson himself did not have much data on the different groups of Kuki or Lushai people, the above list shows more categories of the Chin people in Arakan, which in turn was due to the influence of Phayre, who had been the major informant for Hodgson.

This process of the flow of data from the actual field to London reveals an important point about the categories of early ethnology. For Müller, these categories were primarily linguistic categories, which meant that the names appearing in the above table were the names of languages, and they were distinguished by linguistic characteristics. On the other hand, Hodgson, from whom Müller took these categories, used them primarily as names for different groups of people, or ethnic categories, and language was just one feature he adopted for discussion of human affinity. This was also the case with Phayre, for whom they were the names of peoples in Arakan.

This was what Müller has been always criticised for: even though he, more than any other mentioned so far, opted for a strictly linguistic analysis, his categories pulled him into an area larger than language. Müller, in later days, was strongly against confusing ethnological and phonological categories.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, at least during the

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<sup>142</sup> Friedrich Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longmans Green, 1866), 358-9.

<sup>143</sup> Pels, ‘From text’, 67.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 73; H. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language: A History of Separate*

1850s, he used these categories as more than just linguistic groups. He sometimes attempted to project even those imaginary categories such as Turanian and Arian as actual groups, especially when he discussed their migration. When explaining the diversity of Turanian languages, he alluded to the nomadic lifestyle of the Turanians and, similarly, he often talked of Arians as an actual group with specific territories and their own way of life.<sup>145</sup>

John Crawfurd was highly sceptical of this current that sought affinities among people and languages, and he severely criticised Müller for his argument that ‘the Indo-European was a language ever spoken by such a thing as the Aryan race’. For him it was utterly groundless to argue that ‘all the languages of Europe and Asia from Bengal to the British Isles, however different in appearance, to have sprung from the same stock, and hence, all the people speaking them, black, swarthy and fair, to be of one and the same race of man’.<sup>146</sup>

Another problem with the categories used in ethnology, more general and intrinsic to the discipline, becomes apparent when the Kuki-Chin categories in the above table are compared with the original usages in their local contexts. For an example, as seen in the last chapter, the category ‘Shendu’ in Arakan was an indefinite term that was used by different people to mean different entities. The only common feature the ‘Shendu’ had perhaps was their comparative unfamiliarity to and independence from the people nearer to the British-ruled plains. In this sense, the category ‘Shendu’ could overlap

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*Department* (London: Oxford, 1974), 6, 8-9; Stocking, *Victorian*, 59-60, 68.

<sup>145</sup> Stocking, *Victorian*, 58.

<sup>146</sup> John Crawfurd, ‘On the Aryan or Indo-Germanic Theory’, in *Journal of the Ethnological Society*, vol.1 (1861) 285-6.; quoted in Henson, *British Social Anthropology*, 7-8.

with the category 'Khyen', especially with the 'Independent Khyen' or 'Khyen Yain'. Further evidence for this is that 'Shendu' in Tickell's article implied the Lai group of Chin people who were centred in the area described as inhabited by the 'Khyen Yain' in the maps by Pemberton and Yule. Therefore, 'Khyen' and 'Shendu' were not two separable entities but they were categories used in different contexts: the one by the people near the Arakan Yoma, and the other by the people near the Koladyne River; the same observation can be made of the difference between 'Kuki' and 'Shendu', and 'Kuki' and 'Khyen'.

What actually distinguished one category from another in this case was the context, not the innate characters of the thus-named groups. This was especially so as the names – Shendu, Kuki, and Khyen – were given by outsiders. The complication is much greater than this, since some of the terms in the table, such as Mru, Kumi, and Kami, were the terms the people employed for themselves. Yet, all these names were treated as equally independent categories, comparable to each other, even with fixed locations and with the implication that each category was a unit of migration, with a unique language, culture and, for some, physical traits.

A part of such transformation of categories had been the responsibility of British administrators: in their need to identify names, and, in their position as the rulers over vast territories across different cultures and contexts, the administrators inevitably introduced a degree of standardisation. Yet, when such information was transferred from the administrators in the field, to the ethnologists in their studies, the categories went through a much more thorough de-contextualisation through the 'scientific' process of standardising data for global comparison – dissecting objects into components. As the



main concern of the ethnologists of those days related to the affinities and migrations of 'mankind' on a global scale, they did not think much of the delicate local contexts. Therefore, within the context of the ethnology of the nineteenth century, the categories of the Kuki-Chin people were transformed into one of the many base units for the global categorisation of mankind – whether these were called, races, tribes, or even 'species' – which can be compared, distinguished and grouped with the other categories that came from all over the world through a similar process. Through this, the context fusion that had been introduced locally in administrative forms was now made global.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

#### 1. British Management of the Kuki-Chin Frontier

During the East India Company's rule in India, British interactions with the Kuki-Chin people increased. Whereas the first frontier administrators at Sylhet and Chittagong had barely heard of the name Kuki, by the end of the 1850s there were Kuki villages established under British administrators in the southern frontier of Manipur, Cachar, and Sylhet. In Cachar, a Kuki-levy had been formed under European command, and diplomatic exchanges had been made between the Lushai chiefs and the Superintendent of Cachar, following a decade of raids and expeditions. In Arakan, a group of Chin people were employed as a police force guarding the Aeng Pass, and the villages of the Kumi and Mru around the Koladyne River were paying annual taxes to the Company. The development of direct relationships in Chittagong and Tripura had been minimal, since the British only indirectly managed the frontier in this quarter, yet even here British awareness of the situation increased during the period of the Company.

Most of this increase in relations took place after the First Anglo-Burmese War. Though the British had had contacts with the Kuki-Chin people via Sylhet, Chittagong and Tripura before the war, no effort had been made to manage the frontier: the only action they took against the Kuki-Chin after raids was to close markets temporarily to all the Kuki, while the customs already established under the Mughals, such as paying blackmail to the Paitu Kukis, continued without much interference.

One reason for the change was the geographic expansion of British India after the war: Cachar and Arakan came under direct management while Manipur came under British influence. All these places already had close relationships with the Kuki-Chin, and more contacts were inevitable between the British administration and different groups of the Kuki-Chin people. More important than the geographic expansion, however, were the changes in the attitude of the British Frontier administration, especially a heightened interest in the defence of the frontier. The surveys during the years immediately after the conclusion of the war testify to the interest in the defence of the frontier, which had formerly been utterly neglected. While such renewed interest was only natural after a war with Burma, another factor that influenced the change was the growing consolidation of British rule in the plains, with increasing rationalisation of British administrative practice.

Had the Kuki-Chin people been isolated in the interior of the hills with little interaction with the others around them, it would have been much easier for the British to manage the frontier. Yet all the polities in the frontier were interrelated in an intricate web of relationships, both political and economic. On top of this, any polity in the frontier was composed of different ethnic elements, which van Schendel described as 'multi-ethnic arrangements'. The actual boundary of a polity relied on its power to hold these different elements in an alliance and was only loosely defined, since those at the outskirts of influence could easily break off from the centre and realign with their enemies. Thus, the balance of power in the frontier was extremely volatile and crisis in one polity tended to spread over to its neighbours, as can be seen in the events that led to the First Anglo-Burmese War.

Hence British efforts to consolidate administrations in the newly acquired territories met with trouble. Some of the Kuki-Chin villages were already within their administration. Some of them at the fringe had prearranged tributary relationships with the rulers of the plains that the British came to replace. At times individuals as well as villages as a whole moved in and out of the administered area, from one area to another, or simply threw off what feeble influence the British had over them. Local rebels often joined hands with the hill people. On top of all these, Kuki-Chin raids were reported from all over the frontier, scaring farmers away from the tracts at the foot of the hills.

Such a situation was unsatisfactory for the British administration, especially because by this time British rule in India had already made progress towards a rational government: impersonal rules provided by a set of regulations with administrators carrying out prescribed duties rather than ruling on their own account as feudal lords. The orientation for such development can be seen from the moment Hastings took over the duties of revenue administration directly and provided a central ruling structure for the administration. It was, however, Cornwallis who introduced visible changes through a series of reforms in revenue collection and administrative procedures. Then, in later years, there was also a change of attitude among the British that affected the administrators and propelled further changes: the utilitarian principles of the role of government, the growing influence of Christian evangelism among middle-class Britons, together with the notion of the 'level of civilisation' as the measure of the development of different groups of people, all converged into bringing a more 'Anglicist' viewpoint to the administration of India. By the time of Bentinck's Governor-Generalship, the influence of this new spirit was obvious in the Indian administration, and this in turn

increased governmental intervention into the everyday lives of the people. The Company's servants in India had transformed into administrator-sahibs from the freebooting nabobs exemplified by Robert Lindsay of Sylhet.

For the duration of the Company, however, such changes were not complete and remained mainly as an 'orientation' at the central level. Changes were, however, felt at the frontier, at the edge of the empire, where the British administration was still struggling to gain control over local circumstances. The state of boundaries shows this clearly. A boundary is necessary for a rational administration: it delimitates the duties between different officers, marks the limit within which the rules and regulations can be applied, and distinguishes the tax-payers, or clients under the government's protection, from outsiders; hence it marks the limits of the duties and rights of a government. It was especially imperative for the British Indian government, which, as an alien to the country and people, did not have any traditions to rely on.

Yet the British could not draw the boundary on the frontier with the Kuki-Chin land. The geographic difficulty of finding clear enough landmarks was one important obstacle. There was no river or mountain ridge that could conveniently be taken as a boundary; in fact, the Kuki-Chin lived in the middle of hills which were normally used as markers of boundaries between two powers in the plains as the limits of their domains. Besides, no proper survey was made of these hills or even their outskirts due to the impenetrable nature of the jungle, the climate and the risks in sending a group of surveyors into an unknown area inhabited by potentially hostile people.

A more serious obstacle, however, was of a political nature. In essence, a boundary

divides responsibilities, but in the Kuki-Chin frontier, British officers encountered a barely-known people with whom the British had little communication and who regularly moved their villages. It was impossible for the British even to conceive negotiating a boundary with such people. In other words, the British concept of boundary was not susceptible in the frontier with the Kuki-Chin to the particular feature of Kuki-Chin society. Thus, it was only towards those whose political constitution was similar to that of the British that a boundary could be negotiated. The examples were the southern boundary of Sylhet with Hill Tripura, whose Rajah was already under British influence, and boundaries with Burma in Manipur and Arakan in the aftermath of the First Anglo-Burmese War: the other parts were left unsurveyed and undemarcated. The only way of obtaining a boundary against the Kuki-Chin land would have been to demarcate a convenient line unilaterally and defend it by a line of military posts, as the authorities at Chittagong suggested at times, though the government was not prepared to bear such expenditure.

Thus, while growing consolidation of the administration increased the pressure for the government to protect the tax-payers under its administration, the reality of the unspecified boundary left this very task muddled over the question of who was to be defended against whom and what other measures should be adopted for their defence.

In this situation, actual administrative actions in any frontier situation were decided, item by item, as a result of interplay between the frontier administrator's assessment of the situation and the consideration of strategic and financial feasibilities, which usually loomed larger with the central authorities in Calcutta and London. In general, frontier officers, armed with their undisputed authority on the situation at the frontier,

improvised administrative actions, usually preferring active solutions that encouraged engagements with the Kuki-Chin people. At the other extreme were the Directors in London whose main concerns were financial feasibility, and who as a rule preferred to avoid engagement outside the administered area, since it had proved to be expensive and politically embarrassing at times. In between were the Governor-Generals, supported by departmental secretaries. They were usually those with visions for the empire, which, however, were not directed towards the hills but to the other more stable polities that occupied the wealthier plains. Among them, there was no consistent policy in relation to the management of the frontier and an inbuilt reluctance to confront the problem.

The first measure adopted by frontier officers was indirect defence by a line of friendly villages. In Cachar, Sylhet and Manipur this was done by settlements established using an otherwise mobile population of Manipuri and Kuki immigrants. In Arakan and Chittagong such arrangements were made through the villages that had already come under a tributary relationship to the governments in the plains before the British occupation. In essence, these were the actual frontier villages that were at the very limit of British India: the actual administrative limits of British India towards the Kuki-Chin frontier lay in the nominal control the British had over these villages.

Also, through these villages the British Empire was spilling over towards the outside. When these villages were strong enough to fend off the Kuki-Chin raids, they worked as shields protecting the plains by deterring or absorbing the Kuki raids. But the government in the end had to take up the responsibility of protection when these villages themselves were attacked. In Arakan, the British interest in these villages was

only in the collection of nominal tributes, but as British influence grew over these villages, it became more necessary to punish those who attacked the villages under British protection, to show that the government could protect its clients.

Thus, expeditions were attempted in the 1840s. If the increased relationship with the frontier villages was a reason that made expeditions necessary, it was also a factor in making possible such military deployments into the hills: the existence of friendly groups of Kuki-Chin people who were willing to guide British troops to the villages of culprits was an essential factor in making such adventures possible. These expeditions, however, only confirmed British limitations and the policy returned, even more firmly than before, to the defensive.

The effect of this policy on the Kuki-Chin people was not immediately noticeable. Definitely, however, the Kuki-Chin people knew that the British had taken over from the local rulers in the plains and some of them even tried to form alliances with the British. Yet the British were wary of expanding their political influence into the hills through such alliances. The British principle was definite: the boundary had to be maintained and British influence should be confined within it, even though the actual line of the boundary was non-existent. They welcomed trade but politically they wanted to draw a sharp line: defence would be provided only when the people moved inside the boundary, so becoming the Company's subjects, but once they had moved in, they were requested not to move between different administrative units, not to mention in and out of the British administration. Meanwhile, life in the plains came under stronger control and certain activities such as the trans-border trade in guns and slaves were prohibited; with the clear long-term effect of increasing the isolation of the hills.



## 2. Administration and Ethnographic Knowledge

The consolidation of the administration in the plains coincided with the growth of British knowledge of the frontier people including the Kuki-Chins. It was an inevitable result of proximity and increasing interaction. Until the First Anglo-Burmese War, the administrators as individuals reported on the Kuki-Chin people out of their own interest. This was even the case with Buchanan. The occasions that enabled him to collect information on Burma and the Chittagong Hills were definitely administrative, with the clear purpose of collecting information that would be useful for the administration. Nevertheless, his interest in the people was not just a direct result of these administrative enquiries. It was just as much driven by a desire to acquire a general knowledge about the people and territory, and the specific direction of his enquiries was influenced by the scientific-framework, set in a broader context than the administration of India.

The surveys after the First Anglo-Burmese War were a different case: they were purposefully orchestrated for administrative benefits, of which ethnographic knowledge was also a part. The most important information for the administration at the time was geographical knowledge, which was vital in finding the best mode of defence and possibilities for economic improvement. Ethnographic knowledge was only sought after as a part of general knowledge of the area under British influence. Each different individual collected different information according to his own interests and there was no prescribed ethnographic information that was sought after from the surveys.

Nevertheless, there was a general tendency that can be found among those who reported on the Kuki-Chin people: they all commented on the usefulness of the people in terms of their contribution to wider society, gauged by the possible role they could play in helping the administration of the British Indian government. The origin of this point of view, however, does not lie in the pursuit of narrow administrative benefits. Indeed, such suggestions were also meant to be beneficial for the people, since they were to be brought into 'civilisation'. Rather it was the changes of attitude in nineteenth century Britain that also affected the changes in the British Indian administration – a mixture of utilitarianism, interest in human progress gauged by the stage of civilisation, and evangelism.

The person who most explicitly suggested the pursuit of ethnographic – even ethnological – knowledge for the benefit of administration was Brian Houghton Hodgson, who argued that a 'statesman' could also profit from ethnological studies of the Tamúlians, which would unlock the secret of the diverse conditions to which different groups of the human race had been subjected. These studies would help unlock the secret of why certain people progressed and others did not – and in the end facilitate the colonial government's effort to bring progress among the Tumúlian as well as the Arians. Yet even for him, this was an added benefit rather than the main reason for such studies.

In fact, early ethnology was also under the influence of the same intellectual trends that had affected the administrators in the mid-nineteenth century. A very similar interest in 'civilisation' – not 'race' as physical types as yet – as the measure for the different capacities of human groups can also be found in the ethnological works. Yet

ethnology also guided the interest in expanding the study of mankind in specific directions, which it had inherited from its predecessors, such as comparative philology: the affinity among different groups of mankind and the origin of their difference. Whether one agrees with one paradigm or another, the academic debate had created a general direction for enquiries into mankind. Given that the rise of ethnology was in turn based on the literature produced in colonial circles through the activities of administrators and travellers, this in fact was what Baber termed as the ‘co-production’ between scientific knowledge, technology, institutions, and colonialism in the context of British India.

### 3. Categorisation of the Kuki-Chin People

By the end of the period of the Company, ‘Kuki’, ‘Lushai’, ‘Khyen’, ‘Shendu’, ‘Mru’, ‘Kumi’ and ‘Kami’ were the main generic categories of the Kuki-Chin used by British officers. The usage of such terms was, without exception, what the British inherited from the local non-Kuki-Chin population with whom the British had closer relationships – such as the Bengali, Manipuri, Burmese, and Arakanese. These were the first to tell the British about the people further in the hills, at a time when the British had never even met one, and as the British administration expanded closer towards the hills while becoming closer to the people under its administration, more detailed knowledge became available in place of a mythical representation of the Kukis as half brutes living in the trees.

It would be impossible to know the exact situations of the ethnic categories in the local contexts, but for the work of Buchanan, who provided valuable accounts of the

ethnic categories used in Burma and the Chittagong Hills. As his work shows, in both Burma and the Chittagong Hills a group of people was known by a set of different names according to the person categorising them: there were multiple systems of categorisation. Also, different names had different *extensions* and *intensions* according to the individuals using them. There seems, however, to have been a degree of standardisation or consensus among these people who were relatively close to each other, or who shared a similar culture.

This means, on the other hand, that where different cultures overlapped the task of ethnic categorisation would be most complicated. This is best exemplified by the case of the Chittagong Hills where there were Arakanese, Bengali, and Tripuri influences – to mention but a few of the better known, without regard to the accuracy of such divisions – projected over the already complicated ethnic scenery. For example, there was a category that described the mode of cultivation employed by the people, namely ‘Jumma’ and there were categories which originated in Arakan that divided people according to their proximity to the plains, i.e. ‘Chaungtha’ and ‘Toungtha’. Again, the same names were corrupted into different tongues as in ‘Lakher’, ‘Layngga’, ‘Lanke’, ‘Linta’ and ‘Bawm-zo’, ‘Bong-zu’, ‘Bonjogi’ with added local interpretations regarding the origin of the terms, as in the Bengali interpretation of what they heard as ‘Lannga’ as having originated from their word ‘Nagga’ meaning ‘naked’. ‘Longshe’ or ‘Lushai’ were used in some places to refer to the same people others referred to ‘Langga’ or ‘Kuki’; and different individuals used each term with a different extension.

Not all the terms were pure labels externally imposed, and many of these terms seem to have had a local origin from the name of a chief or a section of the people, but

all of these went through a certain distortion by the local outsiders among whom the terms usually received wider usages than their original meanings. The terms used in Arakan, such as Mru, Kumi and Kami, were known to be the words in their own tongue meaning 'man'. This seems to prove that the Arakanese had a longer relationship with the people thus named; however, towards Burma, or along the Arakan Yoma, the practice of calling the people by a name not recognised by the people concerned reappears, as in the name 'Khyen'. Therefore, in the Arakanese system of categorisation, or as understood by Phayre and followed by other officers, these were geographically distributed into certain locations, and none of these was used as a generic term to include all the others.

It is probable that when the British annexed the whole of Burma in 1886, the word 'Khyen' was replaced by the Burmese pronunciation 'Chin' not only in its spelling but also as a generic term in the context of British Burma. Whether this was the case or not, for the period of the rule of Company they were used as separate categories. Other than these, there was another category 'Shendu' which was the name for little-known marauders from further inland towards the source of the Koladyne. The term itself, according to Phayre, originated from the Kumi corruption of the name of a village and was widened to mean the whole people. There was the same process of distortion, as when the term 'Lannga', which originated from 'Lakher', was used to mean the whole of the Kuki people by the Bengalis in Chittagong. It is interesting to note that the marauders in Arakan Yoma, on the other hand, were labelled 'Khyen Yain' or 'Araing' in contrast to 'Khyen Yeen' which followed Burmese tradition. From this, it appears that there were at least two separable contexts of ethnic categorisation within Arakan: one nearer to the Burmese categorisation along the border area and another, different set for

those around the Koladyne River who were closely connected to the people of the Chittagong Hills.

It is also important to note that the British usage of the term 'Shendu' was adopted from the Kumi. This shows that the British administrators kept acquiring new names of unknown people from those that were in their immediate neighbourhood. Thus, they hear first of Khyen from the Burmese and Arakanese, then of 'Mru', 'Kumi' and 'Kami' from the Arakanese near Koladyne, then of 'Shendu' from the 'Kumi'. A similar process can be found in the case of 'Lushai' whom the British heard of from the 'Kukis' in Manipur and Cachar. Then from the 'Lushai' the British heard of the 'Poi', yet stronger people further inland. Therefore, the British administrators kept acquiring names of yet other people (B) from those others closer to them (A); and by the time the British became more acquainted with 'B' and became aware of the names they called themselves (C), the term 'B' had already become so well-known in the administrative documents that it was difficult to replace. Besides, the term 'C' in many actual occasions had a different extensiveness from 'B' as used by 'A'. Therefore, it became a standard practice to suffix the better-known term 'B' in describing the people also called 'C', as 'C-B'. Such a practice built up the hierarchy among the ethnic categories, in which the vague and broader usages of the outsiders became the generic names for the more specific terms of the insiders.

Various categories that came under 'Kuki' illustrate this process. The term 'Kuki' in local contexts differed in its *extension* from place to place. For example, in Manipur, 'Kuki' was mainly a term employed in contrast to 'Naga' – the two constituted the whole system of categorisation of the hill people around Manipur. Yet, in reality, which

group belonged to Kuki and which to Naga could not always be clarified. There were also other generic categories used by local people used in conjunction with the 'Kuki', unique to Manipur, such as 'Khongjai' and 'Kuchong'. These were at first noted by Pemberton who used them in a confusing manner without an indication of a clear relationship with the Kuki, but soon it became standard practice to use such categories as 'Khongjai-Kuki'. 'Lushai' was also used as a sub-category but growing interaction with them in the context of Cachar meant that they came to carry a somewhat separate status among the other sub-categories of the Kuki and tended to be seen as an independent category.

The exact usages, and *extensions* of the terms are not clear, but they were applied to what in later years became known as the 'new Kukis'. In this sense it was a very Manipuri-oriented categorisation, which differentiated Kuki people according to the time they had been known to the Manipuris. This tendency was exactly what was found in the division between 'Khyen Yain' and 'Khyen Yeen' in Arakan and Burma; and the British themselves adopted the same for Cachar. In fact, the British administrators inherited a similar context in terms of the political relationship with the Kuki-Chin people as the plains people of Manipur, Cachar and Arakan before them, which explains the general currency of such distinctions, and the continuation of such categorisations developed from the description of the different political positions of the Kuki-Chin people.

Nevertheless, there were also certain characteristics that distinguished the British categorisations, or, more properly, the British administrative usages of categories. One important feature is related to the consolidation of administration in the plains

mentioned earlier. This increased not only the instances of British interaction with the Kuki-Chin people but also the needs for the frontier officers to report such cases through the hierarchy of the administration. In this, the British administration relied, more than any other local polities, on written accounts that were circulated over wider areas than those of other, previous, polities. This provided for the easier, deeper and more durable fixation of categories.

Through such administrative practice, existing categories were standardised into British administrative usages. Standardisation of course meant a more consistent form of the spellings which at the end of this period were being fixed into such forms as 'Kookie', 'Loosai', 'Khyen' and so on. More important, however was the standardisation of the *extension* of such terms in a more simplified form than in the local contexts. The process of giving hierarchy over the categories was crucial in this respect, as this guaranteed that, for example, the usage of 'Kuki' could be justified over a wider group than the actual local usages. On the other hand, certain terms such as 'Linta' in Chittagong and 'Khongjai' in Manipur came to be dropped in preference for the term 'Kuki' which was more widely recognised.

Another difference in the British administrative standardisation from any other local categorisation was that it had included a wider area as the basic context of categorisation. Compared to the local contexts of Arakan, Manipur, Cachar, Chittagong, or even Burma, the area which came under the consideration of the British administration was by far the largest at the end of the Company's period. Thus, the inconsistencies among the frontier officers in the usage of categories, as exemplified in the different names used for the same group of people by different officers, became



reduced as British rule continued over an enlarged geographic *extension*, which subsumed many different local contexts.

In relation to this, what is prominent in British understanding of categories is the geographic distribution of these categories. When adopted into administrative usage, these categories were understood as names of certain people occupying certain geographic locations within British India. In this way, the categories were transferred from their local contexts or even the contexts of the individual frontier administrative units into the context of the whole of India, where names from other places were all regarded as the same, comparable names of different groups of people. Thus, the categorisation of Kuki and Lushai as well as Khyen, Mru, Kumi, Kami and Shendu came to be understood in one enlarged context of British India beyond the local context from which the categorisation originated. Maps provide the best illustration for this transformation of categories, since names of people were also displayed as part of the geographic information. Therefore, the British administration had created a new context within which the categories were projected beyond their original local contexts.

The simplification or de-contextualisation of the category was also facilitated when the categories were transferred further from the actual frontier or even out of India through administrative channels. Thus, the Directors in London were more susceptible to the view that Lushai was a different group of people from the Kuki. More than this, with the circulation of information outside the closed circuit of administrative channels, such terms became even more de-contextualised. This is most prominent in their usage by ethnologists, who understood these names as an indication of the existence of differentiable entities, which can be discussed in a global context as units that contain

linguistic, cultural, or physical traits.

About a century and half has passed since the management of India was transferred to the British and more than half a century since the British finally devolved the government to the people. In between, the ethnic categories of the Kuki-Chin people went through more changes and are still in the process of change. During these intervening years, 'Lushai' became more separated from Kuki as a separate generic term which is nowadays replaced by 'Mizo'; 'Khyen' then was changed in the context of Burma to 'Chin' and came to include 'Mru' and 'Kumi', though the old form 'Khyen' is still used in Bangladesh in the context of the Chittagong Hill Tracts; 'Kuki' which had the widest *extension* of usage is now comparatively reduced to the people within Manipur and the Sagaing Division of Burma, with occasional employment of the term in the Chittagong Hills. Nevertheless, some of the features introduced by the British administration during the period of the Company still persist: notably, the rise of generic terms which had been names used by outsiders to become the most widely recognised names and, indeed, the most common way of designating the people.

# Appendix A

‘Vocables’ of the Kuki-Chin collected by Buchanan

English	Koloun	Mru (Edgong)	Mru (King-dai)	Zou	Kiaung Sa (Marma)
Sun	Konee	Tanee	Sat	Nee	Nee
Moon	Klow	Pulaw	Law-ma	Hlaw	Law
Star	Assay	Kray	Kray	Ar-see	Kree
Earth	Day	Kraung	Kraung	Toil	Mo-ree
Water	Tooe	Too-ee		Tee	
Fire	May	Mai	Mai	Mei	Mee
Stone	Aloong	Tow-hoa	Mai-hua	Loong	Kiuk
Wind	Klee	Rlee	Lee	Hlee	Lee
Rain	Yoo		Mo-whang	Koa	Mo
Man	Kloun	Mo-roo	Mo-roo	Moo	Loo
Woman	Patoo	Mee-sar	Mo-sheewa	Noo-nau	Mee-ma
Child	Saemee	Na-sa	Mo-roo-sha	Ngau	Loo-shee
Head	Mulloo	Loo	Lo	Loo	Gaung
Mouth	Mawkoo	Nor	Nor	Moor	Ko-naung
Arm	Maboam	Boung	Baung	Ban	Lay-maung
Hand	Mukoo	Roo-koom	Roo-pa	Koot	Lay-wa
Leg	Manwam	Sae-pom	Klaung	Pe-rai	Kree-ei
Foot	Koaung	Ko-koum	Ko-paw	Pe-paw	Po-wa
Beast	Pakyoo	Ko-paw			
Bird	Pakyoo	To-waw	Wa-ouk	O-aw	Hngaek
Fish	Ngoo	Dam	Dam	Ngaw	Nga
Good	Poelahoe	Yoong	Yaung	Tcha-zaek	Kaung
Bad	Selahoe	Yoong-duay	Yaung-da	Mee-tcha-lo	Ma Kaung
Great	Ahlayn	A-yoo-ko	Yoog-ma	A-yaen	Kree
Little	Ame	A-tsoi-tsa	Sum-tcha	A-tom	Shay
Long	Asaw	A-krang	Klang-ma	Sei	A-kree
Short	Sooahay	A-toung	A-tong-sha	A-toi	A-to

Appendix A – *Continued.*

English	Koloun	Mru (Edgong)	Mru (King-dai)	Zou	Kiaung Sa (Marma)
One	Moo	Lou	Lak	Hak-ka	Tay
Two	Pahnee	Pray	Pray	Pan-nyee-ka	Hnay
Three	Paton	Soum	Soom	Toom-ka	Soum
Four	Poonhee	Ta-lee	Ta-lee	Lee-ka	Lay
Five	Poonhno	Ta-nga	Ta-nga	Nga-ka	Nga
Six	Poosouk	Ta-rouk	Ta-ro	Roop-ka	Kro
Seven	Pooaesae	Ra-neet	Ra-neet	Se-ree-ka	Ko-ney
Eight	Pooaesay	Ree-at	Ryat	Riet-ka	Shay
Nine	Poongo	Ta-koo	Ta-ko	Koa-ka	Ko
Ten	Poohaw	Ha-moot	Haw	Som-ka	Tsay
Eat	Kayawae	Tsa	Tsaw	Hae-ro	Tsaw
Drink	Kowayae	Cam	Kam	Tae-in ro	Souk
Sleep	Eitsha	Ma-ny-b[o]	Eim-moi	Een-ro	Eit
Walk	Hlayaeshoe	Eeep	Tsam-psa	Pa-rol-tee	Hlay
Sit	Own	Tsom	Tsam	Choo-ro	Tein
Stand	Undoon	Roo	Roo	Deeng-ro	Ta
Kill	Say,oe	Taep	Too-tay-moi	Haem-ro	Koy-may
Yes	Ashaeba	Na-za	Na	Too-ta-ka- ne-bro	Hooi-ou
No	Seehay	Na-do[i]	Po-da-po	Bou	Ma-hou-poo
Here	Naea	Wang	Oay	Me-keen	Heea
There	Tsooa	Pai-ko[u]	O-ro	Ma-hou	A-wee-ma
Above	Akloengung	O-roo-ko[..]	Mo-kaung	Chun-chooa	Gaungka-ma
Below	Akoa	Krong-k[..]	Tooa	Koen-to-ya	A-nee

*NOTE:* The vocabulary of the Chin, or 'Koloun', is found in Buchanan's manuscript 'Burma Journal' as well as his article in *Asiatic Researches*; the others are as in Buchanan's journal of South-Eastern Bengal.

## Appendix B

### Genealogical Table of the Turanian Family of Language. – Southern Division, F. M. Müller.

LIVING LANGUAGES		DEAD LANGUAGES	BRANCHES	CLASSES	Turanian Family. Southern Division
Dialects of the Siamese					
“	Ahom		}	Taïc	
“	Laos				
“	Khamti				
“	Shan (Tenasserim)		}	Malaic	
“	Malay and Polynesian Islands. (see Humboldt, <i>Kavi Sprache</i> )				
“	Tibetan	}	Trans- Himalayan	}	
“	Horpa (NW. Tibet, Bucharia)				
“	Thochu-Sifan (NE. Tibet, China)				
“	Gyarung-Sifan (NE. Tibet, China)				
“	Manyak-Sifan (NE. Tibet, China)				
“	Tapka (West of Kwombo)	}	Sub- Himalayan		
“	Kenaveri (Setlej basin)				
“	Sarpa (West of Gandakéan basin)				
“	Sunwár (Gadakéan basin)				
“	Gurung (Gandakéan basin)				
“	Magar (Gandakéan basin)				
“	Newár (between Gandakéan and Koséan basins)				
“	Murmi (between Gandakéan and Koséan basins)				
“	Limbu (Koséan basin)				
“	Kiranti (Koséan basin)				
“	Lepcha (Tishtéan basin)				
“	Bhutanese (Manaséan basin)				
“	Chepang (Nepal – Terai)				
“	Burmese (Burmah and Arakan)	}	Lohitic		
“	Dhimal (between konki and Dhorla)				
“	Kachari-Bodo (Migrat. 80°–93½°, and 25°–27°)				
“	Garo (90°–91°E. long.; 25°–26° N.lat.)				
“	Changlo (91°–92°E. long.)				
“	Mikir (Nowgong)				

Turanian Family.  
Southern Division

Appendix B. – *Continued.*

LIVING LANGUAGES	DEAD LANGUAGES	BRANCHES	CLASSES
Dialects of the Dophla (92°50'–97°N.lat.)			
“ Miri (94°–97° E. long.?)			Lohitic
“ Abor-Miri			
“ Abor (97°–99°E. long.)			
“ Sibsagor-Miri			
“ Singpho (27°–28° N. lat.)			
“ Naga tribes (93°–97°E. long.; 23°N. lat. [Mithan] East of Sibsagor)			
“ Naga tribes (Namsang)			
“ Naga tribes (Nowgong)			
“ Naga tribes (Tengsa)			
“ Naga tribes (Tablung, North of Sibsagor)			
“ Naga tribes (Khaü, Jorhat)			
“ Naga tribes (Angami, South)			
“ Kuki (NE. of Chittagong)			
“ Khyeng (Shyu) (19°–21° N. lat. Arakan)			
“ Kami (Kuladan R. Arakan)			
“ Kumi (Kuladan R. Arakan)			
“ Shendus (22°–23° and 93°–94°)			
“ Mru (Arakan, Chittagong)			
“ Sak (Nauf River, East)			Munda
“ Tunglhu (Tenasserim)			
“ Ho (Kolehan)			
“ Sinhbhum Kol (Chyebossa)			
“ Sontal (Cheybossa)			
“ Bhumij (Cheybossa)			Tamulic
“ Mundala (Chota Nagpur)			
“ Canarese			
“ Tamil			
“ Telugu			
“ Malayalam			
“ Gond			
“ Brahvi			
“ Tuluva			
“ Toduva			
“ Uraon-kol			

Turanian Family.  
Southern Division

Source: Müller, *Lectures*, vol.1, 452.

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*Note:* Among the vast collections of the Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), the F4 series or the Board of Control collection series and E4 series or the East India Company's Correspondence with India series are particularly relevant to this thesis. Mandy Sadan has written a very helpful guide for the sources in OIOC. (Mandy Sadan. *A Guide to Sources in the Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library for the Study of Minority Histories of Burma*, Unpublished Text, 2003) Again, individual volume numbers are only given only for those other than from E/4 and F/4 series.

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