

**BRITISH FOREST POLICY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
IN THE LUSHAI HILLS**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**BRITISH FOREST POLICY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
IN THE LUSHAI HILLS**

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In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of master of philosophy in
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Abbreviations:

AFD	: Assam Forest Department
CCA	: Chief Commissioner of Assam
DFO	: Divisional Forest Officer
DR	: Deputy Ranger
FAR	: Forest Administration Report
FG	: Forest Guard
LHD	: Lushai Hills District
MAS	: Mizoram State Archive
TRI	: Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl
WPCL	: Whitehall Petroleum Corporation London

Glossary of selected terms:

Aijal	: Aizawl
Ahom Kingdom	: A late medieval kingdom established in 1228 in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam
Arakan	: A coastal geographic region in Southern Burma (present Myanmar) presently known as Rakhine state
Bawlpu	: One of the priests in traditional Mizo society, called on by the villagers to cure sickness and diseases
Bonghias	: Sub-clan of Mizo tribe
Bulbous excrescences	: ' <i>Thing lubul</i> ' in Mizo language, a very abnormal outgrowth of a tree shaping like a bulb, considered by the early Mizo as an abode of Evil spirit.
Cachar	: District in Assam
Careya Arborea	: Wild guava, Ceylon oak, ' <i>Hling-si</i> ' in Mizo language, used as traditional medicine by the Mizo.
Chakma	: A distinct tribe who were originally inhabiting the Chittagong hills of Bangladesh who sought refuge in Mizoram and permanently settled
Changsil	: Also known as Bepari Bazaar, a trading station on the Tlawng river About 33km from Aizawl on Sairang to Silchar road. It is said to have been established in 1873, directly under the control of Suakpuilala (Reiek Chief) later on taken over by the British government, acting as a lifeline for the supply of goods and transport for the northern part of Lushai hills
Chhimchhawng ram	: A cultivable land facing east
Chhimtuipui	: Also known as the Koladyne river, the biggest river in Southern Mizoram

Demagiri	: (Also known as Tlabung) a census town in Lunglei district of Mizoram, the southern part of Lushai hills this route to Chittagong got trade and communication.
Chin hills	: A range of mountains in Chin state, Northwestern Burma.
Chittagong hill tracts	: It is a region located in the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh
Chichhiah	: Salt tax
Desiccation	: The removal of moisture from something
Dipterocarpus	: It is called ' <i>Thingsen</i> ' in Mizo, a type of tall tree abundant in the Lushai hills
Fanai	: Sub-clan of Mizo tribe
Fathang	: Paddy cultivation tax
Garjan oil	: A specific kind of oil used for painting the bottoms of the boats
Hnaileng	: Sub-clan of Mizo tribe
Huai	: Malignant or evil spirit
' <i>huk-huk</i> '	: A very peculiar sound made by a bird, this was used as an indicator to tell if the cultivable land was cursed
Jhum	: Also known as Slash and Burn cultivation practised by tribal groups in north-eastern states
Kachari	: An ethnic group living predominantly in the Northeast Indian states of Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya
Kawngpui siam	: Performed to foretell the result of hunting

Khazangpa	: Mara version of the creator
Kheddha	: It is a Hindi word meaning ' <i>ditch</i> ', which was used as a trap to capture many wild elephants
Khuaichhiah	: Honey bee tax
Kuki/ Chin	: A loose term used the Colonial British to refer to Mizo in the Lushai hills, inter changeably with Lushei/ Lushai.
Lakher	: One of the major tribes of the Lushai hills inhabiting the southern part and having their dialect, also known as Mara today
Lal	: Village Chief
Lashikhal	: Ceremonials before and after hunting
Leilet	: Mizo term for a type of paddy cultivation in the flatland area of the field by plough and tilting the soils
Lenpui	: A big cast net used for catching fish
Lente	: A small cast net used for catching fish
Lungleh	: Lunglei
Lushei/ Lushai	: A loose term used by the Colonial British to refer to Mizo in the Lushai hills, inter changeably with Kuki/Chin.
Mahal	: Contractors who extract timbers, bamboos and other natural resources from the Lushai hills
Maund	: An anglicized name for a traditional unit of mass used in British India
Mihlong	: Sub-clan of Mizo tribe
Mizo	: A more contemporary umbrella term for people in Mizoram and its diaspora around the world

Upa	: Village elders who assisted the Chiefs in administration
Pathian	: The creator of all living beings
Pendant protuberances	: ' <i>thin zang</i> ' in Mizo, a weird hanging tree that bulges outward from a surface, believed to possess an evil spirit by the early Mizo
Pialral	: Mizo term for Paradise
Piera	: Mara term for Paradise
Pithecolobium Angulatum	: Called ' <i>Ardah-pui</i> ' in Mizo, A type of tree/vegetation used as a traditional medicine
Ramhual	: A group of people who are experts on selection land for jhum cultivation
Ramtuk rel	: A process of selecting of cultivable land
Taungya System	: It is a form of agro-forestry system in which short-term crops are grown in the early years of forest plantation establishment
Thirdeng	: Blacksmith
Tipperah	: Present-day Tripura state
Tlangau	: Village Cryer
Sachhiah	: Meat tax
Sadawt	: One of the Priest, who engaged in religious performances like invoking the blessings for the well-being of the whole community.
Sangha Chhiah	: Fish Tax

Sial : Mithun/Gayal

Zalen : A group of people who were of close relatives to the chief, consulted by the chief in critical situations and enjoy certain privileges

Zu : Rice beer

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The present study intends to analyze the broad contour of the British forest policy and the management of natural resources in the Lushai hills. Evaluating the ecological changes, more specifically the transformation that took place between flora, fauna and humans in the area. The process such as forest control and management, regulation and preservation, was a critical site in which colonial governance consolidated its hold over its expanding empire. Although the British empire was not built upon the structure of processes like forest management and regulatory mechanisms and strategies of natural resource control alone.¹ The management of strategic natural resources did nevertheless aid the British in the task of empire building.

This process not only impact the environment but also the socio-cultural conditions of the people. The traditional consciousness and the relation concerning Forest and their resources in the North East region of India underwent a massive transformation with the advancement of colonial power in the region. Traditional patterns of life have been changed, but at the same time, many cultural and ideological aspects continued. The colonial process changes the 'traditional' patterns of cultural life disrupting the values, belief system, leadership patterns, and institutional mechanisms.²

Despite the relevance of looking at the history of North-East India from an Environmental history perspective, the available literature was limited and far in between, a few studies

¹ Natasha Nongbri, 'Elephant Hunting in Late 19th Century North-East India: Mechanisms of Control, Contestation and Local Reactions', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 30 (Jul. 26 Aug. 1, 2003), pp. 3189-3199

² Robert Lalremtuanga Ralte, 'Colonialism in Northeast India: An Environmental History of Forest Conflict in the Frontier of Lushai Hills 1850-1900', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, Volume 4 Issue 1, pp. 67-75.

have come up in the last decade. But, as far as the Lushai hills are concerned a study from the environmental history approach was rare and almost non-existence. Hence, as this was one of the rarely explored areas of research in the history of Lushai hills, the present dissertation attempts to fill this gap of a micro level of history by highlighting the intricate nature of colonial control on natural resources and its implication in the larger context.

1.1 Theoretical framework of the study:

History is a continuous dialogue between the past, the present and even the future. As a subject discipline, it developed from chronological studies of the past to more detailed and specialized perspectives. The established historiography at one point of time focused too much on the documented achievements and failings of the ruling dynasties and little cognizance of what had happened in the lives and minds of common people or the realm of nature.³

Later on, the notion of studying and writing history from below gained wide importance and caught up with historians and scholars. Historians of late, especially under the influence of the Annales School have realized that to understand how societies changed over time, a historian's quest should encompass every aspect of human existence.⁴ With the emergence of the concept of 'total history, the dimension of the subject has got expanded so much that without an interdisciplinary approach, a study of historical perspective nowadays was almost impossible. Nonetheless, this has strengthened the relation of History with other subjects of social sciences, sciences, and humanities. History nowadays reflects an interdisciplinary nature that exudes an element of universality, irrespective of region, period, or time.⁵

³ R. Handique, '*British Forest Policy in Assam*', New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 2004, p. 1.

⁴ Handique, *British Forest Policy*, p.1.

⁵ Handique, p. 2.

The pattern of historical research changes frequently and it has changed substantially in recent times. One significant area where the recent approach of historians has yielded results was what has come to be called environmental history. The study of environmental history in today's world has become important as a natural and inevitable result of a perceived environmental crisis. This perception has resulted in the development of broad areas called Environmental Studies. However, given the important role of scientists in the emergence of environmental studies and the subsequent contribution of scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to this field, it has remained an open-ended subject. Within the field, 'environmental history' remains universally acknowledged as a critically important area of inquiry.⁶ And became an emerging frontier of historical research.

1.2 Situating Environmental History:

There can be no simple yes or no answer when trying to define the disciplinary area and boundary of environmental history, whether it was a separate sub-discipline under the discipline of history or was it just a recent offshoot of social history, cultural history, intellectual history, economic history, history from below, tribal history, history of peasant resistance, or a socio-political history.⁷

To answer this, first, it is important to mention how did it all begin? The awareness of men's dependence upon nature was a thing that exists in the past, though it may seem like the realization of the significant role of man as the maker and un-maker of nature has developed in more recent times⁸. Historians and philosophers of the past were aware that

⁶ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007, p. 9.

⁷ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, p. 10.

⁸D. Arnold and R. Guha (ed.), *Nature, culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 3.

the natural environment plays an important role in how humans behave, relate to one another, and organized themselves.⁹

Historians since Herodotus and Thucydides have understood the value of geography and the environment in the understanding of human societies. The Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century introduced new ideas about nature. In addition to the already existing notion that climate affected human beings and human societies, some thinkers started arguing that human actions affected the environment.¹⁰

South Asia was no exception to this, in ancient India, forests were regarded as a dwelling place of spiritual solace and the concept of preserving forests and wildlife developed around the ashrams of sages. These forest-based ashrams propagated a forest culture and human understanding of the fundamental ecological utility of forest ecosystems and their economic importance, which led to trees and animals being treated with veneration.¹¹ Ancient texts like the Ramayana give clues to sensibilities, the twin themes of the forest as a place of dangers to be confronted and of beauty to be enjoyed run like a thread through the epic. And the protection of important animals like elephants had become serious business by the time of the Mauryan. Arthasastra mentions rules for protecting elephant forests. The same tenor of concern for the wilderness runs through the medieval period as well, even Babur, a keen observer of wildlife, gives interesting information about it in his memoir.

Interestingly, in Europe and America, the conservationist urge became more pronounced after the industrial revolution which transformed the rural and urban landscape of Europe. The losses of woodlands and changing landscape created space for ideas of the romantic world of nature. The romantic writings, which were in some ways also a critique of the industrial revolution celebrated lost nature. They encouraged a '*back to the land*

⁹ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007, p.12.

¹⁰ Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism*, The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU UK, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 16.

¹¹ A.S Rawat, *A History of Forestry in India*, Delhi, 1991, p. 130.

movement', William Wordsworth, John Ruskin and William Morris were some of the leading literacy figures who contributed to this movement and the setting up of environmental societies in Europe.

The rapid disappearance of forests in Europe and America also gave birth to the idea of wilderness, which combined elements of morality, science and aesthetics.¹² In fact, it was in the United States that Environmental histories as a self-conscious discipline begin to take shape; it grew out of the history of conservation as an ideal and as a social movement and drew its stimulus from a tradition. The origins of this tradition can be traced to the works of scholars like George Perkins Marsh and Frederick Jackson Turner.

But, the direct concern for the environment or its impact on human societies was, however, rare among professional historians until the 1970s. Until the mid-1970s historians have, by and large, indirectly addressed various environmental or ecological issues while writing economic, social and cultural histories of various types. So various environmental issue actually remains scattered in the history of peasant resistance or history from below, agrarian history, tribal history, social and cultural history, history of ideas and so on.

Therefore, the origins of environmental history can be traced back to the earlier time; it was firmly rooted in social, cultural or economic history, history of science and technology, history of health or beyond. It still shares a very porous border with economic and social histories and even with various other disciplines. So, this mechanical branding of histories may not always convey the essence. But one does not require much sophistication to understand the fact that environmental history stemmed from the recent concern for environmental or ecological changes. Its historiography has been expanding at a rapid pace and has indeed emerged as a separate sub-discipline within the historical discipline in a number of countries.¹³

¹² Madhav Gadgil and Ramchandra Guha, *this fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 26.

¹³ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007, p. 11.

Ranjan Chakrabarti reframed the subject matter of environmental history in four categories:

1. Environment-oriented environmental history: which is primarily preoccupied with changes in biological or physical environments and how these changes affect human beings or how human actions affect the physical environment?
2. Cultural or intellectual environmental history: This is concerned with representations of images of nature in ideas, arts and letters. It traces the shifts in these representations and what light they throw on the societies that produced them.
3. An environmental history that uses the environment as a site for the exercise of various types of power. It includes ideas, law and state policy in relation to the natural world.
4. Environmental histories that run through all the other three, move around with one or more of the issues stated above.¹⁴

1.3 Brief historiography of environmental history:

Environmental history as a separate subject arose in Europe and America as an offshoot of the post-war wave of environmentalism. At first, the subject was dragged into an academic arena by natural scientists. The work that set a global agenda for environmental history was the book *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* by Clarence Glacken (a geographer not a historian) written in 1967. Many scholars follow the footsteps of Glacken and make environmental history intellectually acceptable in the United States. A major English contribution was *Man and the Natural World* by Keith Thomas (1983). With the publication of Alfred Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism* in 1986, the subject reached another landmark.

¹⁴ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, p. 15-16.

Unlike Europe and America, Environmental history in Asia and Africa, initially derived its strength from the upsurge of the history from below, pioneered by Peter Burke and E.P Thomson and also from the work of Fernand Braudel. At the same time, the Annales School (scholars like Marc Bloch, Braudel, and Ladurie) had been nurturing the seeds of environmental history since the 1970s in many ways. These scholars understood that the human experience was the composite result of the interaction of many things, many of which are only partially subject to human volition. They thought that the external context could be understood by the same kind of logic as that employed by natural science. This total history was, therefore, a history that sought a synthesis of all the material, physical and mental forces that shaped the lives of men in the past.¹⁵

Thus, to the scholars of the Annales School, the natural environment too, among other things, appeared to be an important consideration in the understanding of the structures of the past. Fernand Braudel gives an insight into the powerful influence of geography in the Mediterranean world. Ladurie sought to light the point of environmental change in some of his major works. Even though the Annales historians did not consider themselves as environmental historians, nevertheless, the Annals School served as a great source of inspiration to the environmental historians of the future.

In South Asia, environmental history began to emerge in the late 1980s. Two of the earliest articles were written by North Americans, Robert K Winters (a professional forester) and Richard Tucker (a radical Indianist and political historian).¹⁶ Tucker aimed at drawing a link between nationalist protest and the colonial forest policy, from there a variety of disciplines started to construct a coherent agenda in the environmental history of South and South-East Asia, and the environmental history and the forest history of India, in particular, became intensely politicized.¹⁷ Historians like Ramachandra Guha through his

¹⁵ Ranjan Chakrabarti, 'Foucault and the New Social History', *Journal of history (Jadavpur University)*, vol.xi, 1990-1. Jacques Le Goff and P. Nora (eds.), 'Constructing the past: Essays in Historical Methodology', Cambridge, 1985.

¹⁶ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007, p. 22.

¹⁷ Chakrabarti, p. 20.

articles and books asserted that Colonial forest policy and conservation were primarily driven by materialistic needs, serving the strategic and revenue interest of the British Empire. And that in the pre-British era there was little or no interference with the customary use of forest and forest produce.¹⁸

Opposite to this Richard Grove argued that colonial policy of conservation was based on humanist concerns motivated by growing deforestation and drought. He believes that desiccationism was the one that promoted the idea of forest conservancy in the colonies, who (the desiccationist) draws on the connection between deforestation and drought, shrinking water resources, soil erosion and productivity.¹⁹ The official of the European trading companies was able to take note of them and developed desiccationist discourses and sought state intervention in the protection of forests. In a way, Grove plays down the importance of imperialist or capitalist greed behind the forest policy.²⁰

Other scholars like Mahesh Rangarajan does not see polarities between the two sets of ideas and suggests that a convergence of ideas was indeed the case, and argued that the desiccationist idea was only one of the influences that shaped the course of the early 19th century Indian forestry.²¹ Ajay Skaria also disagrees with Grove and says that the agenda of forest conservancy was not innocent of colonial domination, and opined that the desiccationist discourse of conservancy was also a part of the broader civilizing mission of imperialism.²²

However, there seems to be no disagreement on the point that the forests were destroyed due to the policy of ruthless commercial exploitation adopted by the colonial government. And drastic changes were taking place during this period. South Asian environmental

¹⁸ Chakrabarti, p. 21.

¹⁹ Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600-1800*, United states of America, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 16.

²⁰ Grove, *Green Imperialism*, p. 17.

²¹ Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces*, Delhi, 1996, p. 13.

²² Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forests, frontiers and wilderness in western India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 20.

historians see the coming of colonialism as an environmental watershed and its legacy as the key agent of all environmental problems. And a clear emphasis was given on the negative impact of the interventionist role of colonial and post-colonial states in the degradation of human ecologies.²³

Most of the existing works of literature were preoccupied with the discussion of the importation of a scientific model of forest conservation, the dislocation of a complex structure of localized forest uses, the degradation of peasants and a series of conflicts with the interventionist colonial state. In a lot of ways, it is more inclined to the social consequences than the ecological consequences of that change. From the perspective of the subaltern/ tribal/peasant, they expressed opposition not only to the environmental costs of capitalist expansion but also the social costs of state conservation.

It is clear that the negative impact of the interventionist role of colonial and post-colonial states in the degradation of human ecologies was accentuated in almost all their writing. But this bias seems to be the natural outcome of empirical research based on the interpretations of archival documents. There is little disagreement on the point that colonial forest policy was not geared to bring welfare to the colonized people.

1.4 Colonial forestry in India:

According to Crosby, '*conditions in Europe provided a considerable push-population explosion and a resulting shortage of cultivable land, national rivalries, persecution of minorities and the application of steam power to ocean and land travel certainly facilitated long-distance migration*'.²⁴

²³ Ranjan Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Situating Environmental History*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007, p. 23.

²⁴ Velayutham Saravanan, *Environmental History and the tribals in Modern India*, New Delhi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 1.

European contact with the Indian subcontinent began in the early sixteenth century, trade and commercial activities continued until the late eighteenth century. In the sixteenth, early seventeenth, the Portuguese, established their trade and commercial ventures, followed by the Dutch and French in the early 17th century, later on, followed by the English in the Late 17th century. Over time, Europeans gradually took control of the subcontinent, exploiting the natural resources for their commercial interests. Initially, their interest was limited to spices and some important trees including teak in the southwest part of the Western Coast.

By the 19th century, large tracts of Indian forests were seen by British administrators as an opportunity and at the same time a barrier to their economic agenda, considering that these lands could otherwise be used for income-generating purposes.²⁵ British officials report from the 1830s onward regularly mention the expansion of the forest-product trade in different regions of India especially the southern coastal regions. By the mid-1800s commercial contractors became an important link between towns and forests and between government and villagers. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, tea and coffee plantations had been established in different parts of the country. In the third decade, the enumeration of sandalwood trees was carried out so they could be cut in the near future.²⁶ Within two to three decades of the East India Company's arrival, teak was no longer found anywhere along the Western Ghats. The people of this region used it for a variety of activities, but that all ended after the colonial intervention. Additionally, sandalwood can be found in large amounts in the Eastern Ghats, they were systematically exploited and exported to European countries.²⁷

Then as a part of the British Imperial Policy of '*Encroachment on Crown Land*', an ordinance called the Crown Land (Encroachment) Ordinance was passed in 1840. Through this ordinance, all forests, wastes, unoccupied and uncultivated lands in Britain's

²⁵ Saravanan, *Environmental History*, p. 3.

²⁶ Richard P. Trucker, *A Forest History of India*, New Delhi, SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2012

²⁷ Velayutham Saravanan, *Environmental History and the tribals in Modern India*, New Delhi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p.6.

Asian colonies were vested to the crown. And then to earn revenue from timber supplies and for maximizing land revenue by clearing forest tracts into cultivation, Forest in different parts of the country were quickly destroyed.²⁸ The growing ship-building industries in England in the 1800s and the expansion of the railway network in India by the 1850s further propel the demand for timber, leading to rapid deforestation. But then it was quickly they realized that these natural resources would not last for long and hence they started paying attention to regenerating these resources, particularly teak, to meet future requirements. Concern was raised by the Imperial official, by pointing out that continued exploitation of forests would severely impair the potential of forest stock to yield timber and advocated for insulation of forests from the pressure of local use.

Taking this into consideration, the Nilanbur teak plantation was established in 1844 in the south, followed by similar activities others in other parts of India. The Imperial Forest Department was later established in India in 1864. Then, The Indian Forest Act of 1865 established the British state's monopoly over Indian forests, this law firmly established the government claims to forests.²⁹ However, after thirteen years, another act was passed called the Forest Act of 1878, this had a far-reaching impact than before. This act curtailed centuries-old, customary-use rights of local communities over forests and consolidated the government's control over all forests. This changes the relationship of villagers and that of the forest, with this their right became a mere privilege of concession coming from the government.³⁰

With the Indian Forest Act of 1927, everything related to forests, the transportation of forest produce, and the duty levied on timber was consolidated. Forests were categorized according to the degree of privileges communities enjoyed over them. All forests excluded from all claims were designated as reserve forests. The tribal community who lived in close proximity didn't have any right to use these areas other than what was specifically

²⁸ Saravanan, *Environmental History*, p 6.

²⁹ Jayantha Perera (ed.), *Land and Cultural Survival: The Communal Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Asia*, Philippines, Asian Development bank, 2009, p. 195.

³⁰ Perera (ed.), *Land and Cultural Survival*, p. 195

granted by the state since these were solely for the use of the Forest Department. In the second category the '*protected forest*', residents were allowed to make use of certain forest products for household consumption without being allowed to sell them.³¹ Then there was a third category called '*village forests*', in this category village communities were given more concessions in using forests for their livelihood.

Under this act, it was possible for the government to delegate government rights over any land designated as a reserve forest to a village community. But such an arrangement can be cancelled at any time by the government. So, all in all, the management of village forests is regulated by the government; how the villagers may use forest resources, including timber, village produce, pasture and their duties to protect and improve these forests.³²

In cases where a forest settlement officer of the Forest Department made a decision to take over a forest as a reserve or protected forest, the officer gave a community three months' notice to contest the decision. The state would then take over the forest if communities failed to claim their rights within this period and the community lost all its rights over the forest. In theory, the official procedures for the settlement of forest claims and the establishment of forest boundaries were designed to benefit local communities. But in practice, illiteracy and the marginal social status kept communities from taking advantage of such processes. Due to their incapacity to negotiate effectively, they were not able to take advantage of the complex rules of notice, appeal and settlement. Consequently, many tribal communities in different parts of the country were physically displaced without adequate compensation.³³ Moreover, in many areas, local high caste elites and landowners took advantage of the limited access that the community had to forests for their gain.

³¹ Perera (ed.), p. 196.

³² A. Pathak, '*Contested Domains: The State, Peasants and Forests in Contemporary India*'. Delhi, Thousand Oaks and London, Sage Publications, 1994, p. 208.

³³ M. Poffenberger, and C. Singh, '*Communities and the State: Reestablishing the Balance in Indian Forest Policy*', Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 223.

A colonial policy on shifting cultivation or jhum agriculture, best illustrates how colonial administrators developed stereotypical attitudes toward tribal uses of forests. Shifting cultivation which different tribal had a different name for it, in the northeast areas it is called 'Jhum' not only tribal agriculture method, but it was one of the key characteristics of the tribal way of life, culture and tradition combine. It is unique only to the tribals and were different from the dominant culture of ploughing that has been a hallmark of mainstream Indian society. Despite, being well aware of the situation, a provision was included in the Forest Act of 1927 that prohibited the practice of Jhum cultivation. There was an acute sense of deprivation among tribal communities, as Guha puts it, '*the aboriginals' notion of property wherein forests and forest produce belonged to the community, every member of which had a prescriptive right to harvest what they needed*' was taken away, resulting in violations of their rights.³⁴

Forest policies that were applied in colonial India continue to be adopted into the post colonial period, this was evidenced from the National Forest Policy of 1952, which enhanced the state's exclusive right to forest management, production and protection. Similar to colonial forest policy which was driven by imperial needs. The forest policy of India after Independence sought to meet the demands of commercial industry. While many industries were granted access to raw materials, some tribal communities were excluded from using forests. Over the past century, large tracts of forests have been cleared for agriculture, hydroelectric projects and other development projects. A rate of approximately 150,000 ha was diverted to sites of commercial interests annually from 1950 to 1980, according to estimates.³⁵

³⁴ R. Guha, *Fighting for the Forest: State Forestry and Social Change in Tribal India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press. 1994, p. 208.

³⁵ S. Saigal, H. Arora, and S.S. Rizvi, *The New Foresters: The Role of Private Enterprise in the Indian Forestry Sector*, New Delhi, International Institute for Environment and Development, 2002, p. 198.

1.5 Importance of studying the British Forest policy:

Environmental forces and ecological constraints have always been affecting the course of history without necessarily predetermining its path. And, the concern for the environment in human society has always been there. Most of the crucial decisions all human society takes have always been related to the natural world. The inner conflicts among humans' societies of the past were fueled by the continuous effort to resolve the question of the legitimate use of the natural world. As human settlements spread across the earth and technology advanced, the urge to resolve this fundamental question relating to the legitimate use of the natural world increased.³⁶ Nature is one of those spaces where we observe the most intense form of class struggle and power politics. A more privileged section controls the bulk of natural resources across the world.

The British encounter with the natural world of the northeast can be explained in the language of power. The environment is one of those spaces where we see the most intense form of demonstration of power. Nature can be seen as a parallel category deployed to reveal power relationships in societies. The rapid unfolding of power relations, the random misuse of the natural world, the rise of new technology to exploit nature and the growing resource crunch have made this age-old debate as complex and intense as never before. It was a question central and global to the entire human civilization. The more human society progress and prosper, the greater was the longing to resolve this problem. Writers, philosophers, historians, lawmakers, administrators and thinkers through the ages have been wrestling to settle this unresolved question. The method of addressing this crucial question has attained a refinement over the last two decades and one important manifestation of this can be found in the rise of a new field of knowledge.³⁷

³⁶ Saigal, Arora, and Rizvi, *The New Foresters*, p.11.

³⁷ Saigal, Arora, and Rizvi, p. 12.

1.6 Statement of the problem:

The impact of British Colonial policies on their Empire has always been providing subjects of academic pursuits, the emergence of the British Imperial power in the Indian subcontinent have been interpreted by using different theoretical approaches and are well understood. But the transformation of cultural identities and the structuring of indigenous consciousness to modernization and science in the context of Northeast India has not been focused on. Hence, despite the importance of the British forest policy and its resource management during the colonial period and its socio-economic impact on society, the available literature is limited and far in between. Therefore, a critical study of the forest policy is essential not only for knowing the colonial past but also to understanding the all-pervading nature of British imperialism in the Lushai hills.

Moreover, human exists in an innate relationship with their environment, of all the decisions human society takes, perhaps the most crucial one has always been in direct relations to the natural world. This was very true especially to a community like Mizo, whose community livelihood based was very primitive during the pre-colonial era and still very traditional in the present time. The norms and values, culture and traditions, habits and attitudes are consciously or subconsciously shaped by the ecology of the region. Therefore, ecology plays an intricate role in the life of the people.

Even though the understanding and the consciousness about Human relationships with its environments are limited from a historical perspective. While lately because of increasing environmental problems faced by different countries and the world at large, academicians have turned to study the role played by the British in a long drawn-out process of environmental degradation. The study on the history of the Lushai hills from this perspective is largely an ignored area and a critical study is absent. This leaves ample scope for further study, therefore an analytical study on this topic will give an insight into how the British forest policy and strategies led to the unfolding of new power relations, the rise of new ideas, strategy and technology to exploit the environment, in turn how

these changes had a deep impact on the socio-culture and tradition of the people living in the Lushai hills.

1.7 Review of literature:

The Book 'Environmental History and Tribals in Modern India' written by Velayutham Saravanan is a very informative book for the study of colonial forest policy and its legacies. This book attempts to analyze the environmental history of India from the period of colonial rule to the early twenty-first century from a historical perspective. It explored the unexplored areas of environmental history in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the colonial period and the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, that is, during the post-independence period. However, it is largely confined to the Madras Presidency for the colonial period and Tamil Nadu for the post-independence period which made this book somehow limited in its scope. But the book attempts to offer a comprehensive account of environmental history both of the colonial and post-colonial periods from the early nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. Overall, it had a valuable contribution to the current discourse on environmental history.

The last frontier: People and Forests in Mizoram written by Daman Singh is an indispensable reference point for anybody's research on the environmental history of Mizoram. The book surveys the environmental history and the complex relationship between the people and nature in Mizoram through the colonial, post-independence and the present times and do fill a major gap in the literature. The great merit of this work is in identifying the factors that can sustain swidden cultivation. She convincingly argues against stereotypical views that blame jhum cultivation in the hills for floods in the plains and depletion of forest cover. Another major merit of the study is the insights it gives into the state of village and district council forests.

Situating Environmental History edited by Ranjan Chakrabarti. This is a collection of essays, based on local environmental narratives of South and Southeast Asian countries that look at different time frames and provide an in-depth analysis of local environmental histories through case studies from India and beyond. The essays are classified under four headings: understanding environmental history, communities at the margin, management of nature during the colonial and postcolonial period and a section beyond India. The book investigates ecological issues concerning water, health, sanitation, global warming and forestry. It also examines themes such as governance, regulations, advances in science and technology. European perceptions of the oriental environment and the changing material culture of South Asia.

Ecology, Climate and Empire: colonialism and global environmental history, 1400-1940 written by Richard Grove. This book aims to serve as an introduction to a relatively new area of research on the environmental history of the European colonial empires. Its emphasis on the critical importance of India to the course of development in climatic and conservation thinking in the rest of the world. The story of the involvement of the British East India Company in natural history and then in forest management was also emphasized. It vividly demonstrates that concerns about climate change are far from being a uniquely modern phenomenon. Grove traces the origins of present-day environmental debates about soil erosion, deforestation and climate change in the writings of early colonial administrators, doctors and missionaries.

Over-Exploitation of Forests: A Case Study from North East India by Anup Saikia. In this book the author touch extensively on the forest loss in the northeast area, it is a very interdisciplinary and scientific study using Landsat satellite data from three periods (the 70s, 80s/90s and 2010s), forest loss is assessed in sample protected areas and other sites in the study area, the process is undertaken using image processing and standard GIS tools. In the end pointed out in great detail, a diverse set of drivers play a role in affecting forest loss in Northeast India.

British Forest Policy in Assam written by Rajib Handique, this book analyzes the British Forest policy from 1864 to 1947 with a particular context to Assam in great detail. Situating the geography and history of the region while tracing the genesis and development of the British forest policy. It also examines the socio-economic and environmental impact of the policy on the people as well as on the state as a whole. But there is no specific mention of the Lushai hills, even though the entire hill tracks are included under Assam during this time.

Forest Laws and Policies in India edited by Dr A.K. Poddar, Mr Swayambhu Mukherjee and Mrs Debosmita Nandy. This book looks into the history and evolution of forest policies and laws in India. Certain laws like the forest act from 1865 to 1988 are analyzed with so many details. Also look into afforestation programs of the Central and states government, international conventions concerning conservation and protection of natural resources, issue of wildlife conservation, joint forest management and many other issues in the forest laws.

'Reconfigured Frontier: British Policy towards the Chin-Lushai Hills, 1881-1898' by Pum Khan Pau. This article analyses the British policy toward the Chin-Lushai Hills in the late nineteenth century. Highlight how the British initially considered these hill tracts only as a source of trouble and therefore followed a non-interventionist approach, but soon began to see its strategic importance and therefore changed their perspective. This paper examines three colonial policies all of which in one way or the other dealt with the Zo people who predominantly lived in the Chin-Lushai hill tracts. It also argues that colonial and post colonial borders not only fragmented the indigenous Zo population into different nation-states but also changed the contour of their history.

The article *'The Excluded Areas of Assam'* by Robert Reid explains, in brief, the excluded areas of Assam and how it's different from the excluded areas in other parts of India. At the same time elaborate the relations of the tribes with the British one by one. It is an important reference for studying British policy in this area.

'Genesis and Patterns of British Administration in the Hill areas of Northeastern India' by Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee. In this article, the author gives an elaborate account of the transformations of the British in northeast India. Firstly, explain the tribal polity in this area and go on to describe how the power dynamic and administrative system changed with the event of the British. This is a good article that gives a glimpse into British administrative policy.

'Forest Policy in North-East India' by Tiplut Nongbri. This paper examines the evolution of forest policy in North-East India. By combining the anthropological and historical perspectives, the paper shows how state control over forests has systematically eroded people's rights over their resources, posing a threat not only to their livelihood but also to the delicate balance which rural and forest-based communities traditionally maintained with their natural environment.

'Forest Laws and North East India: A Historical Enquiry' by Srijani Bhattacharjee. In this article, the author traces the evolution of forest policies and legislations in the North-Eastern part of India from colonial to post-colonial times. The author tries to outline the gradual evolution of the forest policies implemented over the region at various points in time. It takes into consideration the diversities of forest policies that vary according to the geographical variations of the region. For instance, the nature of forest policies implemented in the hill areas was different from the policies implemented in the plain areas.

'Socio-economic Drivers of Forest Cover Change in Assam: A Historical Perspective' by Narayan Sharma, M D Madhusudan and Anindya Sinha. This article analyzes the historical context of forest cover change in the upper Brahmaputra Valley of Assam during the pre colonial, colonial and post colonial periods, locating these changes within the political economy and demographic milieu of each regime. In the current context of rising populations linked to immigration from neighbouring regions, the dwindling share of agriculture in the state's gross domestic product and recent incentives to small tea growers

in risk-prone agricultural landscapes, serious challenges remain to secure forests in this region.

'Colonialism in Northeast India: An Environmental History of Forest Conflict in the Frontier of Lushai Hills 1850-1900' by Robert Lalremtlunga Ralte. This study deals with the interaction between the colonialists and the Mizos in the frontier areas of Lushai hills. The study tries to substantiate how the colonial knowledge system, based on modern scientific rationality, perceived and transformed the traditional knowledge system and practices. It attempts to unpack the interaction between the two groups by studying forest conflict in the frontier which covers the period roughly from 1850 to 1900.

'Elephant hunting in late 19th Century North-East India: Mechanisms of Control, Contestation, and Local Reactions' by Natasha Nongbri. This paper explores the interaction between state and society in the management of the elephant as a strategic natural resource in the late 19th century northeast India. And how, the management of strategic natural resources aided the British in the task of empire-building. The micro-level history of this kind of paper has sought to highlight the intricate character of natural resource control by the colonial state. It is an essential article for studying British policy in the Assam frontier area.

All the above-selected literature review shows that research had already been done on various subjects relating to the colonial phase of British rule. In the all-India context, of late, the impact of British forest policy has been studied from various perspectives and researches are carried on to unravel more aspect of the British administration. But the works of literature on the British policy in Assam can hardly be found, let alone with specific reference to the Lushai hills (the present state of Mizoram). Such studies have been minimal if not non-existent. Therefore, the proposed research aims to probe into the gap and analyze in great detail the British forest policy and its socio-economic impact on the Lushai hills.

1.8 Area of study:

The proposed research will cover the geographical area of the Lushai hills (presently known as Mizoram). This hilly geographical space lies between the Burmese Empire on the east and The Tripura state on the west, The Kachari and Ahom kingdom on the North, Manipur kingdom on the North West. Despite their occasional interaction and resistance against the Burmese Empire, Tripura, Manipuri kingdom and the Kachari Kingdom, the Lushai hills enjoyed splendid political isolation until the British occupied their territory and formed Lushai hills in 1894.

1.9 Objectives of the Study:

- The main objective of the study is to analyze the unexplored areas of environmental history in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the colonial period in the Lushai hills.
- The study will also analyze the Mizo worldview on nature before the European intervention, and the symbiotic relationship between man and nature during early society.
- Examine colonial forest policy and resource management in the Lushai Hills and highlight the true intention behind their policy.
- Lastly, it will examine how the colonial knowledge system perceived and transformed the traditional knowledge system and practices.
- And how this brings about changes in the socio-economic and cultural life of the people and the local response to these changes.

1.10 Methodology of the study:

The study is essentially a historical analysis of the British Forest policy and its impact on the Lushai hills. An interdisciplinary approach has to be adopted in a study like this and to analyze the problem at hand, drawing expertise and insights from experts in the field of forestry, geography, environmental science etc. will be extremely crucial. Reports, journals, and other documents collected from other fields will form an important tool for this study.

Other sources will be also be procured from relevant archival records in the National Archives of India New Delhi, State archives of Assam and Mizoram, Missionary reports and Gazetteers. Other sources like published books, papers, journals etc. will be consulted for conceptual clarity and a better structural framework. Oral History will also be invoked in this study and unstructured interviews will be conducted wherever necessary. Therefore, this study will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, which will reflect the multifaceted nature of this study.

1.11 Structure of the Study:

This dissertation is divided into four Chapters. They are as follows:

The first chapter is broadly divided into two themes, the first part of the chapter discusses the theoretical framework that is to be applied in the study, conceptualizing the environmental history. How it all begins, the disciplinary areas and the subject matter of what environmental history deals with. And then briefly outlining the historiography of environmental history on the world stage and South Asia in particular. The second part of the chapter focus on the structure of the study. Outlining why it is important to study the British Forest policy from an environmental history approach, stating the problem, reviewing the existing works of literature in the subject matter, also highlight the area of study and the objective of the study and the methodology that is to be applied in the study.

The second chapter highlight ecology of the Lushai hills, describing the physical nature of the region and the distribution pattern of flora and fauna, while examining the relationship between nature and the people. This chapter focus on the early traditional Mizo society (Pre-colonial), the mode of resources used and the base of their economic sustainability and their traditional practices. The main objective of this chapter is to highlight the interesting connection between belief systems of the traditional society and their knowledge and attitude toward the environment. the study in this chapter attempt to understand how the belief system of a Mizo society shaped their attitude toward the environment.

The third chapter traces the evolution of colonial penetration into the northeast of India, from the capturing of the Assam plain area by the Colonial Government up to the permanent occupation of Lushai hills. The focus in this Chapter is not to analyze every detailed account of the colonial penetration, but to critically analyze the intervention of the colonial government with their intentions to generate imperial revenue that led to conflict over forests and exploitation of resources in the region. Also, to examine the colonial discourses about natural resources, the strategies and management policy adopted by the British in the region and how they were contested and negotiated with the locals.

The fourth chapter summarizes and concludes the study by analyzing how the '*traditional knowledge*' of Mizo society had been structured and transformed by the colonial knowledge system, which is based on modern scientific rationality. Examining how this change disrupted the '*traditional*' patterns of cultural life, the values, belief system, leadership patterns, institutional mechanisms and the pattern of resource usage practices. And highlight the struggle of the indigenous people to acclimatize to the new order.

CHAPTER – II

ECOLOGY OF THE LUSHAI HILLS

AND

MIZO WORLDVIEW ON NATURE BEFORE THE EUROPEAN INTERVENTION



Figure. 1: Satellite imagery of Lushai Hills³⁸

³⁸ Satellites.pro, India map, 2021, https://satellites.pro/India_map#E23.276005,92.769287,8, (accessed 1 November 2021).

2.1 The Physical Features and Ecology of the Lushai hills:

Humans are equipped with an enormous power to change or alter the physical landscape, but, at the same time, the physical environment itself imposes certain restrictions on the way of life of a human being. This was very true especially in a more traditional society like the early Mizo society. From this perspective, it is necessary to examine the physical framework of the Lushai hills like the location, topography, climate, vegetation cover and other related phenomena to better understand the interrelation between the early Mizo society and nature.

The Lushai hills lie between 21°56 'N - 24°31'N latitude and 92°16'E - 93°26 'E longitude.³⁹ In an extreme northeast corner of India, bounded on the north by Cachar and the state of Manipur, on the west by the Chittagong Hill tracts, on the east by Burma (present Myanmar) and the south by Arakan.⁴⁰ The Lushai hills presently known as Mizoram is sandwiched between Bangladesh and Myanmar and share a total common international of about 585 km with these two countries right now.⁴¹ Due to its location, the Lushai hills has always been an important strategic location even during the time of British rule geographically and politically.

The topographic set-up of the Lushai hills can broadly be classified into Mountainous terrain, Ridge and Valley provinces base on altitude. There are many wide valleys and ridges especially in the western part of the region. The area is composed of steep vertical inclined hills and deep narrow valleys except only in a few places we can find a few patches of flatland scattered at places in the region. The Lushai Hills is composed mainly of the mountainous terrain of tertiary rocks. The hill ranges run mostly from north to south direction in a parallel series, the ranges are separated from one another by narrow deep river valleys. The elevation ranges from 21 meters at Tlabung to 2,157 meters at

³⁹ Rintluanga Pachuau, *Mizoram: A study in comprehensive geography*, New Delhi, Northern Book Centre, reprint 2013, p.24.

⁴⁰ Captain O.A. Chambers (Royal Warwickshire regiment Attaché), *Hand book of The Lushai Country*, India, The Superintend of Government Printing, 1899, p.64.

⁴¹ Rintluanga Pachuau, *Mizoram*, p.24.

Phawngpui. The general heights of mountain ranges vary from 900 meters to 2,157 meters. Lengteng, Chalfilh, Lurh, Hmuifang and Tan are other important mountains. The Mizo inhabited hills were covered by thick and green forest. The inhabitant areas of the Mizo confided predominantly to hilly terrain. A Christian Missionary, Reginald Lorrain reported his first experience in the hills as;

“There is practically no flat land in Lakher (Mara), even of such small dimension as would be needed to erect a bungalow, nothing but hills and valleys, rivers and rocks, the sides of the mountains being densely covered with jungle from the foot to the brow”.

The area is drained by several rivers, streams and rivulets of various patterns and lengths. The area receives a considerable amount of rainfall during summer, but most of the streams are ephemeral in nature. Most of the drainage lines originate in the central part of the region and flow in the north or south direction. The northern portion of the region is drained by rivers Tlawng, Tuivawl, Tuirial, Langkaih and Tuivai, these rivers are flowing north direction and drain into the Barak River in the Cachar plain of Assam. The southern portions are drained by river Chhimtuipui on the east with its tributaries Mat, Tuichang, Tiau, and Khawthlangtuipui with its tributaries Kawrpui, Tuichawng, Phairuang etc.

Despite its tropical location might be because of its elevation, the region enjoys a pleasant climate, the temperature does not fluctuate much throughout the years, except in a few places like the low-lying area in the valley sites. The entire area falls within the direct influence of the southwest monsoon. May, June and July are the hottest time of the year, temperatures range from 25°C to 35°C during this time of the year. Then the onset of the monsoon brings down the temperature and continue to fall in the second half of the year, the annual temperature ranging from 18°C to 25°C in autumn, while during winter the temperature range from 11°C to 23°C. Even though the winter is a little bit chilling during the month of December up till about February, Summer and the Rainy season cover most of the season except for about three months of winter and spring. It receives an average rainfall of 250 cms annually. The southern and the western part seems to receive heavier

rainfall, normally rainfall starts from the month of May to September and lasts till the second half of October. Normally July and August receive the highest amount of rainfall, while December and January are the driest months.⁴²

Due to the physical factors of the region, there is an abundant growth of vegetation. There are three broad forest types they are; the Tropical Wet Evergreen Forest, Tropical Semi-Evergreen and Mountain Sub Tropical Forests with a variety of economically useful species.⁴³ The rich diversity of flora and fauna were recorded by the early administrators, geographers and botanists of the colonial government, to name a few, A.T Gage in his book '*A Botanical Tour in The S. Lushai Hills*' (1899) had recorded 317 species of plants found in the hills. Cecil E.C Fischer also recorded more than 1300 species of plants.

Various timber and bamboo species were found abundantly in pre-colonial Mizoram. Palms were quite common on the lower slopes like Oak, Chestnuts and Firs grow on the higher ridges. Different species of banana, ferns and orchids are found everywhere. Various species of stinging nettles, some of which are indeed poisonous and the sting of which, although not causing death would cause three to four days severe illness, these poisonous vines served as the village fort.

Lemon and tea trees were found in the northern part. Unlike the tea that was common in the European country, the tree plant grows into a large dimension, the tea from this full-grown was not suitable for consumption. Another important tree that was found abundantly in pre-colonial Mizoram is the cotton tree. The species of cotton tree in this region attain great height and large girth of trunk, which sheds its leaves every year. A few trees in the region appear to shed their leaves, making a greater part of the forest evergreen.

The Indian rubber trees were also native in some areas of the hills. During the late pre-colonial era, the Mizos used to tap rubber knowing that they could get a good price in

⁴² Rintluanga, p.42.

⁴³ Rintluanga Pachuau, *Geography of Mizoram*, Mizoram, R.T Enterprize, 1994, p. 24.

return for guns, knives, beads etc. From a bag of crude rubber from the native traders of neighbouring plains areas. This unsustainable extraction of rubber led to the over tapping of local rubber trees and this resulted in the decline of the rubber trees. The export of crude rubbers completely died out by the time colonial ruler set up administration in the hills. Today only a few commercial rubber species can be found in the region.

It was notable to keep in mind that various species of bamboos grew abundantly in the whole region. In fact, bamboos were found almost everywhere except at the higher ridges covering about 80 per cent of the area. Pre-colonial Mizo agriculture areas were also mainly confined to the bamboo jungles. Recently, a local ethnobotanist J.H Ramnghinglova has recorded 20 species of bamboo found in Mizoram. Mizoram is often described as the land of bamboos, for instance, J.D Baveja wrote a book entitled '*The land where the Bamboo Flowers*' (1970). Some writers state that the pre-colonial Mizo economy was based on the bamboo plant (Bamboo based economy) due to the extensive uses of this plant by the people.

However, despite its usefulness, it is interesting to note down that bamboos periodically led to famine. Bamboo flowers and then produces fruits after an interval of a couple of years. The fruits lead to the production of seeds, which was voraciously consumed by rats. Strangely it has been observed that this period of the bamboo plants led to a sudden increase in the rat population. The rats soon finished eating the bamboo seeds and then turned to the paddy fields this initiated successive famines in the hills.

During the pre-colonial time, the Lushai hills forest was inhabited by a large variety of wild animals, comprising diverse species of tropical birds, animals and reptiles, from the larger to the smaller species of animal. The Sumatran rhino and the brow-antlered seem to exist in the past, other animals like elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, leopards, wild hogs,

porcupines, wild dogs, civet cats, land tortoises, the Himalayan black bears and malay bears, bison, several species of Deers, Guals and Serows were also found in the hills.⁴⁴

Elephants were roaming the foothills of the forest bordering Cachar and Chittagong Hill Tract since the earliest of times, Wild goats were found on the ridges of the steepest slopes. Gibbon Apes were found on the southern Mara land in the southern side of the Lushai hills. The Kolodyne River which run through this area was inhabited by alligators in small numbers.⁴⁵ cobra, king cobra, viper etc, though not in plenty represent the poisonous group of snakes while pythons, grass snakes and many other varieties of smaller snakes represent the non-poisonous group.

Among the bird's species, Peacock pheasant, Black pheasant, Hornbill pheasants, Partridge, Jungle fowls and Paroquet etc. were present in abundance, even doves and pigeons were found across the whole land. Numerous eagles and kites also abound throughout the country and make desperate raids on the domestic fowls.⁴⁶ The rivers, especially during September and October towards the latter end of the rainy season, were home to many fishes, turtles and other aquatic animals, Reginald Lorrain who done missionary work in the region reported that a cat fist even larger than a man was caught during his first adventure into the hills.

2.2 Settlement pattern and social structure:

Traditional structures were in a lot of ways influence by geographical phenomena, factors like landscape, climate, soil and water resources play a critical role in how settlement patterns and social structure form and develop.⁴⁷ While there were various theories about

⁴⁴ *Mizoram District Gazetteers*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute (Director of Art and Culture, Government of Mizoram), 1989, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Reginald A. Lorrain, *5 years in unknown jungles*, Aizawl, Allied Publishers PVT.LTD (on behalf of TRI Mizoram), 2012, p.13.

⁴⁶ Lorrain, *5 years in unknown jungles*, p.14.

⁴⁷ S.N Singh, *Mizoram*, p. 134.

the original homeland of the early Mizo tribes and their origins, it was well accepted that they are of Tibeto-Burman stock and had lived in the neighbouring Chin hills of upper Burma since the early 14th century.⁴⁸ Fleeing from the aggression of rival tribes, there were waves of migration through the Lushai hill region. The geographical boundaries of this region and its features put pressure on the people and created tension between different tribes, which eventually responsible for feuds between different tribes. factors like steep ridges, deep valleys and dense forests have kept different tribes secluded from one another and act as a natural boundary.⁴⁹ This influences their perception about geographical space and is also limited by the forces of geography, this led to mutual distrust and animosity among the people living in this isolated pocket of the Lushai hills region.

Under this circumstance, it was necessary for these migratory tribes to have a chief as the population was unsettled, disorganized and they need a strong man to act as a guardian. This condition led to the development of a traditional institution called the chieftainship, the chief then developed their idea of space and boundary which did not go much beyond the village itself, the plot of agricultural area, household area, hunting ground etc. were delimited by the chief (Lal) along with his council of elders (Upas). Even individual perception of space remained conditioned and narrow down by the chief and his councils of elders through various restrictions. As a result, it was clear that the geographical elements play a critical role in the development of traditional institutions.

Upon migration, the institutionalization of the clan's chief had been achieved by the 18th century. Each village would become an independent entity headed by its chief who would protect its subject from other rival tribes marauding into their territory, leading his men in raids to capture slaves and loot property and finding suitable locations for habitation and cultivation.

⁴⁸ Daman singh, *The last frontier: People and forests in Mizoram*, New Delhi, Tata Energy Research Institute, 1996, p. 4.

⁴⁹ B.P Singh, *The Problem of Change*, 1997, p. 142.

The chief (Lal) would select his village site on the ridge of a steep hill. Traditionally, flatlands were not recognized to be permanent settlement areas in the early Mizo society, for safety from intruders as a defensive strategy and to avoid tropical diseases. Villages are built on the summits of the mountains, never in the valleys.⁵⁰ And it was very important for them to select a place that had a perennial source of water. While there are occasional references to the existence of large villages of as many as 3000 houses, it was more common for a village to house 400-500 families.⁵¹ After having cultivated all the available land within reach the chief and his elders would search for a new site. Sometimes these activities involve a journey of two to three days, the final decision was made after the elders spent a night at the proposed site. Taking a Cock with them: if the Cock crowed at daybreak, the site was approved. Locations that were previously occupied by the other chief were avoided. Relocation of the village could occur as frequently as once every four to five years. This to some extent discourages the accumulation of property.

When it come to the power of the Chief, they were absolute, as he was considered to be the head of the village, the leader in war, owner of the village land, protector and guardian of his subjects, he was the executive authority and dispenser of justice. Because of this the chief need to possess certain quality like a good guardian, brave, dependable commander and impeachable judge. He was endowed with a vast knowledge of the villagers, their lives, difficulties and problems. In times of emergency, he would supply essentials to the needing villagers. But this does not mean the Chief would act in a dictatorial manner the society was very egalitarian in nature as most of the time the Chief would take decisions based on the advice of the elders (Upas).

The chief along with his council of elders (Upas) who were selected by the chief at his discretion, much like the '*Punches*' of the plain districts of in some parts of India perform a lot of functions like settling all the village disputes, distributing land for jhum cultivation, collect taxes etc. Basically, making the administrations of the villages run

⁵⁰ Lorrain, p. 9.

⁵¹ Colonel J. Shakespeare, *The Lushei-Kuki clans*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd on behalf of Tribal Research Institute (department of Art and Culture Aziawl, Mizroam), 1975, p. 19.

smoothly.⁵² The perks of being the owner and controller of all resources in the village were that he received taxes and rent on the uses of certain resources and assumed certain privileges. Each household thus paid '*Fathang*' (one or three baskets of paddy harvested from jhum), '*Sachhiah*' (meat tax, apportion of every animal hunted), '*khuaichhiah*' (bee tax), '*Chichiah*' (a share of salt collected from salt wells or springs with prior permission) and Fish tax.

Besides the councils of elders (Upas) some other people are appointed by the Chief to assist in running the administration and maintaining the social structure. There were as follows:

- **Zalen:** These are a group of people who were of close relatives to the chief, basically an aristocrat group. They were consulted by the chief in critical situations. They were enjoying certain privileges like exemption from paying taxes called '*Fathang*'. They were also given a plot of land for cultivation and house construction before the commoners.⁵³
- **Ramhuals:** These were a group who are experts on the selection of land for jhum cultivation and assisted the chief in allotment of the cultivable lands to the villagers. They have fair amount of knowledge on the fertile areas suitable for cultivation within the village jurisdiction. They also enjoy certain privileges and exemptions from taxes.
- **Tlangau (the Village crier):** He passed on order or any message by the Chief to the villagers, He was paid one tin paddy from each house for his services.
- **Thirdeng (Blacksmith):** the villagers depend on him for making, repair and change of all kinds of tools and utilities that are useful for agriculture practice and in the household. He held an important position in society. He was paid a basket of paddy from each house.

⁵² S M Dubey (ed), *North-East India; A Sociological study*, Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1978, p. 100.

⁵³ S M Dubey (ed), *North-East India*, p.10.

- **Sadawt:** He is one of the two kinds of '*puithiam*' a priest in the society, he engaged in religious performances like invoking the blessings for the well-being of the whole community. Those include the blessing to ensure good crops, success in animal hunting, security from enemies and natural calamities. He also performed a sacrifice for an individual purpose which has to do with life after death.
- **Bawlpu:** Who was another '*puithiam*' priest in the society, his function has to do mostly with curing the sick person of the spell of the evil spirit. Therefore, the rituals he performed are mainly to appease the evil spirits to cure people of their sickness, so his performance was individual in nature.

2.3 Forests as a dwelling place for Evil spirit:

The mosaic of the lives of early tribal communities in the Lushai hills be it at the community or an individual level was grounded in the concept and perceptions about natural resources. These beliefs are intertwined in religious symbols, cultural practices, social customs and methods of resource use.

In the early Mizo belief system, though they do not worship the sun or moon or any of the forces of nature, they believed there was a creator of the universe called '*Pathian*' which was believed to be a good spirit, or in other words, a benevolent entity who does not concern much with humanity. Then, they also had affirmed believed that the hills, streams and trees were inhabited by various demons. They called it '*Huai*' the evil spirits. Plagued by the fear of these spirits, the early Mizo would spend their lifetime in a constant endeavour to please them, because from their believed these evil spirits bring upon human ill-ness and misfortune. Then, through a plethora of sacrifices conducted by the priest on different occasions and for different purposes they would try to please the evil spirit. There seems to be no evidence, on the sacrifice performed by the creator Pathian except by the Mara community, certain sacrifice was performed by the Mara for their version of the

creator 'Khazangpa' even though their perception of an evil spirit was also based on the same concept of fear.

This concept of a belief system was not based on rational meaning but on faith which was passed down from many generations which dictated every aspect of their life. F K Lehman in his book '*the structure of Chin society*' perfectly captures the supernatural connotations of forests for the tribals in the Chin hill's region, which applied to the early Mizo society as well. He wrote:

Ram (forest) is the countryside owned by the village, and also the country controlled by a centre of power, that can be used for cultivation if cut over and clear. It is the abode of unnamed spirits and the abode of the spirits which control the wild game sought in the hunt. In the forest, one treads softly, use special vocabulary so as not to offend the spirit of the game, uses euphemisms and circumlocutions for referring to the larger game animals by name.⁵⁴

Such was their conviction that, when a man cut large cultivation for himself, and toward the end of his work if he discovered a tree with one of those holes pierced right through its trunk or branch, he will immediately abandon the whole site and go to some other part of the jungle and start over again. N E Parry also talks about this concept in his book '*The Lakher*' (1976). He said among the Mara, certain trees were identified with evil spirits. For example, a tree-like *Careya Arborea* was believed to seize the soul if approached and *Pithecolobium Angulatum* could not be brunt as firewood, because it would cause their chickens to fall ill and die.⁵⁵ Hollow tree stumps containing water and frogs or worms were considered the home of a small demon who caused stomachache and sundry bowel

⁵⁴ F K Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1980, p.173.

⁵⁵ N E Parry, *The Lakhers*, Calcutta, Firma LM Private Limited on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1976, p. 77.

disorders and were therefore unlucky to encounter. This misfortune could only be avoided if the passerby cut the stump open, let the water out, sacrificed a hen and left a few eggs for the devilkin.⁵⁶

Those inhabiting the water were called '*Tui-huai*' and those residing on land are known as '*Ram-huai*' and so on.⁵⁷ In fact, every high hill, every large river, every great boulder, every gigantic chasm or large cave, everything that is in any way out of the ordinary, was regarded as the abode of evil spirits.⁵⁸ They are presumed to be bad, all the troubles and ills that happen in their life are attributed to them and they would perform a sacrifice to appease those spirits. This traditional belief of the hill ranges and mountains were occupied by spirits made the early Mizo avoid disturbing these areas. This maintenance of sacred forests of some sort enhanced the spiritual well-being of the communities and in turn, protected critical elements of natural forests.

Until the advent of the European in the Lushai hills in the twentieth century, the early Mizo religious belief was animistic in nature. Natures were associated with mystical characters filled with evil and capricious spirits. It was firmly believed that these spirits were superior to humans and hold some sort of power over humans. At times Human was believed to be the victim of those evils' depredation and the only way to prevent this misfortune is by appeasing the spirits, through correct action, respecting the taboos and observance of ritual and sacrifice. This animistic belief system places the natural elements at the centre of human existence, around which all facets of life revolve.⁵⁹

Therefore, it will not be far off to suggest that the tenet of the human relationship with nature was founded on vulnerability, fear and anxiety. This makes it of utmost importance for an individual in the community to abide by the rules and regulations set out by the

⁵⁶ Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushei-Kuki clans*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd on behalf of Tribal Research Institute (department of Art and Culture Aizawl, Mizoram), 1975, p.65.

⁵⁸ Reginald A. Lorrain, *5 years in unknown jungles*, Aizawl, Allied Publishers PVT.LTD (on behalf of TRI Mizoram), 2012, p.74.

⁵⁹ Daman Singh, p. 18.

entire community on how natural resources were used, otherwise if one deviated from the system set out by the community there was a risk of repercussion from the supernatural being. This need for security makes social solidarity stronger since all the events happening around humans can be attributed to the action of the spirits.

2.4 Mode of resources uses and base of their economic sustainability:

The early Mizo society was for the most part agrarian in nature, apart from hunting, fishing and domestication of animals; agriculture was the backbone of the economy. This was a point in time when human activities were overwhelmingly shaped by natural forces, people had to rely entirely on human energy, employing simple tools, using (other than iron local material and indigenous knowledge completely free from external influences. The economy was essentially subsistence-based, meeting the demand of the basic needs of day-to-day life was enough. No village had a surplus produces to gain extra revenue since the advancement of the technology was uniformed within the village and relatively uniform across villages and tribes. There seems to be a balance between the production and distribution of agriculture and forest resource due to the limited need of the people.

There was a close relationship between the socio-cultural process, fertility of the soil, gradient of terrain, climatic condition, property relation, religious and traditional beliefs.⁶⁰ *'Jhumming'* (shifting cultivation) was practised by the Mizos since time immemorial. In this method, forests were cleared for cultivation, the trees and bushes were slashed and then burned where the ashes of burnt vegetation provided manure to the soil.

The selection of cultivable land (ramtuk rel) usually occurred between the end of January (Ramtuk thla) and the beginning of February (vau thla). Among the Maras, this section

⁶⁰ Dr. H. Vanlalhruaia, 'Mizo Economy and ancillary branches in the pre-colonial period', Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii (ed.), Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram, Guwahati, R.K Pillai for Scientific Book Centre, 2003, p. 68-80.

was conducted during December (Pawtlak thla).⁶¹ Selecting a land for cultivation required a lot of expertise, one who was able to identify the quality of the soil by its colours, weight, taste assess the gradation of the land. This was where 'Ramhuals' came into play who were experts on this matter, they were responsible for surveying land suitable for jhum land every year. While selecting land for cultivation, they would take the following points into considerations: Firstly, the appearance of the jungle and its thickness. The thicker the forest, the better the yielding of crops. Although bamboo forest produces less, it has the advantage of being easier to clear and permitted cropping at every four to five years interval, where the trees forests needed at least 8-10 years of regeneration. Secondly, the land facing the east '*chhimchhawng ram*' was normally selected as most plants if not all require abundant sunlight. Thirdly, the fertility and acidity of the soil were also taken into account, Ramhuals would taste the sample of the soil literally with their mouths, if the acidity of the soil was high it was considered risky, after assessing the soil fertility, Ramhuals would then divide the holding plots for each household and classified them into grade according to the quality of the land. According to the size and capacity of labour, the size of cultivation holding was determined for each family.

The chiefs would pick the plot first, followed by Ramhuals and Zalen, then the rest of the villagers were informed of the decision then all the families would select their plots one by one. Each family cut down the forest on the month of January or February followed by burning the vegetation after it was left completely dry for some time in March or April. Each family was on its own, the surface of the fields was plough lightly before the on sets of the rains. After the first sets of light rain the entire family sow the seed of maize, cucumber, pumpkins, peas, beans, and other vegetables, paddy was sown toward the end of April in the latter part. Tobacco and cotton were also raised for household use. The remaining season was devoted to periodic weeding, usually done three times a year. Then the harvest season was the happiest time for the early Mizo peoples, immediately after

⁶¹ N E Parry, *The Lakhers*, Calcutta, Firma LM Private Limited on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1976, p .77.

harvest was gathered Pawl kut took place, people gathering and feasting could last for a week or as long as there was enough rice beer to go around.⁶²

There were so many superstitions associated with the practice of Jhumming. Things like; the plot would be abandoned if a peculiar 'huk-huk' sound was heard when burning, or if the nightjar called by day, or if after the first day of cutting one had a dream of being chased by a mithun or being sprung upon by a tiger. Also, sites with trees that had certain abnormal growth, such as pendant protuberances (thinjang) or bulbous excrescences (thing lubul) were avoided.⁶³ Jhumming was the focal point of the peoples' lives, the sole source of survival. Their customs, culture, measures of time, quantities and distance are woven around these activities. It kept them occupied for most of the year and determined their well-being and quality of life.

Apart from jhumming, almost every Mizo family practices domestication of chicken, goat, dog and pig. There was no evidence of herding of cows and oxen during the pre-colonial period. One of the most highly valued animals during the pre-colonial period was 'sial' mithun/gayal, it was the highest mode of exchange and man's wealth was usually measured in terms of this animal. It was an animal of great symbolic value, the beast of choice in major sacrifice.

Forests are a provider of livelihood for the people it supplies firewood, building materials, food, medicines, animal fodder and all sort of things. Most of the fruits they consume were naturally grown in the jungles, edible roots and herbs were also taken from the jungle. Even jungle rubber trees are grown naturally in many parts of the country. However, the local method of tapping rubber and selling it to the neighbouring plain areas in return for daily necessities led to the decline of rubber trees. This led to a complete die out of rubber trees by the time colonial ruler set up administration in the hills.⁶⁴ Apart from this, all the

⁶² Parry, p. 77.

⁶³ Parry, p. 77.

⁶⁴ R.G Woodthrope, *The Lushai expedition 1871-1872*, Calcutta, FKPL on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram, p. 94.

articles of use were of material available in the immediate surroundings, it is notable that bamboos grew abundantly in the whole region.

The Lushai hills was often described as the land of bamboos, for instance, J D Baveja entitles his book *'The Land Where the Bamboo Flowers'* bamboo being present everywhere in the region, it has an intricate link with the lifestyle of the people and had a wide range of applications as a wall of the houses, floors, the frame for roofs, spears, handles for tools, water containers, mats, baskets, spoons, traps, cups, fuel, as edible shoots. Every stage of its growth from the shoot to the mature bamboo serves a different purpose. Different varieties of trees, shrubs, climbers, and herbs provided fruit and vegetables, timber, fuelwood, dyes, lacquer, medicine, and fibre. Reverend J H Lorrain who was one of the first missionaries in 1894, in his book *'Dictionary of the Lushai language'* (1940) which basically was an encyclopedia, mentions extensively different species of herbs with their locals' name in it.

Besides providing a variety of useful resources forests were the ground for hunting, hunting in the pre-colonial period was not only a game but part of the economic activity. The meat was regarded as a rich source of food. T.H Lewin wrote, *'the Lhoosai are great eaters of flesh, and domestic animal not being plentiful among them, their supplies depend on a good deal upon their success in the chase'*.⁶⁵

Apart from this experts in hunting commanded deep respect in the early Mizo society, according to traditional belief, it was the wish of any young able man to kill big animals to achieve or to provide himself with a good visa to paradise or pialral. This was one way to ensure admission to *'Pial-ral'* (a paradise after death) or the Mara equivalent of *'Piera'*. There were many ceremonials before and after the hunting, a sacrifice called *'Lashikhal'* was offered to the spirit who own all the wild animals before venturing into the wild to hunt. A ceremony *'Kawngpui siam'* were performed to foretell the result of the hunting and to facilitate success when a large party were about to embark on hunting annually

⁶⁵ T.H Lewin, *Wild Races of The South-Eastern India*, (first edition, London, 1870), Firma LM Private LTD on behalf of TRI Aizawl, Mizoram, (reprinted) 1978, p.138.

usually around April. A successful hunt was followed by a ceremonial sacrifice, giving the ghost of the performer powers over the ghost of the animal when entering paradise. When the hunting party returned, the best hunter among the young men was honoured with a special cup of rice beer (Zu), followed up with certain public ceremonies.⁶⁶

Besides meat being an important food source, the sense of spiritual enjoyment attained through hunting was evident in their expertise in making traps for all sorts of animals. Intricate traps were made for tigers, elephants, monkeys and some of the most commonly caught included pheasants, jungle fowl, porcupines, deer and wild cats. In the second half of the nineteenth century the use of European-made flint-lock guns obtained from Burma and Chittagong became very popular, large hunting parties undertook lengthy expeditions.

Fishing also formed an important part of the Mizo economy. The Mizos developed several indigenous fishing methods to suit the unique riverine system.⁶⁷ Fishing was conducted with ordinary casting nets, spears, or daos. But most of the time through weirs of timber and bamboo reinforced with a stone laid across rivers, sometimes an entire village would participate. As many streams were located on village boundaries, a competition was bound to happen to stake claim over sites suitable for fishing. Customarily, the first village to lay its weirs earned a right to fish, an infringement of this sometimes led to a serious quarrel.

The available literature on the early Mizo society did not provide evidence of restrictions on the hunting of any kind, either in species or their members hunted, methods employed, numbers killed, or frequency and timing of the hunt. However, there are certain taboos observed by different clans, this seems to be very clan specific, for example, *Mihlong* claimed descent from the Great Indian Hornbill and therefore never killed it. *Hnaihlen* did not kill tigers and pythons were off-limits for *Bonghias*. *Maras* avoided killing tigers as this was believed to cause sickness, requiring a special sacrifice in atonement. *Fanai* also

⁶⁶ N.E Parry, *Lushai custom: a monograph on Lushai customs and ceremonies*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Ltd (On behalf of TRI Aziawl, Mizoram), 1988, p. 33.

⁶⁷ Lalthanzara H and P B Lalthanpuii, 'Traditional fishing methods in rivers and streams of Mizoram north-east India', *science Vision (Journal of the Mizo Academy of Sciences (MAS))*, Vol 9, NO.4., 2009, p. 188-194.

spared tigers, believing that an ancestor once lost his way and was guided back to his village holding on to the tail of a tiger.⁶⁸

Interestingly, there seem to be no taboos on the killing of birds and animals during the breeding season as such. But there was a fascinating take on why *Maras* did not shoot the cock bird of any of the four varieties of hornbill during the nesting season. But it was because deprived of the food brought by the male, the female and her chicks would starve to death, and the perpetrators of this crime were severely punishable by the creator/*Khazangpa*. On the other hand, *Maras* did not have any reservations about consuming the mother and chicks, then left behind a stick in the nest as evidence of the cause of death. There was a belief that it would be reported by the male to the king of hornbills, who would give the widower another wife. The couple would return to the same nesting site, providing *Mara* people with an endless supply of hornbills.⁶⁹

There was however an unwritten set of rules governing rights to the kill. Regardless of where the hunting took place, '*Sachhiah*' (meat tax) was paid to the chief on every animal killed. When hunting in a group, the claims of various members were specified. Base on tradition and custom, different parts of the animal hunted were earmarked for family members. Then, there were fines imposed on the theft of birds or wild animals from traps.⁷⁰

The needs of the people have mostly been met through the years by intelligent use of natural resources in the surrounding. Even though there was a lack of intercourse with the neighbouring plains that restricted trade to a great extent, since an early time, some sort of trade exists in small frequency between the Mizos and the neighbouring people especially with the Bengali and Manipuri traders.⁷¹ Trade with the Chin Hills (Burma)

⁶⁸ N E Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 24.

⁶⁹ N E Parry, *The Lakher*, p. 28.

⁷⁰ N E Parry, *Lushai Custom*, p. 38.

⁷¹ Lalrinmawia, 'Economy of Mizos (1840-94)', in J B Bhattacharjee, *Studies in the History of North-east India*, Essay in honour of Professor H K Barpuraji, NEHU Publication with North Eastern History Association.

existed, in the early period salt, iron, metal ornament, hairpins and round metal gongs were imported from Burma. At times this would be disturbed by the rivalry between Mizo chiefs and Chin Chiefs of Burma.⁷² Several bones of animals, the skin of tiger and other animal products were sold in the neighbouring plains areas. The supply of Ivory by the Mizos even reach the Mughal court of Delhi and the aristocracy of Bengal through traders and craftsmen of Sylhet.⁷³ Guns, gongs, ornaments (necklaces, bracelets, hairpins, earrings etc.) were generally imported from Burma, Chittagong and Sylhet. The barter system was the main mode of exchange, as a monetary value was not known among the pre-colonial Mizo.

2.5 Influences of the ecology on Mizo society and culture:

Ecological conditions strongly determined the character of cultural space of any society, man and his surrounding geographical environment deeply affect his social, political and economic conditions.⁷⁴ Whenever there was rich biological diversity, there were bound to be social and cultural evolution, these two factors were always mutually supportive and reinforcing. Throughout the evolution of history, there was always a close relationship between the cultural space and the ecological conditions of the area, where the former was in one way or another determined by the latter. This was very true in the context of the early Mizo society as well. For example, the very word '*Mizo*' means '*highlander*' or '*hillman*' owing to the hilly conditions of the area. It was impossible to deny ecology of the Lushai hills have contributed considerably to the tradition and culture of the early Mizo society.

Most of the existing literature like the early reports and writings of the colonial administrators were not much concerned with environmental matters, their job was to

⁷² F.K Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, Calcutta, FKPL on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram, p. 155.

⁷³ Zochungnunga, 'Survey of Pre-colonial Mizo Economy in Pialral', *Historical Journal of Mizoram*, Vol-V, Mizo History Association, 1995, p. 23-38.

⁷⁴ Robert Leo Smith, *The Ecology of Man: An Ecosystem Approach*, New York, Harper & Row, 2nd Edition, 1987, p. 110.

report their administrations and suggests a strategy to go forward if necessary. Therefore, it was not a subject that was explicitly mentioned in their writings. However, it can be inferred from the then existing village, the use of forest, practice of cultivation, customs and belief system that the ecology of the Lushai hills had a lot of influence on the early Mizo society. Most of the nomenclature was directly or indirectly related to the ecological condition of the Lushai hills. Local beliefs, local stories, legends, folktales, and ceremonies were also related to the geographical conditions of the area. Rivers, hills and mountains had their importance in the life of Mizo as they had a deep connection with the culture and traditional religious beliefs of the people.

The early Mizo tribes like many other tribal communities, their belief systems were based on an animistic approach toward nature as mentioned before. Because of this, their sense of happiness and confidence came only after they have taken all steps possible to make peace with the spirits of good and evil. Ceremonies were performed at birth and death, in illness, association with the hunt, calamity, crops, unnatural deaths in the forests or, in the case of a woman at childbirth, also when at war. Indeed, they try to find connections where ever possible in every turn and phase of their life, to provide comfort that all that is happening in their life does not seem like a random thing. And this constant association of every situation in their life with the presence of a supernatural being put society in order, make people conform to the rules and restrictions set out by society.⁷⁵ This may seem like clutching its straws from outside looking in or people looking for significance in odd places, but forming those patterns in their life provides them comfort in their life. After all, everyone take comfort where we can find it!

On the other hand, they have explored with intelligence the potential of their land, this is visible from their ingenious utilization of cane, bamboo, leaves, herbs, and other accessories for their needs. At the same time, due to their nomadic nature and the

⁷⁵ A.G McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, Firma KLM (On behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram), 1977, Calcutta, p.118.

topographical features, there is hardly any trace of the early Mizo creation other than large rectangular roughly fashioned monoliths inscribed with crude markings.

The early Mizo were always very particular about their place of settlement, they would choose carefully on the site of the village. The hilltop was always the favourite site this seems to be because of its strategic location which provides the most impregnable stronghold from the intruders, it has to have a good supply of water in time of the dry season. Another reason that can be inferred from this was that the early Mizos seem to have an awareness about climatic conditions and diseases, the places they avoid for settlement like the place near the river streams and valleys are always infested with mosquitoes and tropical diseases and the humidity of this area was also a concern for permanent settlement.

In the olden days, villagers would move regularly to new pastures, in about four or five years. Apart from the form of cultivation system called *jhumming*, where a more easy and safe range of cultivation is sought after, epidemics caused by unhygienic treatment of the water supply, animals and human refuse, or treatment of the dead might give rise to a loss of public confidence in the site and may prompt to shifting of places.

The houses were strongly built to stand a strong wind. The framework was of rough-hewn timber uprights, the sides of the houses were supported by bamboo, and the roof was of the same material odd thatch grass as bamboos were easily available everywhere around the area. The floor of the houses was also of split bamboos plaited together; the floor was always a few feet above the ground level and most of the houses will not have windows, the only opening of the house was of the front and the back doors. This was mainly due to the fear of ill-luck but it also indicated the early Mizo have some awareness about health and hygiene. Each house had a front portico, from which rough timbers steps served as an approach to the ground level. The outer wall of the portico would be decorated with skulls and tokens of the hunts, rice mortar, fowls, wood stocks, and other household items would also be stored here to keep them from the dangers of civet cat, or other unwelcome vermin.

The livelihood of the people living in the Lushai hills depends on the yielding from their lands sufficient rice to sustain the family adequately for a year. This has to be achieved by clearing the forest, after some weeks the fallen timber or bamboos had to be burned under careful management because the fire of the forest turns in a wrong direction the fire lines had to be guided by the male villager so that uncut forest will not be mutilated. Unnecessary burning of the forest was a serious crime in the society, this shows that there is proper management of the forest.

Early Mizo belief that the hope of treatment lay in the propitiation of the interested spirits, whichever type they may be. But in some cases, there was the application of treatments in combination with sacrifices and incantations, under the advice of the village *Puithiam*/Priest. The treatment is widely different depending upon the regions and therefore cannot be generalized. In some cases, there was a distinct relationship between the treatment in those days and modern pharmacology, it is evident in their use of jungle plants on wounds and sores. Illness like dysentery, goitre, eye diseases, worms, skin sores, fever, stomach pains, rheumatism, diarrhoea, cholera, and respiratory diseases, were all known to the early Mizos.

Nature resources like salts from certain areas like the Piler Hill east of the Tuichang river were known to be beneficial when taken in small quantities either with or without food. Salt was also used externally on burns. Hot ginger, soda and water, were also used for colds and stomach relief. In the case of eye defects, a boiled egg was placed in a receptacle for pig's food, and the patient would have to eat it kneeling in a position of all fours. Fever was treated with a different type of method, in some cases, the bile of a wild boar mixed with water served as one medicine, in another a cup of cow's urine was drunk. Even though meat is usually considered unsuitable in fever cases, it is a belief that monkey flesh and water turtle were appropriated for feeding, must be to boost the appetite. The fat of the hornbill was used for external application in the case of respiratory diseases, this seems to be scientifically reasonable as it contains a large amount of oil and fat. The fats of python, tiger or bear were popular for massaging rheumatism. And the wearing of the

bones of a hook monkey over the aching joints. Many jungles creepers like lilies or leaves after drying or powdered were also used as a supplementary cure taken internally or applied externally in case of blackwater fever, still, today remain a very effective cure. The early Mizo also seems to have recognized the existence of tuberculosis, although they seem to be confused with chronic bronchitis.

Even in the fields of arts and crafts, we can see the ecological influence. Even though the early Mizo were a migratory race, never seems to have any deep urge to accumulate possessions on any extensive scale. Despite this uncompromising situation it was surprising to know that the early Mizo handwork was able to attain its excellence. Domestic baskets were all made of plaited bamboo, this was mainly done by men. These were reinforced by stout cane which has a quality of being very hard and durable. By smoking technique, the cane could be coloured, shiny mahogany was also used to give some colour and pattern to the artworks. Different types of baskets were used for different purposes like for storing valuables in the house, for carrying wood, rice, or articles for a short distance as well as for a further distance.

The method of weaving achieves excellent during this time, it was done on complicated indigenous handlooms and home-grown cotton were used. The whole process takes a lot of time and required a lot of patience. The cotton was seeded by means of a small locally made ginning machine, crude wood moving parts operating reversely which with the help of pig fat grease slowly spit out the seeds. The cotton was then carded employing a bow composed of a tight curved piece of cane connected at both ends by a thin cane string. The fluffy cotton was then spun by hand, then the cotton finally being run into skeins. This becomes easy only after considerable practice.

At times, Men's haversack and the green and red exhilaration of the women clothes were imported by they were not up to the standard. The colouring materials they have indigenously been the blue indigo (*Strobilanthes Flaccidi Folia*) which produce a dark blue colour but this process was very primitive and thus did not provide good results. Powder-horns, scabbards, wood combed, and other articles, were covered by lacquer

effectively usually in black and red colour, the Lushai '*Mei Thui*' tree (*Melanorrhoea*) provide the raw material for this. The conditions and the situation they were in, if there were no need for things, they will not waste time and effort on making them. Therefore, it is clear that there was no space and luxury for the retention of arts for the sake of the art itself.

CHAPTER III

ADVENT OF THE BRITISH: NEW ECONOMY, COMMERCIALIZATION AND CHANGES IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

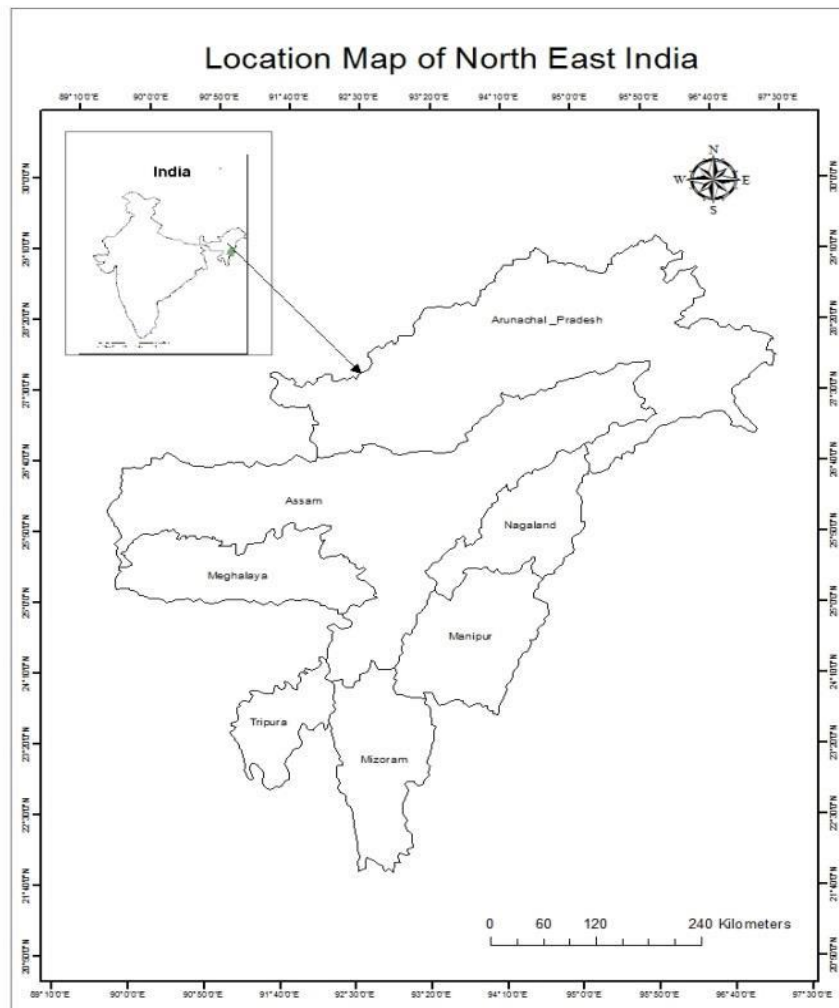


Figure.2: Location Map of North East India.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Lh Seitinthang, Cropping Pattern of North East India: An Appraisal, *American Research Thoughts*, ISSN: 2392 – 876X, Vol.1, Issue.1, November 2014, p. 490,

3.1 The compulsion for the occupation of the Lushai hills:

The battle of Plassey in 1757 was the turning point for The British East India Company in the colonizing process of India where a decisive victory was won against Siraj-ud-Daulah the Nawab of Bengal and his allies the French. This victory to the British means their arch-rival the French were no longer a threat in India, taking advantage of the non-rivalry condition in and around Bengal by 1760. The British East India Company firmly established itself in Bengal, during this time Mir Kasim the Nawab of Bengal, give up the Chittagong area to Lord Clive of the East India Company through a treaty. This later turns out to be an important seed for further colonization of the Assam and the hill area of the Northeast.

While the real consolidation of the Company rule in India started with a victory in the Battle of Buxar in 1764. With this victory, the British firmly established their base in India and started to embark on conquering other parts of the country by defeating Indian rulers one after another,⁷⁷ which led to the vast territory of the Indian sub-continent coming under the direct control of the East India Company, their interests now spread across the region of the subcontinent.

The East India Company started to invade Assam and the Surma Valley During the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26 and drive out the Burmese who had occupied the area for almost 60 years. The districts of Cachar and Sylhet were also conquered along with some other parts of Assam. Then the turning point concerning North-East India came with the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, which put an end to the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26), this enables the Company not only to occupy Assam permanently, it also paved a way for direct contact with the North-East, which eventually led to the annexation of the hills area one after another.⁷⁸

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269389564_Cropping_Pattern_of_North_East_India_An_Appraisal (Accessed 28th October 2021)

⁷⁷ Vumson, *Zo History: With an introduction to Zo culture, economy, religion and their status as an ethnic minority in INDIA, BURMA, and BANGLADESH*, Aizawl, Vumson, 1990, p. 106.

⁷⁸ Vumson, *Zo History*, p. 106.

The major geographical feature of Northeast India can be broadly divided into two distinct ecosystems, one is the plain areas of the three kingdoms of Assam, Manipur and Tripura and the other one is the hilly regions occupied by different tribal groups. Until the turn of the second half of the nineteenth century, the boundaries of the British provinces of Bengal and Assam never extended into the hill areas.⁷⁹

Some sort of trade exists between the Mizos tribe inhabiting the hill area and the people in the plain area through the market in the Cachar plains and other frontier areas where the Bengali traders will get a supply of elephant tasks, ivory, musk, rubber and timber from the neighbouring Lushai-Kuki hills.⁸⁰ Then, the Mizo tribes who inhabited the Cachar and Sylhet mountain ranges begin to have real contact with the British administrators with the annexation of Cachar in 1832.⁸¹

It is important to acknowledge that the British expansion in India was one of a steady process and was more of a gradual progression as the annexation of one territory necessitated the annexation of another, due to imperial, strategic and commercial considerations.⁸² The British initially came as traders of the British East India Company to the sub-continent. But they soon realized that the vast natural resources of the Indian sub-continent could be used to strengthen trade and industries which were booming back home in England by establishing dominance over the country. As a result, they started to adopt a policy of conquest, annexation and consolidation from the time of Warren Hastings and even more so during Dalhousie Governor Generalship.⁸³

⁷⁹ In 1905, Eastern Bengal was added to Assam to form a single province.

⁸⁰ J.B. Bhattachajee, *Trade and Colony: The British Colonisation of North East India*, Shillong, North East India History Association, 2000, pp. 12, 69. Also see Alexander Mackenzie, *the North East Frontier of India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, Reprint 2005, p. 287. Also, JB Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule un-North East India*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 256-294.

⁸¹ A.W. Davis, *Gazetteer of the North Lushai Hills 1915*, Delhi, Matro Company, reprint, 1987, p. 1.

⁸² S.K. Barpuari, *Alexander Mackenzie and evolution of British policy in the hills of north east frontier of India*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 2003, page. introduction ix.

⁸³ N E Parry, *The lakhers*, Calcutta, FKPL (on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram), 1932, p. 15.

Therefore, in most of the colonies, economic incentives have always instigated political imperialism, which over time led to control of resources. The situation was not much different in the context of Assam and the Northeast regions. Even though with regards to the Lushai hills and most other hill tribes, conditions look a little different, the immediate reason to conquer the Lushai hills was basically to protect the interest of British subjects and the commercial establishments in the neighbouring plains. And also, to secure the territory between the colonies of India and Burma from a strategic point of view.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, even though they appeared to be quite concerned with stopping raids and plunders of the from hill tribes, there seems to be an underlining motive as to more than just stopping the raids and plunders, annexation and colonization were done in different parts of India including the Northeast regions without the consent of the conquered. To quote NE Parry:

'They were not brought under British rule in their own interest; in fact, whether they liked being taken over and whether it was in their interest to be taken over or not were never considered at all'.⁸⁵

In the context of Assam and the Northeast region, Prof. H.L Gupta comment that one of the significant factors in the annexation of Assam was the quest for tea, which was then growing fast as a social nicety and as a lucrative article of trade.⁸⁶ Another eminent scholar Prof S.K. Chaube point out that once the organized states were brought under control, the subjection of the turbulent hill people was just a matter of time.⁸⁷ The '*Lure of the Hills*' increased the temptation of the annexation of Assam and her surrounding hills on one plea or another. This was aggravated by the economic prospects for what could be profited from the hills, such as cotton, minerals of value, timber, wild rubber and wild tea.⁸⁸ On the other side of the spectrum, some historians defend the annexationist policy and justify it on the

⁸⁴ Daman singh, Daman singh, *The last frontier: People and forests in Mizoram*, New Delhi, Tata Energy Research Institute, 1996, p. 25.

⁸⁵ NE Parry, *the Lakhers*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ S.K. Barpujari, *Alexander Mackenzie and evolution of British policy*, p. introduction ix.

⁸⁷ S.K. Chaube, *Hill politics in North-East India*, New Delhi, Orient Blackswan, 2012, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Chaube, *Hill politics*, Economic Aspects of the British Annexation of Assam, p. 6.

ground of '*mal-administration and frontier troubles*' which made it necessary for the East India Company in extending its territories as far east as Burma. But when exploring the British policy deeper, the underlining motive was clear and that this territorial expansion was the manifestation of the continuation of the British mercantile colonialism of the 18th century.⁸⁹

In 1869 Alexander Mackenzie,⁹⁰ at the request of Sir William Grey (who was Lieutenant the governor of Bengal at the time) had to prepare a '*Memorandum on the North East Frontier of Bengal*' relating to the hill tribes inhabiting it and the British policy regarding their annexation.⁹¹

In his memorandum, Mackenzie sought to explain the rationale of the British conquest of North East India. Here, he put forward an argument regarding the relations of the Bengal government with the hill tribes on its North-East Frontier and asserted that there had been a decided policy toward them. He said, '*The policy may have varied as times and government have changed, but in its broad aspect it has never aught else than a policy of conciliation*'. But it is important to acknowledge that since Pemberton's Report (1835) was published, no general survey had been undertaken of the political relations of the government with the hill tribes of Assam. So, the primary intention of the British Indian Governments policy with regards to its dealing with the turbulent hill tribes of the North-East Frontier was in the interest of protecting the peace of the settled territories in the borders.⁹² '*Non-intervention*' was the watchword and followed towards the hill tribes for a long time, but this could not stop them from raiding the frontier areas. Even though the policy of non-intervention could not bring peace at the border, the government was

⁸⁹ Chaube, p.75.

⁹⁰ Alexander Macenzie between 1866 to 1873 had the official charge of the political correspondence of the Government of Bengal which at that time also had the charge of Assam.

⁹¹ Chaube, p.75.

⁹² Alexander Macenzie, *History of the relations of the Government with the hill tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, Home Department Press, 1884, p. Preface.

adamant not to adopt any bold policy against them due to the fear of impending attack from Burma.⁹³

With the rapid expansion of tea gardens even to the foothills of both the valleys of Assam by the middle of the 19th century and the prospect of exploitation of various hills products and minerals of value by the European entrepreneurs. The demand for change of the existing policy and its replacement by a '*forward policy*' gain ground. But even an expansionist Governor-general like Lord Dalhousie remained unchanged in his policy leaving the Hill tribes to themselves.⁹⁴ Even though several local officials clamoured for a forward policy, both the supreme government and the Bengal government were reluctant to adopt a bold policy of annexation which in their opinion would be financially harmful and politically premature.

In 1865, the non-intervention policy was reviewed, the imperial government was not yet prepared to openly adopt the '*forward policy*' which might involve it in financial obligations and responsibilities when it was passing through a period of economic crisis and strained relation with Burma and Afghanistan.⁹⁵ However, advocates of the '*forward policy*' gained a favourable hearing with the creation of a separate province of Assam in 1887, under the in charge of a chief commissioner who come under the direct control of the government of India. Moreover, with the change of government in England and the coming of imperialist Disraeli to power, the new Governor-General of India Lord Lytton urged the secretary of state to abandon the policy of non-interference in relation to hill tracts in the North-East Frontier.⁹⁶ With the rapid expansion of the tea industry and prospects of interest of Assam which increase even more so with the annexation of upper Burma in 1886 when the hills areas were penetrated it was not as conciliatory as British administrator wanted it to be, since their main concern seem to be trade and profit from

⁹³ H. K Barpujari (ed.), *the comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.IV, Guwahati, Guwahati: Publication Board, Assam, 1990, 1992, Preface.

⁹⁴ Macenzie, *History of the relations of the Government with the hill tribes*, p. 369-70.

⁹⁵ H.K Barpujari (ed.), *the comprehensive History of Assam*, p. 225.

⁹⁶ B.C Charavarty, *British relations with the hill tribes of Assam since 1858*, Calcutta, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1964, p. 169-170.

forest products raw materials like timber, rubber and cotton etc.⁹⁷ And the exploration of the land features and its resources and construction of a road reaching Haka in Burma also seems to be one of the main driving factors for the annexation of the hills area one after another.⁹⁸

According to J.B Bhattacharjee, the British had commercial activity in Assam way before the actual occupation of Assam, in turn, this was the reason or the condition for the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26) which eventually led to the annexation of Assam.⁹⁹ Since then, it would not be an overstatement to assert that the eyes of the British occasional fell on the Lushai hills which ultimately led to its occupation in the latter part of the 19th century.

3.2 The Annexation of the Lushai hills:

The port of Chittagong has always remained an important strategic location since the time of the Mughal and to the British as well and Burma was ceded to the British East India Company in 1760. In 1830, Cachar lapsed to the British. The hill areas of North Cachar were subsequently annexed, followed by Lakhimpur in 1835 and Sylhet in 1858. Manipur had retained its status as an independent and remain a friendly state under its Hindu Raja. There were few minor conflicts between the British and the Chiefs of the Khasi Hills, but it was resolved with a brief military operation, then in 1833, the Khasi state was an independent free state except for the Jaintia hills state which lapsed into British rule as the Raja was allegedly involved in the murder of three British subjects.¹⁰⁰

Now, the threat to the authority of the crown came from the Nagas, the Garos, and the Lushais, all of whom persistently raided British territory and kept the British forces perpetually engaged in clashes. The Naga Hills was constituted as a district in 1866, the

⁹⁷ Dr. H Thangtungnung, *Anglo-Lushai relations 1890-1947*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2014, p. 24.

⁹⁸ Thangtungnung, *Anglo-Lushai relations*, p. 24.

⁹⁹ J.B Bhattacharjee, *Trade and Colony: The British Colonisation of the North East India*, Shillong, North East India History Association, 2000, p. 69.

¹⁰⁰ Daman Singh, p. 22.

Garo Hills district was similarly constituted in 1869. At this point, the only problem that remained was that of the Lushais Hills.

There has been contact with the Lushais (Mizos) with the plain people in the Cachar plains, where the Raja of Cachar supplied Elephants' tasks, ivory, rubber and agar timber to the Mughal rulers. Some of the items in this market came from the neighbouring Lushai-Kuki Hills.¹⁰¹ After the British occupation of Cachar in 1832, the Lushais, who inhabited the bordering mountain ranges of Cachar and Sylhet began to have contacts with the new administrator, later on, the relations became more firmly established.

The early phase of the British and the Lushais was a violent one, as the hills tribes would constantly descend to the plain's areas, raid and plundered the villages and workers in the plantations. Then after looting and taking captive, they would retreat back to their strongholds in the hills, the Lushais had their own reason for their activities. The year 1777 was the first official record about the raid of the Lushais by the British administrator, the Lushais were better known as the Kukis back then.¹⁰² When the British East India Company penetrated the Chittagong hill tracts, a complaint was made to the Chittagong Chief about a raid by the savaged people and a request for a detachment of sepoy. The incursions of the Lushai (Kukis) had been felt in the region a few times. So, for the British protecting the inhabitants against the intruders was a priority since the Chittagong area had been ceded to the British by Mir Kasim in 1760 after the Battle of Plassey, which open ground for the British to contact with the Mizo tribes.¹⁰³

The Lushai who were called the Kukis or Chins at that time was seen by the British as uncivilized war mongered, occupied the southern stretches of the hill's areas beyond Assam known as the Lushai Hills, an area that stretch from Assam towards the south to

¹⁰¹ Bhattacharjee, *Trade and Colony*, p.12, 69. Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, p. 287; Also, Bhattacharjee, *Cachar Under British Rule*, p. 256-294.

¹⁰² Dr Sangkima, *Mizos Society and Social Change (1890-1947)*, Guwahati, Spectrum publications, 1992, p. 70.

¹⁰³ Animesh Ray, *Mizoram*, New Delhi, National book trust India, , 2002, p. 25; A.S Ried , *Chin-Lushai Land*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, Reprint, 2008, p. 7.

the Chin hills on Burma. As isolated as they might seem, the hill dwellers would often come down as to the markets, rivers and plantation areas along the foothills to trade their items like rubber, cotton etc. in return for their daily needs.¹⁰⁴ Therefore the annexation and occupation of the lower and the upper Assam in 1826 and 1836 respectively brought the company affairs in constant touch with the lives of the hill tribes.

The British company constantly follow the policy of conciliation and concession towards the hill tribes. But the plains of Cachar and the Sylhet frontier were subject to frequent raids by the Lushais. From the British recorded, in September 1826, there was a massacréd of woodcutter of Sylhet which the British considered as their subjects. And in 1844 another one happens in the Sylhet frontier itself.¹⁰⁵ In retaliation, an expeditionary force was sent to the Lushai Hills in December under Captain Blackwood. This was the first-ever military expedition undertaken by the British in the Lushai Hills.¹⁰⁶

In 1850 a suggestion was made by Colonel Lister to raise a levy from the Kukis, Cacharis and other tribes to occupy the southern frontier posts of Cachar, this is one of the first steps for the frontier defence against the raids of the hill's tribes.¹⁰⁷ A more favourable relation had existed between the British and the Lushais by this time. However, in 1855, a tea garden in the southern part of Cachar opened and this was seen by the Lushais as an encroachment upon their traditional hunting grounds, this ultimately led to a raid of the tea gardens of Loharbund and Monierkkhal in early 1869.¹⁰⁸

As a conciliatory measure for a peaceful relationship between December 1869 and March 1870, the Deputy Commissioner at that time Edgar and Major Macdonald visited

¹⁰⁴ C. Lalthlengliana, *The Lushai Hills, Annexation, Resistance and Pacification (1886-1988)*, New Delhi, Akansha Publishing House, 2007, p. 25-26.

¹⁰⁵ Vumson, *Zo History*, p. 108; Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, New Delhi, Mittal publication, 2005, p. 288.

¹⁰⁶ L.W Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, Calutta, FKPL (on behalf of Tribal Research Institute Aizawl, Mizoram), 1929, reprint 1977, p. 5, 21; E.B Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country*, Aizawl, Firma KLM (on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram), 1893, reprint 1973, p. 24.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Mackenzie, *The north east Frontier of India*, new Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2005, p. 292.

¹⁰⁸ S.N Singh, *Mizoram: Historical, Geographical, Social, Economic, Political and Administrative*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1994, p. 34.

Suakpial who raid three villages in Sylhet in 1862, at his own home and fixed a new boundary. But this does not yield a fruitful result, as the tribal chiefs reluctantly accepted the terms as this would restrict their movement and at the same time the British also came to a conclusion that conciliation measures only emboldened the Lushais.¹⁰⁹ This was followed by an action of outrages and raids on the frontiers of Chittagong hill tracts, Hill areas of Tipperah, Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur.

The raid started in the Chittagong outpost on 31st December 1870, followed by Poyakookie on 21st January 1871 and 23rd Ainahkal on the westside of Cachar district. In the year 1871 between January and March, many villages in the area of Cachar, the hillside of Tiperah, Sylhet and Manipur were destroyed and many of the inhabitants were killed and wounded. It was during this period that the famous incident in Mizo history '*The Mary Winchester incident*' happened. On 23rd January 1871, the tea garden of Alexandrapore in Cachar was raided and destroyed by the Haulongs tribe of Lushai and a six years old Mary Winchester was carried away as a war slave.

On 11th July 1871, The British government in India decided upon a full-scale expedition against the tribes in the Lushai hills.¹¹⁰ Two-column were formed that should start operation as early as possible in November 1871, the right (Chittagong) column commanded by general Brownlow with Captain Lewis as Civil officer and the left (Cachar) column under general Bouchier with Edgar as Civil officer. The main objective was to bring the Lushais into submission to protect the frontier and to punish the tribes for their actions and release the British subjects held under captivity and specifically bring back Mary Winchester.¹¹¹ Apart from this exploring and surveying the Lushai country for the purposes of trade and commerce to open bazaars in the border areas to promote trade and commerce was the underlying objective.

¹⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *History of the Assam Rifles*, p. 59.

¹¹⁰ Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, p. 309-310.

¹¹¹ Captain O.A. Chamber, *Hand Book of the Lushai Country*, Calcutta, Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1899, Reprint Firma KLM, Kolkata, 2005, p. 81.

The Expedition was carried out successfully throughout the cold season and concluded in March 1872.¹¹² This expedition had an important impact from an economic point of view, For the first time the British had the advantage of exploring the Lushai hills properly, which led to the opening of communication between the Hills and Plains through the proposed road from Cachar to Chittagong which act as an incentive to trade, Bazaars were established; one at Changsil in the Lushai Hills, two in Cachar Hills, and others in the vicinity of Tipaimukh hills (later known as Sonai Bazar). Because of this trade and commerce activities began to increase in the border area where items like ivory, rubber and other forest products were traded for salt, iron, utensils, tobacco etc. But even during this time trade were done mostly in a barter system.¹¹³

Peace existed for about a decade and a half, then on 16th December 1888, news of a raid by the Lushais tribe reached Calcutta. It became evident to the government that the existing frontier defence and preventive measures were insufficient to prevent the raids of the Lushais and to deter them from crossing the Frontier. So, a massive expectation was initiated into the hills, the whole column was placed under the command of Colonel V. W Tregear with D. Lyall commissioner of Chittagong as the Civil Political Officer and Captain J. Shakespear as the intelligence officer.¹¹⁴ This operation lasted for about four months and it had an important result, after this expedition a road was constructed from Demagri to Lunglei, and a fort with stockages was built at Lunglei this place, later on, came to be an important centre of British administration.¹¹⁵

The British had been in contact with the tribal in the Chin Hills of Burma, which were situated adjacent to the Lushai Hills after the annexation of upper Burma in 1885. The Chins tribe were also involved in frequent raiding of the surrounding plains, while the British were busy in a military campaign trying to contain the Lushai tribes who are on

¹¹² E.B. Elly, *Military report on the Chin-Lushai Coutry*, p. 9.

¹¹³ *The Lushais 1878-1889*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute (Govt of Mizoram), 2nd reprint, 2008, p. 41.

¹¹⁴ A.S Reid, *Chin-Lushai land*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute (Govt of Mizoram), Reprint, 2008, p. 48, 50.

¹¹⁵ B.C. Allen, E A Gait, et al, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2005, p. 459.

the other side of the frontier the Chin annoyance by raiding grew. Even though Her Majesty places the responsibility on the British Government of India to protect their new subjects from the inroads of the savages, who are in the habit of raiding the villages on the frontier.¹¹⁶ The government was against undertaking another extensive expedition in the same year being already burdened with large expeditions in India.¹¹⁷

Instead, a garrisoned post and a frontier station were established at Fort white situated in the centre of the Chin hills, having established a Fort at Lunglei in the south Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills, The British began to have an idea that a combined Chin-Lushai expedition should be launch to subdue the tribes completely and occupied the area permanently.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 was launched both in the Chin Hills in Burma and the Lushai Hills of India. The main objective was to expose, open out, and subjugate the unknown country which lay between Burma and Eastern Bengal and bring the entire area under British control. A road was to be constructed which connected between India and Burma, specifically for the southern column the orders were to construct a mule track to Haka in Burma and establish garrisoned posts there, and the northern column was to punish the chiefs who were responsible for raids of the valley and villages, and to established a permanent post in the Northern Lushai Hills. Both the Southern and Northern columns were placed under the command of Brigadier General F.V.W. Tregear whose force consisted of 3,380 men.¹¹⁹

The expedition ended with the establishment of a road connecting Chittagong and Kale in Burma and eventually led to the annexation of the Lushai Hills. It led to the creation of two districts in the Hills, North Lushai Hills with its headquarters at Aizawl and South Lushai Hills with its headquarters at Lunglei.¹²⁰ The Chins and Lushais were completely disarmed and many were recruited as part of the labour force to Europe during the First

¹¹⁶ Dr. Sangkima, *Mizo Society and Social Change (1890-1947)*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publication, 1992, p.70.

¹¹⁷ Sangkima, *Mizo Society and Social Change*, p. 60-61.

¹¹⁸ Sangkima, p. 61f.

¹¹⁹ Foreign department, External affairs, march 1891, Nos. 163, 169 and 171.

¹²⁰ Robert Reid, p.13.

World War (1914-1918).¹²¹ The expedition also paved the way for the coming of the Christian missionaries and the gradual introduction of western education in the hills.¹²² The Colonial Government consolidated its power by crushing later disobedience Chiefs and introduced a common system of administration in the Lushai Hills and remained under the Colonial rule till 1947.

3.3 Changes of Administration in the Lushai hills:

The annexation and occupation of the Lushai Hills resulted in the creations of two districts, the North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills with headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. The North Lushai Hills came under the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1895, while the South district became a part of Bengal until 1898 and then it was transferred to Assam.¹²³

The administration system of the British in the Lushai had its parallel with the '*dual government*' adopted in Bengal during the administration of Robert Clive between 1765 and 1767 under which the company acquired real power while the responsibility of the administration rested with the Nawab of Bengal.¹²⁴ Throughout the period of their administration, the British indirectly ruled the country through the existing chiefs and many new chiefs were also created. The responsibilities of day-to-day affairs rested on their shoulders while the British monopolized power and to a large extent control natural resources.¹²⁵ The rights of the Chiefs were curtailed significantly with a new set of orders and responsibilities.

¹²¹ Vumson, p. 133, 134.

¹²² Sangkima, p.125.

¹²³ Vumson, p. 88.

¹²⁴ Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1975*, New Delhi, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 32-33.

¹²⁵ Arrangements for Political and Military Control of Chin-Lushai Country, Foreign Department, External affairs, August 1890, No.240.

The British administration as early as 1890 stated that the present administration by the chiefs should be left as it was and that we should not interfere with the village administration of criminal, civil and social matters.¹²⁶ This principle was highlighted in a proclamation issued by the Chief Commissioner of Assam which published the rules for the administration of the Lushai Hills in 1895; one of the main principles was the internal control of villages by their leaders, the Chiefs.¹²⁷ Indeed, this remained in force throughout the colonial administration with slide modification periodically. Major Shakespeare, stated clearly in his report of 1897-98 that his main aim was to interfere as little as possible between the Chiefs and their people while doing their best to influence the Chiefs their responsibility for maintenance of order in their villages. He also wrote in his notebook (22nd March 1905) *'I am sure that the sound policy is to do all we can to make the best of the form of Government we found existing'*.¹²⁸

The British were very meticulous in their management of resources including human resources. The retainment of chieftainship was extremely beneficial for the British it essentially provides an effective at the same time inexpensive administrative for the British.¹²⁹ But on the other hand, this significantly weakens the position and the power of the chiefs to a subordinate position and makes them a mere instrument for the maintenance of peace, collection of revenue and tribute and supply of labour. They act as a link between the government and the people who were governed and became a critical part in maintaining the British administrative and political setup in the Lushai hills¹³⁰. Just by this arrangement alone, the British saved a huge amount of expenditure, energy, time and valuable resources. Many new chiefs were also created and appointed by the British due

¹²⁶ Foreign Department, External Affairs, August 1890, No. 240.

¹²⁷ Foreign Department, No 240.

¹²⁸ Foreign Department, No 240

¹²⁹ NE Parry, *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, Calcutta, Firma KLM (on behalf of TRI, Aizawl Mizoram), reprint, 1992, p. 3.

¹³⁰ Sangkima, 'The relations between the English and the Lushai Chiefs after 1890: A period of conflict and Co-operation', *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, 10th session, 1989, Ed. And Pub. By J.B. Bhattacharjee, Shillong, p. 444-45.

to their usefulness for the British to run an administration effectively, by 1947 as many as around 350 new chiefs were created under the colonial rule.¹³¹

The British government introduced several legislative measures concerning the hill tribes. One of the first legislation was the Scheduled Districts Act. XIV of 1874, which became effective in 1898.¹³² This acted as the guiding principle in the administration of the Lushai Hills District till 1919. It empowered the provincial government to declare what enactment should be enforced within its territorial jurisdiction.

The Government of India Act of 1919 empowered the Governor-General of India to declare any part of British India as a '*backward track*', accordingly the Lushai Hills District was kept as a reserved subject.¹³³ Later on, based on the recommendations of the Simon Commission in 1927, the Lushai Hills was placed as '*excluded*' as per the purview of the New Constitution, and accordingly classes as an '*Excluded Area*' in the Government of India Act, 1935, as per the government of India Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas orders 1936.¹³⁴ This act of 1935 along with the provisions of section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier regulation 1 of 1873 combine to enforce '*the inner line*' which was a permit system enforced upon any outsider to enter the hills so specified by the regulation. This inner line as it evolved served as an instrument to prohibit outsiders from entering beyond a certain line into the hills without a pass from the concerned authority.¹³⁵ But in the initial stage, it was more of a measure taken to by the British government to safeguard its subject settling near the foot hills and workers plantation area of Assam, essentially to keep the hill tribes at bay.

¹³¹ A.G McCall stated in his book '*Lushai Chrysalis*' that the number of chiefs rapidly increased to more than 400 after some 40 years under the British which was around 60 at the beginning of the occupation of the hills. While opinion was divided on this where some sections of the British officers disapproved of the creation of new chiefs, the Government continued with this practice.

¹³² Administrative reform; Notification No. 921P of 1 April, 1898.

¹³³ A.G McCall, '*Lushai Chrysalis*', Calcutta, Firma KLM (on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram), p. 238.

¹³⁴ Sir Robert Reid, '*The Lushai Hills : culled from history of the frontier areas bordering on Assam, from 1883-1941*', Calcutta, Firma KLM (on behalf of TRI Aizawl, Mizoram), Reprint, 1978, p.66.

¹³⁵ S K Chaube, '*Hill Politics in Northeast India*', Patna, Orient Longman, 1999, p. 14, 15, 23.

Apart from this, the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Act XIV of 1860) and Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure were also introduced and extended into the Lushai Hills.¹³⁶ All these legislations not only prevented the Lushai hills from outside penetration like Assamese, the Bengalis and the Bangladeshis. But were also to a certain extent useful in protecting the natural resources of the Lushai hills from the onslaught of commercialization and unsustainable extraction of forest resources.

3.4 British Forest policy in the Lushai Hills:

Political authority opens a door for the colonial power to establish absolute control over the natural resources. This to a large extent change and in some places destroy the existing patterns of resource ownership, management, access and utilization while replacing them with systems more suited to meet the requirements of the imperial power. But their policies concerning natural resources varied extensively across India, just as their political interests also varied.

In 1864, the forest department of British India was established to enforce the state dominion over forest resources, with the end goal of achieving systematic economic returns. The department followed a general policy of establishing jurisdiction over valuable forests. Those areas which contain an immediate worth commercially were declared as reserved areas, while others were designated as protected forests to await their turn for exploitation, all other forest areas comprised of '*unclassified*' forest area, even in this area, the government retained its monopolistic control of trade in forest products.¹³⁷ Commercial extraction began in the accessible areas which gradually grew with the expanding rail and road network in mainland India. On the other hand, the right and livelihood of the locals were severely curtailed.

¹³⁶ Sangkima, *Mizos, Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1992, p. 103-104.

¹³⁷ Daman Singh, p. 38.

Out of all the forest products timber was the prime value of the British, so the British government were trying to improve natural forest by increasing the stocked of desirable species, afforestation was backed by silvicultural trials and research on wood treatment and processing, this kind of experimentation happened in most of the plain areas of colonial India and it happens in the plains area of north-eastern India as well.¹³⁸ But the hills area of the Lushai hills and other hills area were a bit of a different story in terms of the degree of control and intrusion the imperial power had, in a sense that it did not seem to be as pervasive in these areas as it did in another part of the country.

Some of the reasons attributed were; firstly, except in some sovereign states of Manipur, Hill Tippera and the Khasi Hills who enjoy some autonomy and where the British political agents had only an advisory role. Other hills areas like the Naga, Garo, and Lushai Hills and the Chittagong hill tracts were annexed and therefore entirely administered by the British. In most of these areas, their economic interests were outweighed by the priority of maintaining public order, especially at the start of colonization. Secondly, from a commercial point of view, most of the hill forests had less commercial potential in terms of species and their numbers, compared to the plains and foothills area of Assam. Thirdly, accessibility seems to be another major problem, as this area had a tropical evergreen type of forest, and this limited to a large extent the exploitation of timbers. Nonetheless, the Lushai hills did yield revenue, in an area where timbers available on the route of navigable rivers, in some cases more from unclassed than from the reserved forests.¹³⁹

When the British occupied the Lushai hills, it was felt not necessary to establish a forest department specifically for the Lushai hills. Therefore, the British administration in the hills look after the forests area and its activities within it, and operations in the forests on the shared border were supervised by the Cachar forest division. A fairly large area was reserved, but most of the extraction of forest products was done in an area of the river banks. One of the main activities of the district administration staff were organizing trade

¹³⁸ Daman Singh, p.38.

¹³⁹ Daman Singh, p.38.

in forest product, so most of the commercial transactions were monopolized by the government, no attempts were made to restock the forests areas.

The Superintendent through executive order under the general supervision of the conservator of forests administered other forests areas, the Assam Forest Regulation of 1891 was also barred in the Lushai Hills district from 1989 apart from invoking certain sections. Therefore in 1904, the Chief Commissioner of Assam put up a notice on the rules by which the forests were to be controlled. The reserves forest other than the inner line reserve were created by executive order. These areas were relatively small, scattered and localized, consisting of riverine, roadside, town etc. Apart from these areas, there were also reserved tree species.¹⁴⁰ An area of one mile along the entire length of both banks of navigable rivers was designated as riverine reserves, even paddy cultivation was not permitted within these areas. However, the plantation was allowed in the bamboo areas as long as no trees were cut or burnt. And a pass for cotton cultivation in the bamboo jungle was also given, as long as valuable trees were not destroyed. Apart from this, a strip of land 150 feet in width, either side of government roads was similarly reserved, here also jhumming were not allowed, this is done mainly to prevent landslide and to preserve roadside trees as shelter for travellers. But in some circumstances, jhumming were allowed, and the village was responsible for keeping the road clear and repairing any damage caused.

Reserved was deemed necessary supposedly on environmental grounds in an important town, for example, small bamboo reserve in Aizawl was earmarked for use in government construction therefore not open to government construction, Champhai reserve was to safeguard rice cultivation introduced in the valley, and also the purpose of the reserved area in Lunglei was to protect the Theiriat water supply.¹⁴¹ Especially within Aizawl and Lunglei towns, special rules were framed in relation to felling trees. For instance, only the superintendent could authorize the removal of trees within the compounds of government

¹⁴⁰ MSA, Assam Forest regulation 1891, Notification no. 608 R, under Section 32 (a), dated 22nd February 1895

¹⁴¹ Daman Singh, p. 40.

buildings or along public works department roads. Conditions under which felling trees was allowed included if there is a danger to property, road conditions, or human life. Permission was also necessary to cut trees standing on proposed house sites. Such trees were either disposed of through auction or by levying royalty.

There was a fairly simple system of management of forest and its resource, indeed the forest administration reports of the Lushai hills was not well recorded and abysmal. Even in 1947-48 when India was about to gain independence, one can see from archival record that there was no proper working plan, preliminary working plan report, annual plan of operations, afforestation, forests roads, bridge, forest buildings, protection from fire, nor any forest surveys to reports.¹⁴² Most of these activities were taken up by other divisions. Routine information such as the seed years of species works on forest economics, works on forest botany, standard volume tables, and commercial volume tables etc. Most of them were not properly recorded and these could be due to lack of trained and experienced staff from the Lushai Hills district.

However archival data indicate an effort to train local people, but the education system seems to be a barrier and this could be the reason for lack of motivation also. Among the locals, there were only a few who could qualify to enlist for training courses, fewer passed with the required grades. The post of Deputy Ranger could be filled by a candidate who had successfully completed a course at the Kurseong Forest School only by around 1920.¹⁴³ By 1931, the strength of local permanent employees in the district forest department consisted of one Deputy Ranger and seven Forest Guards.¹⁴⁴ After the partition of India in 1947, there were some changes in the administration as the neighbouring Chittagong Hill tracts and the joint revenue station at Barkhal went to Pakistan. As revealed by the Forest Administration Report (1948-49) a building was constructed at Demagiri here two Assistant Foresters (transferred from Cachar), one

¹⁴² MSA, Collection II, administration, 1947-48; Forest administration Report in the district of Lushai Hills for the year 1947-48.

¹⁴³ MSA, training Lushai in forestry, 1916

¹⁴⁴ MSA, 1931, Reports and returns, Assam schedule III, form 7 (new), 6 (old), 1.4.1931.

Deputy Ranger, two Forest Guards, and two boatmen were posted to handle the operations in the south. At this stage, Aizawl had one Forester and five Forest Guards.¹⁴⁵

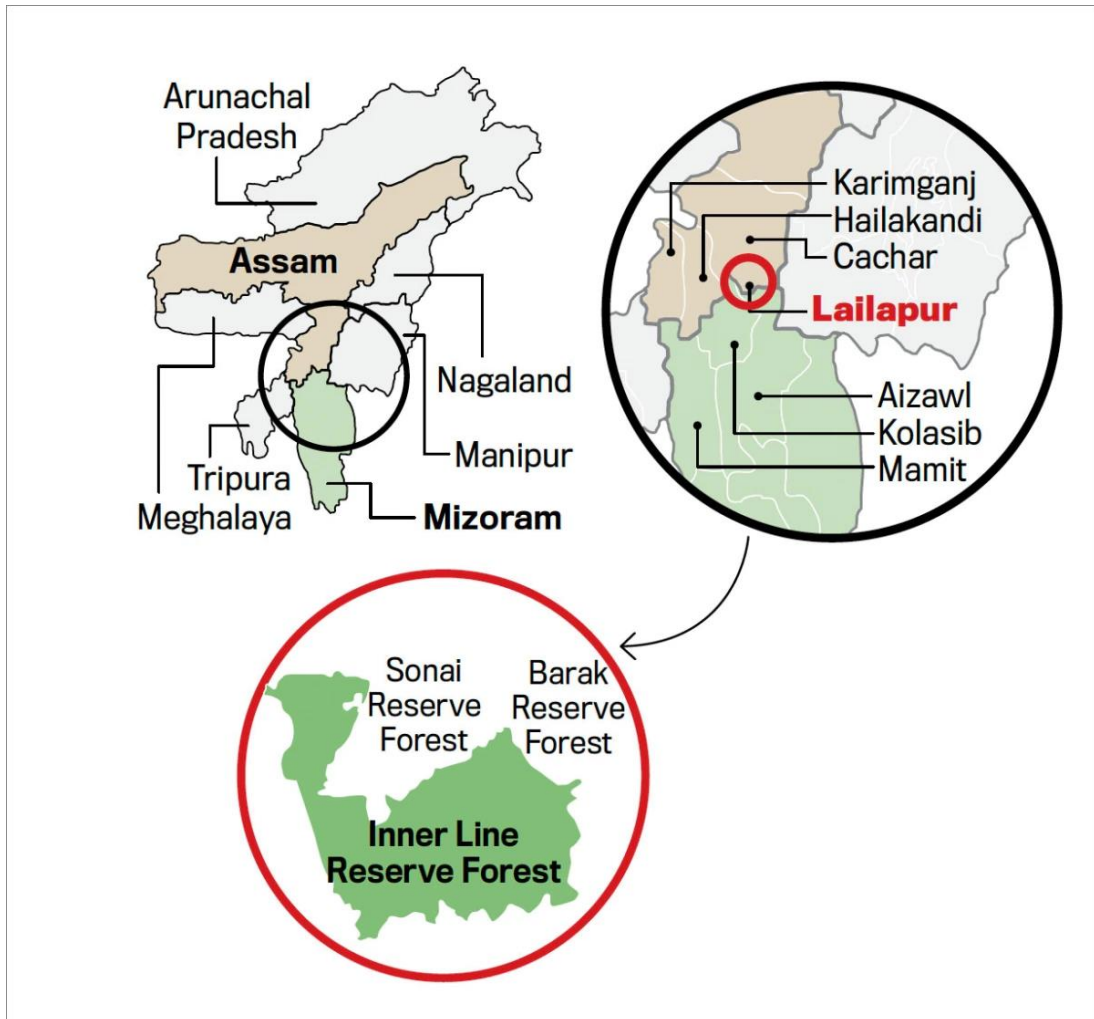


Figure.3: Location Map of Inner Line Forest Reserve¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ MSA, 1949, forest administration Report, Report of the Lushai hills for the years 1948-49.

¹⁴⁶ Kaushik Deka, 'Assam-Mizoram clash: Border battles', *IndiaToday*, August 9, 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/up-front/story/20210809-assam-mizoram-clash-border-battles-1834876-2021-07-30>, (Accessed 27th October 2021).

3.5 Administration and Management of the Lushai hills forest:

The notification 75 Forests 1776 R which was issued on April 22nd 1904 by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, which may be seen in the Assam Forest Manual from pages number 164 onwards, disclose a method on how the forest in the district will be controlled by superintendent and subject to supervision by the conservator of forests. Prior to this, The Assam Forest regulation does not necessarily apply to the district.¹⁴⁷

In 1877 a huge tract of about 509 square miles on the northern side bordering with Cachar was declared as the '*Inner Line Reserve*'. This was the only area that was constituted as reserved forests. Later in 1904, while continuing to be managed by the Cachar forest division, the territory was transferred from the Cachar district to the Lushai Hills.¹⁴⁸ This was only one properly constituted Forest Reserve within the Lushai Hills and this bordered the district of North Cachar. Approve of this can be seen in the files of 1933 from state archive under the title, '*Short note on the progress of forests affairs within Lushai hills District and an account of the exact position at the present moment together with a summary of the conditions and sanctions governing the control of forest villages and hamlets within the Lushai hills Inner Line Reserve*'.¹⁴⁹ This Inner Line reserve was a forest that protect the plains areas of Cachar, therefore jhumming in this area in an uncontrol manner were regarded as detrimental to cultivation in the plains and restricted.

The Inner Line Reserve was divided into blocks and was kept under the charge of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). The felling of trees within these reserves areas was periodically negotiated and assigned to timber traders from the plains. The DFOs at Cachar and Sylhet were empowered to issue trade permits, this was done in consultation with the superintendent of Lushai Hills and royalty were collected on the produce. On the southern side, the Chittagong DFO could issue instead trade permits. Later in the 1930s as an experimental measure, it was permitted that anyone could engage in cutting or

¹⁴⁷ A.G. McCall O.B.E, *The Lushai hills District cover*, Aizawl, TRI (Aizawl, Mizoram), 1980, reprint 2008, p.193.

¹⁴⁸ McCall, *The Lushai hills District cover*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁹ McCall, p.193

purchasing timber who were not specifically barred entry could proceed without a pass, as long as one did not go beyond a mile from the banks of navigable rivers or where the house was built. The Bengal Forest Department was authorized to collect royalty at the border, Barkhal (the joint revenue station) the share was then allocated to Assam.

The villages that were located within and on the boundary of this reserve was subject to restrictions in many activities like habitation, cultivation, hunting, fishing etc. There were six villages within the reserve area; Saiphum, Mauchar, Tinghmun, Sakawrdai, Bilkhawthlir, and Vairengte, each of these villages were permitted a certain number of houses. At the time India gain independence (1947-1948) there were a total of 325 households in the area. Residents were not allowed to cut tree forests for jhumming and they had to obtain permission to clear the bamboo jungle of cultivation, even to collect forest produce they had to obtain permission from the official. Other villages like; Palsang, Khawdungsei, Zohmun, Khawulian, Vaitin, Khawpuar, Dairep, Bhairabi were inhabiting the boundary area of the Inner Line Reserve were also prohibited from jhumming activities in the area.

Then through amendment No.50 to the Assam Forest Manual pages 167, a reserved area at Aizawl was exclusively created. Another reserve area which was to be maintained by the superintendent of police also included all along the banks of the navigable rivers to a depth of one mile on either side. The control of extraction of certain areas within the district lies with the Divisional Forest Officer of Cachar, but in the areas of south Lushai hills collection of all royalty on extraction lies with the Divisional Forest Officer of Chittagong hill tracts on a sharing basis. In both these areas, there were little to no control or supervision of extraction.¹⁵⁰

According to official A.G. McCall a civil servant at the time, the Assam Forest Department was naturally discouraged in an attempt to extend much influence over the forests due to the wasteful practice of jhumming throughout the district. This could be the

¹⁵⁰ McCall, p. 194.

reason why no machinery exists for afforestation anywhere within the district and revenue realized is the result of wholesale extractions dependent on the demands by timber traders. The extractions of timber usually take place near navigable rivers even so the absence of proper outlay of road makes it a very difficult task.¹⁵¹

The crux of the policy of the British was to increase control over some specific areas and lessen restrictions on the other areas. This was done with the hope that this will result in meeting the reasonable requirement of the Forest Department while relieving the chief of a measure of rather irritating executive restrictions. In line with this policy, some areas from the Inner Line Reserve were released from control while specifically reserving other areas possibly on a forest village control basis. But opening up of the Inner Line Reserve to general Jhumming was strongly disapproved. The British officials were of an opinion that an increased presence of people in this area would only mitigate, but not in any way solve the need for additional cultivation or a change in method and would only result in using up a last remaining buffer or forest reserve. Since, this Inner Line Forest Reserve constitutes a protection forest for the plains of Cachar, if they are freely jhummed, denudation would accelerate to the disadvantage of plains cultivation.¹⁵²

Management was done area wise and the route which export were to be taken. So, on and *'Unclassed and unreserved forests'* within the Lushai Hills of which produce was not exported via the Karnaphuli; extraction for personal consumption was allowed free of all royalty, but extraction for sale was prohibited except under proper authority granted by the superintendent of Lushai hills who are advised to follow the footsteps of the procedure followed by the Forest Officers of Cachar, Sylhet or Bengal. Then an area on which the Divisional Forest Officer of Cachar exercise executive control of extraction is divided into Blocks which are from time to time were settled with a specified timber trader. One big difficulty faced by the British official in the process was that the period of major timber

¹⁵¹ McCall, p. 194.

¹⁵² McCall, p. 196.

extraction activity coincides with a bust period of indigenous cultivation.¹⁵³ So the contract timbers face a shortage of labours constantly in the region.

Then in an '*Unclassed and unreserved Forests*', the produce of which was exported via the Karnaphuli; all of the extraction and exportation was done through the navigable river which flows into Karnaphuli, Demagiri (the first trading centre on the way down to the Karnaphuli, Chittagong) was a long way and there are various rapids to be encountered, to navigate through this tough river stream, a good and experience boatmen were need, so most of the traders and cutter were from Chittagong hill tracts since the Lushais were not good boatmen. Traders and cutters operate under the authority of the Divisional Forest Officer of Rangamti, subject to general agreement by the superintendent of Lushai hills.¹⁵⁴

As an experimental measure, people who were engaged in cutting or purchasing of timber who has not been specifically debarred can enter the Lushai hills without a pass, under a condition that if they did not proceed or encroach more than one mile into the interior from any navigable river's bank and they were allowed to builds house within the area as well. If they had to proceed further into the interior, he must obtain a pass from the superintendent of Lushai hills or sub-divisional officer of Lunglei as per the inner line regulation.¹⁵⁵

An official Ordered concern to cultivation within one mile of banks of navigable rivers and areas exclusively reserved were;

- No rice cultivation was permitted on any account and no other cultivation except under a valid pass signed by the District Office.
- Orange cultivation was allowed on a valid pass that prohibits any burning or cutting of valuable timber.

¹⁵³ McCall, P. 198

¹⁵⁴ McCall, P. 200.

¹⁵⁵ McCall, p. 200.

- A similar pass was issued for cotton cultivation within bamboos areas except that burning is permitted provided no valuable timber was destroyed and no woodland fired, the penalty for which was fixed up to a maximum of Rs.10 fine.¹⁵⁶

In the Lushai hills portion of the reserve there were two Lushai villages viz;

1. Manglian and Mauchar
2. Melvang or Road Constructors hamlets – Bilkhawthlir, Kharzawl, Rengte.

These villages were allowed to jhummed in a portion of the area under the permission of the superintendent of Lushai hills. They were supposed to jhumed only in bamboo areas and are forbidden to jhum within one mile of either bank of the navigable rivers Sonai and Rukni. And the number of houses that were allowed were also permanently fixed by the superintendent of Lushai Hills. But despite this, it appears based on 1932 report, the number of housings has increased considerably.¹⁵⁷

Table.1: List of villages found jhumming inside the Lushai Inner Line Reserve Forests of Lushai portion:

Village	Houses	Village	Houses
Kolasib	49	Vaitin	50
Bailum	3	Khawpuar	24
Kawihruilian	39	Total	310
Palsang	26		
Khawdungsei	40		
Thinsat	49		
Zohmun	30		

Source: Mizoram State Archive¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ McCall, p. 203.

¹⁵⁷ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-83, Copy of letter No. A. 291, from the Divisional Forest Officer Cachar, to the Conservator of Forests Assam Shillong, through the superintendent of Lushai hills, dated the 23rd June 1932, p. 6-7.

¹⁵⁸ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-83, copy of letter No. A. 291, from the Divisional Forest Officer Cachar, to the Conservator of Forests Assam Shillong, through the superintendent of Lushai hills, dated the 23rd June 1932, p. 6-7.

Lushai Hills Inner Line Forest Reserve bordering on Cachar;

- Some of the villages in the inner line reserve like Bilkhawthlir were allowed to cultivate only in the ‘*Leilet*’ method only and a maximum of 16 houses are allowed in Vairengte.
- And some villages in the nearby villages but situated just outside the reserve area like Palsang, Vaitin and Khawpuar were allowed to cultivate with prior sanction.
- Most other villages like Khawdungsei, Zohmun, Khawruhlian, Dairep, Bhairabi, Boilum were not allowed to jhum in the reserve area.
- The boundary of the Inner Liner Reserve was put out annually under an arrangement made by the superintendent.¹⁵⁹

Table. 2: List of Village found jhumming in the Inner Line reserve bordering Cachar:

Village	Houses	village	Houses
Dairep	13	Mauchar	49
Bilkhawthlir	22	Tinghmun	28
Kharzawl	16	Maurawp	6
Saipum	30	Total	160
Saiphai	15		

Source: Mizoram State Archive¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ McCall, p. 202.

¹⁶⁰ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-83, copy of letter No. A. 291, from the Divisional Forest Officer Cachar, to the Conservator of Forests Assam Shillong, through the superintendent of Lushai hills, dated the 23rd June 1932, p. 7.

3.6 Commercial extraction of forest produce:

There was no internal demand for forest products from the entirely rural Lushai hills district from a commercial point of view. Since there was no local industries or enterprises that needed raw material in bulk quantities. Therefore, the value of forest produce of the Lushai hills could only be materialized beyond its border. There was a trade permit issued by the government to regulate the cutting, sewing, conversion and removal of timbers from the reserved and unreserved area and for the collection, manufacture and extraction of forest resources for export, even the minors forest produce was covered by permits, special licenses were an issue for removal of rubber, wax and rhino horns etc.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, cane and bamboo mahals were awarded for extraction along the river banks, passed were issued to allow removal of trees to make dugouts, without charging royalty, this was done mainly to encourage boat craft and to stimulate exports.

The British official did not do the extraction themselves, instead sunken log mahals and drift timber mahals were leased annually to extract timber, apart from those timber mahal cane and bamboo mahals were also at work. For example, for the Karnapuli river in 1933-34, the leasing price was Rs.20.5 for sunken log and Rs.10 for drift timber.¹⁶² Apart from the revenue collected from timbers, other forests comprised only a nominal income. For instance, the fishing permit was leased out to fishermen from the plains in the Dhaleshwari river in 1909, with a condition that the fish were to be sold twice a week in Aizawl and one day a week in the plains. But since this was not economically attractive enough for the fishermen, people who take the lease are very rare.¹⁶³ So, no much revenue was generated from this process.

¹⁶¹ Daman Singh, p. 41.

¹⁶² MSA, Forest miscellaneous, Files no. 3/1935, letter from SDO lunglei to Superintendent of Lushai hills, dated 25th October 33.

¹⁶³ MSA, Protection of fishes, 1914, letter from J. Hezlett, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to commissioner Surma valley and hill districts of Silchar, dated 16th January 1915.

Table.3: List of the rate of royalty on forest produce exported from the Lushai hill in 1917.

S/no	Type of produce	Class/species/types	Rate of royalty
1.	For timber in log	Class A	4 annas 6 pies (*per cft.)
		Class B	3 annas 6 pies -do-
		Class C	2 annas 6 pies -do-
		Class D	1 anna 3 pies -do-
2.	Timber for scantlings, knees, crooks and parts of the plough	Class A	6 annas -do-
		Class B	5 annas -do-
		Class C	3 annas 6 pies -do-
		Class D	2 annas 6 pies -do-
3.	Timber for Dugs-outs	Class A	6 annas (*per cft)
		Class B	4 annas 9 pies -do-
		Class C	3 annas -do-
		Class D	2 annas 6 pies -do-
		Class E	1 annas 6 pies -do-
Note: Export of Jarul dug-out except with the permission of the superintendent of Lushai is prohibited			
4.	Timber for Fuel	Firewood when removes in boats	6 pies per mound (of 3 cft)
		Firewood when removed in log	3 pies per cft.
		Charcoal	6 annas per maund
Note: Logs of classes A, B and C shall not be removed as fuel			
5.	Timber for poles or house posts and sapling	Over 2-3 inches in girth at the larger end	5 annas 6 pies each
		Over 1-2 inches in girth at the larger end	4 annas 2 pies each
	Sapling		2 annas each
Note: Class A, B and C shall not be felled for house post or sapling			

6.	For Bamboos	Chataya	Rs. 3-12-0 (*per 1000)
		Kaliseri	Rs. 4-1-0 -do-
		Muli	Rs. 5-0-0 -do-
		Orah	Rs. 5-10-0 -do-
		Mitenga and Dalu	Rs. 6-9-0 -do-
		Nali	Rs. 2-8-0 -d0-
		Bazali	Rs. 1-14-0 -do-
		Bariala	Rs. 20-0-0 -do-
7.	For canes	Kerak and Bhudum	2 annas each
		Gallack	Rs. 4-1-0 (*per 1000)
		Other kinds	Rs. 2-8-0 -do-
8.	for sungrass	Bundles each 1-6 inches girth	Rs. 3 per (*per 1000)
		Bundles each 4-6 inches girth	Rs. 27 per -do-
9.	For other minor forest produce	Maida	Rs. 3-2-0 (*per 1000 bundles of 10)
		Kuruspaths	Rs. 4-12-0 -do-
		Gondaki	Rs. 6-12-0 -do-
		Plantation leaves	Rs. 0-12-0 -do-
		Cane leaves	Rs. 0-15-0 -do-
		Tara leaves	Rs. 0-15-0 -do-
		Ooampatha	Rs. 2-8-0 -do-
		Hetalapatha	Rs. 0-10-0 -do-
		Pitali Leaves	Rs. 0-12-0 -do-
		Kukilota	Rs. 0-1-0 -do-
		Stone	Rs. 1-8-0 (*per hundred cft)
		Shell	Rs. 0-10-0 -do-
		Honey	Rs. 1-8-0 (*per mound)
		Wax	Rs. 4-0-0 -do-
		Chaulmugra seed	Rs. 3-0-0 -do-
		India rubber	Rs. 20-0-0 -do-

		Bamboos	Rs. 0-0-2 (*basket each)
		Bamboos mats	Rs. 0-1-0 -do-

Sources: Mizoram State Archive¹⁶⁴

While analyzing official documents it can be implied that potential sites for timber remain available throughout the British rule beyond the riverine forests, they were available in the deeper and higher hill ridges, But most of the extraction sites were confined to the banks of river stretches which are navigable, mainly because the infrastructure and facilities available during that time were not compatible to take up such a herculean task, the nature of the terrain also limited to a great extent the accessibility of these parts of the region. Moreover, the cost-benefit of such difficult tasks was not on the site imperial government anyway. All these conditions block the progress of traders to proceed further upstream and into the hills. fortunately for Mizo, forest exploitation during British rule in the Lushai hills was not as pervasive as it was in other parts of the country.

One of the most important resources extracted from this region apart from timber was rubber, in 1920 royalty to be paid for extracting rubber was Rs 12.50, and a distinction was drawn between root and branch rubber, and it can be understood from an official letter sent back and forth that the price of rubber varies considerably in the market, depending on this the royalty charge on this item also change every year.¹⁶⁵

Another important item extracted on the south Lushai hills side was '*Garjan oil*', this was the kind of oil derived from the three or four species of tree called Dipterocarpus. They were collected by incising the bark of the tree and applying heat, even though the trees did not die as a consequence of this method but this could be harmful to trees, so there

¹⁶⁴ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-88, copy of letter No. 2789-R, from the under Secretary to the government of Assam, to the conservator of forests, Western Circle, Assam, dated 3rd August 1929, p. 20-23.

¹⁶⁵ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, letter from J.S.Owden Esquire. Deputy Conservator of Forests Cachar Division, to the Conservator of Forests Western Circle Assam Shillong, through the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated 29th June 1920, p.11.

was a concern for the government on the extraction of this oil. These trees are numerous in the foothill's areas of the South Lushai Hills sub-division. They were mainly used for painting the bottoms of boats to prevent borers from damaging the wood of a boat. The prices of this oil vary between Rs 10/- to Rs 20/- per mound.¹⁶⁶ In 1920 the petition for 30 years lease of the right to collect Garjan oil was applied by Azim Khan.¹⁶⁷ But since there was a concern in the process of extraction of being injurious to trees and considering the small amount of revenue that would be involved it was advisable not to grant a lease by the government.¹⁶⁸ So, no leases have been granted to anyone within the reserve Forests area, while in the unclassified forest, this oil was collected all the time by paying revenue in the toll station.¹⁶⁹

Another important item that came up in the archival record, again and again, was the sale of 'bees wax' and 'honey', these items were extracted under the strict control of the government. An official publication has to be put up in the gazette for the sale of these items.¹⁷⁰ This was done under the conditions that:

- The purchaser will maintain a register of all wax and honey collected and export, and a copy of which will be submitted yearly to the Divisional Forest Officer. And register should also show the locality from which obtained example; Cachar, Lushai, Manipur-private etc.
- The purchaser will obtain from the first forest revenue station passed a free pass for all that was being exported by him and will inform Forest offices of the locality

¹⁶⁶ "Maund (mun or mann)" is an anglicized name for a traditional unit of mass used in British India, after Independence one maund became exactly 37.3242 kilograms.

¹⁶⁷ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, letter from Mr. J. Needham Sub-Divisional Officer Lungleh, to Superintendent Lushai Hills Aijal, dated 5th July 1920, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ MSA, Forest Dept, CB-7 For-80, letter No. K/451, from A.W. Blunt Esquire. Conservator of Forests Western Circle Assam, to Superintendent Lushai Hills Aijal, dated 23rd August 1920, p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ MSA, Forest Dept, CB-7 For-80, copy of Letter No. 752/2-33 from the Divisional Forest Officer, Chittagong hills tracts, to the conservator of Forests Western Circle Assam, dated 14th August 1920, p. 54.

¹⁷⁰ MSA, Forest Dept, CB-7 For-80, copy of Letter No. A/125 from J.S. Owden Esq. Deputy Conservator of forests Cachar Division, to the conservator of Forests Western Circle Assam Shillong, dated 31st July 1920. p. 34.

from which received and quantities from such localities which will be entered on such pass.

- The purchaser will pay the moral value in 3 equal instalments every year.
- The purchaser will find the necessary security for the full value of the mahal (contract).
- For the breach of either of these conditions, the Mahal may be cancelled at the option of the Divisional Forest Officer.

A monopoly fee and royalty fee on the sale of bees and honey mahal were also collected on these items.¹⁷¹ At the time 1903, the rate of royalty on beeswax exported from the Lushai to Sylhet and Cachar was Rs. 5/- per maund, export to Chittagong was Rs. 4/- per maund and license fee for the purchase of wax in the Lushai hills should be fixed at Rs. 3/-.¹⁷²

The British administration also charged a grazing tax of two rupees for buffalo and six annas for cows, bulls and bullocks over two years of age. An exemption was allowed on the following ground; For a pack animal of up to five cows maintained for home consumption of milk, cattle maintain by chowkidars of inspection bungalows and circuit houses, and milk sellers up to a limit of 10 animals.

As far as grazing of animals in the region is a concern, even though in Mizo society buffalos are not kept for the supply of milk nor agricultural purposes. As early as 1903, there were rules framed for the Lushai Hills, which was even before grazing fees were introduced in the unclassed state forest of the Assam Valley District like Cachar and Sylhet. According to government officials, these fees were introduced in these regions only in 1916.¹⁷³ But the fees were levied only from professional grazers i.e., from persons

¹⁷¹ MSA, Forest Dept, CB-7 For-80, copy of Letter No. A/125 from J.S. Owden Esq. Deputy Conservator of forests Cachar Division, to the conservator of Forests Western Circle Assam Shillong, dated 31st July 1920, p. 36.

¹⁷² MSA, Forest Dept, CB-8 For-105, letter from F.J. Monahan Esq. I.C.S Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Conservator of Forest Assam, dated 29th July 1903, p. 8.

¹⁷³ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, a clarification made by W.L Scott Superintendent Lushai Hills on the subject of grazing fees for cattle in the Lushai Hills, dated 18th January 1920, p. 60.

who keep cattle solely for the purposes of trade, and that ordinary hillman should be exempt, also settlers, who keep cattle for domestic purposes, even if they occasionally sell milk or young animals.¹⁷⁴

W.L Scott the superintendent of Lushai hills at the time was of an opinion that all Lushai's should be totally exempt from grazing fees, as this would encourage the Mizo to keep cattle, and thereby increasing milk supply at the station. Contrary to the previous statement, he was also of an opinion that in order to keep a large influx of grazers from the plains the rates of grazing fees kept in the Lushai hills should be higher than those in force in the Assam plains.¹⁷⁵

Table.4: Grazing fees collected from the Lushai hills, Cachar and Sylhet.

Area	Year	Buffalo	Other horned cattle	Elephant
Lushai hills	1904	-/8/- per annum	-/4/-per annum	
	1916			
	1920	Rs 2/-	-/6/-	
Cachar and Sylhet	1904			
	1916	Rs 2/-	-/6/-	
	1920	Re 1/-	-/4/-	Rs 15/-

Sources: Mizoram state archive¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, p. 60.

¹⁷⁵ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, p. 60.

¹⁷⁶ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-80, p. 60-62.

As per the official document, the Lushai tribes' method of catching fish-catching were considered wasteful from a commercial point of view by the British government. Traditionally, the Mizo practices three popular methods for catching fishies, they were;

1. Dams: The local name is 'Sanga ngoih', they are made of timber and bamboos and are very common. This must be one of the most common methods of catching fish, and it is not that destructive to very small fry which manages to escape.
2. Another method was poisoning, 'Sanga-rul' in local name, the poison employed was the root of a tree name 'Ru' (in Lushai). Other poisonous plants creeper called *Ngaih-hih*, *Kang-ding* and the fruit of *Ruthei* were also used. This method is ineffective during rain and is only efficient when the water level in the rivers were low. Fewer fish are killed by this method than is generally suspected, many fish revive and escape and it is effective only in confined water.
3. The cast net method is also adopted in the hills area, there are two different kinds one with large and another mesh. The former is called '*Lenpui*' and the latter is called '*Lente*' in the local language, made by the Lushai themselves and were not often sold.¹⁷⁷

The area of Lushai Hills was 7,227 square miles, the population of the district was 82,434 according to the census of 1901. Even though all Lushai eat fish when obtained which is only on occasion and in small quantities, most importantly there are no fishermen by trade in these hills. So, for the government, this brought up a lot of interesting aspects commercially, even though it is impossible to estimate the extent of the river for fisheries there must be have been several thousand miles. But since the river in the Lushai hills were mostly seasonal, large fish was therefore very limited and can be found only in the pool of large rivers like Koladyne river (Chhimtuipui) and other few big rivers.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-2 For-18, Letter from Maor H.W.G. Cole Superintendent Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the board of revenue Eastern Bengal and Assam. Dated) October 1907, p. 2-5.

¹⁷⁸ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-2 For-18, p. 2-5.

Government officials posting at the division at the time were pushing for the preservation of breeding fish and small fry since there was practically no demand for fish in the Lushai hills commercially speaking. In their opinion decision should be taken depending on the condition like:

1. How far does the destructive method of fishing of the Lushai influence the supply of marketable fish in the plain districts of the province?
2. And if to an appreciable extent how far would it be practicable to modify such methods.¹⁷⁹

So, it was clear that there was a serious consideration at the government level for the viable opportunities of developing fisheries commercially in the Lushai hills area.

Apart from all those valuable resources mentioned above, there was also an enquiry about mineral resources, a geological survey was done a few times to look for potential mineral resources spots in the region, it could be encouraged by the plain area of Assam which has huge mineral resources. As early as 1921, there was a letter sent to the deputy commissioner of Lushai Hills tract from W.M.J Wright, a geologist working for the Whitehall Petroleum Corporation London, who hold Certificate of Approval (No.3506 R., dated 2nd November 1920) in the province of Assam enquiring about whether or not any prospecting licences or mining leases have been granted for mineral oil in the Lushai hills tract while expressing his willingness to pay the required fees for the leases.¹⁸⁰

There were a few challenges for the extraction of forest resources in the Lushai hills; firstly the topographic nature of the Lushai hills made it very challenging for extraction in large quantities, the forest was thick and extended to a vast area and the terrains were steep, this makes it very challenging in term of transportation and communication. Even by 1938, there were hardly any cartable roads beyond the 13 mile stretch from Sairang to Aizawl, the river course was fairly dangerous, an accident occurs a few times. A few

¹⁷⁹ MSA, Forest Dept. CB 2 For-18, p. 2-5.

¹⁸⁰ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For- 81, letter from Wm.J. Wrigt C/O Psothmaster, to the Deputy Commissioner Lushai Hills Tracts Aijal, dated 20th February 1921, p. 70.

feasible export routes were via the rivers Sonai and Barak into Cachar, and the Karnaphuli into the Chittagong hill tracts, as mentioned in the administration and management section. Even in and around this export route proper administration is seriously lacking in developing infrastructure and there seems to be no serious attempt on the government side.¹⁸¹ Besides transportation infrastructure, shortage of labour was also a big problem mainly because the felling coincided with the agricultural season besides the wage rates were not attractive enough for the locals. But despite all these challenges it was possible to extract product from these river banks and float timber down the rivers to Cachar and the Chittagong hill tracts. So, the administration seemed to be content with the existing method of extraction and did not attempt to invest in local support infrastructures.

From the official report, it could be inferred that no supervision and proper management practice were followed, such as reserving areas for extraction and pre-marking trees to be fell in reserve areas were supposed to be introduced, but they were never introduced. A visiting expert who came in 1915 was shocked by how the administration was run in and around the area, he was of the view that there was no difference in the characteristic of the Inner Line Reserve to the unreserved jungle tracts elsewhere and sees no point in having a reserved area. He suggested that a headquarters should be established at Aizawl or Kolasib, and a Deputy Ranger and Forester were to be placed in charge of each river system to ensure marking and supervise felling and facilities like boats and boatmen should be supplied to the staff. He also noted that valuable resources existed along the Dhaleshwari as far as Sairang, the Pakua, Tut, Barak, and sections of the Tuivai and Sonai Rivers. So, to have an efficient operation, systematic leasing and felling operations had to be planned.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ MSA, Saw Mills, 1917, letter from Surma Valley Saw Mills Sylhet, to Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 10th December. 1917.

¹⁸² MSA, Forest Administrative Report 1949, a short note on the progress of forest affairs within the Lushai Hills district and an account of the exact position at the present moment together with a summary of the conditions and sanctions governing the control of forest villages and hamlets within the Lushai Inner Line reserve, 1933.

Then, when the superintendent of the Lushai Hills took up the task of improving systems for extraction and exploitation, he later expresses that additional resources and control from Aizawl rather than Silchar was required.¹⁸³ But the initial proposal was hampered by the First World War., then it was later brought up again, but this time it was not favoured by the Assam Conservator of Forests. This unsystematic arrangement of extraction and exploitation was evident from an early stage even when the DFO of Cachar inspected the Surma Valley, Saw Mills, he found that many logs were below the prescribed girth and points out the need to introduce marking of trees, the numbering of logs, and general supervision of felling and extraction.¹⁸⁴ But this suggestion remain the neglected part of the British throughout their rule.

While it is difficult to have a definite conclusive idea on the sustainability of the extraction levels, unsupervised felling through the unscientific method in unregulated quantities likely disregarded the need to allow for adequate regeneration. Over some time, this should have resulted in the depletion of growing stock. Timber trades must then have proceeded further upstream up to the last negotiable section of the rivers. Meanwhile, abandoned areas would have been taken over by bamboo, which was also harvested for export. Repeated clear-felling of bamboo at short intervals may have subsequently resulted in the degradation of vegetation. But no document is available to support this.

A.G. McCall had a remark in this context in 1933:

'In former days some thirty years ago, one Officer predicted that the inhabitants of Cachar after not many more years would have to rely upon the forests of this District for the supply of their timber. But though I do not think that this can be at all a correct prediction, in the light of later events it seems to me that it is open to consideration whether we should not now consider if we are doing all we can to preserve and conserve the

¹⁸³ MSA, Forest Administrative Report 1949.

¹⁸⁴ MSA, Saw mills, 1917, letter No. A/178 from DFO Cachar, to Conservator of Forests Western Circle Silchar, through Superintendent of Lushai hills, dated 16th November 1917.

province's capital resources and though at the moment the timber market is dull we should be ready for an improvement should this materialize'.¹⁸⁵

Towards the end of the British rule between 1934-1935, plantations were started on timber and bamboo in an area of 31.85 acres it was maintained by the forest subordinates of the Lushai division.¹⁸⁶ In 1935 A.J.W Milroy the conservator of Forest Assam requested all divisional forest officers and botanical forest officers of Assam including Khasi, Jaintia and Lushai hills to submit one copy of their plantation and 'Taungya' programmed.¹⁸⁷ Before spring to the conservatory and one to the silviculturist, the latter was in charge of drawing up thinning programmed for all plantations in the province and the divisional forest officers was to proceed without delay to thin such plantations as required. So, it can be concluded from the above statement that, proper maintenance and timely thinning of the plantations area were given utmost importance in the plantation area and surely there must be some sort of plantation work or programmed in the Lushai hills as well.¹⁸⁸

3.7 Revenue generated from the Lushai hills:

Proper records of the nature of the transactions that took place in the Lushai hills throughout the colonial period were not well documented. For this, the state archival sources are almost the only possible option we have, but to have a very comprehensive analysis most of the documents are not well preserved especially of the early period and even among the preserved official documents, documentation of resources such as the species removed, the amount of extraction, the location and area of sites cleared, the royalty paid etc. is lacking. The most common pieces of information were about the annual

¹⁸⁵ MSA, Forest administrative Report 1949.

¹⁸⁶ MSA, Forest dept, CB-8 For-96, form No.18 (B) Forest Department, Assam, Artificial reproduction, data on timber and Bamboo plantation in the Lushai Hills, p. 26.

¹⁸⁷ "taungya Cultivation" term is a Burmese word meaning hill cultivation started in in Burma 1856, then introduced in Chittagong and Sylhet region in 1870. It is a form agroforestry system in which short-term crops are grown in the early years in the early years of the plantation.

¹⁸⁸ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-8 For-104, letter No. F365/4 from Surma Valley Saw Mills ltd Bhanga Bazar Sylhet, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills Aijal, dated 2nd may 1917, p. 12.

total revenue generated at various stations on items timber, firewood and charcoal, bamboo, grazing and folder grass and other minor produce.

Table.5: Total revenue derived from the Lushai hills forests during the forest years.

Year	Total revenue
July 1908 - June 1909	Rs. 37,972-6-6
July 1912 - June 1913	Rs. 2599-11-9
July 1931 – June 1932	Rs. 29,675-9-0

Sources: Mizoram state archive¹⁸⁹

Table. 6: Amount of forest revenue realized at different stations on produces removed from Lushai hills during the financial year 1912-13.

Area	Amount
Sonai range	Rs. 10,204/3/-
Silchar Cheek station	Rs. 941/1/6
Matijuri Range	Rs. 29,123/6/9
Sealtek Range	Rs 46/7/-
Total revenue	Rs. 40,755-2-3

Sources: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-4 For-43, letter No.B/176 from L.E.S Teague Esqr., Assist. Coservator of Forest Eastern Bengal and Assam Cachar Division, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills Aijal, dated 7th July 1909, p. 30.; MSA, Forest Dept. CB-4 For- 49, letter No. B/453 from Mr. Nilkanta Muheree Extra assist. Conservator of Forests Sylhet Division, to the superintendent Lushai hills, dated 14th July 1913, p. 16, MSA, Forest dept, CB-7 For-83, total revenue realized from Lushai Hills, letter No. B/998 from A. Adhikari Esguire Divisional Forest Officer Cachar Division, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 26th April 1932, p. 35.

¹⁹⁰ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-4 For-49, letter No: B/48 from T.V Owden Esquire, Assist. Conservator of Forests Eastern Bengal and Assam Cachar Division, to the Superintendent incharge Lushai Hills Forest Division, dated 21st April 1913, p. 23.

As shown in the above data, the main sources of revenue for the British were from timber extraction, others contributed only a very nominal income. Nonetheless, it does seem that in the later period of colonial rule, the Lushai Hills yielded a fairly steady income from forests. But when compared it the expenditure incurred it's just not a lucrative venture for the British government from a commercial point of view.

Table.7: Expenditure incurred and Revenue collected from Assam, Western Circle Lushai Hills between September 1920 to January 1921.

Month and year	Total expenditure	Total revenue
August 1920	Rs. 941-12-9	Rs. 223-3-6
September 1920	Rs. 1136-9-10	Rs. 240-13-6
October 1920	Rs. 1353-9-7	Rs. 246-13-6
November 1920	Rs. 1582-4-9	Rs. 266-13-6
December 1920	Rs. 1844-11-5	Rs. 363-6-3
January 1921	Rs. 2194-12-7	Rs. 740-0-0

Sources: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹¹

Figure.8: Revenue gain from the collection of grazing tax.

1945-46	1946-47	1947-1948
Rs 37-6-0 (including Lunglei sub division)	Rs 20-10-0 (excluding Lunglei sub division)	Rs 16-8-0 (excluding Lunglei sub division)

Sources: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-79, Assam Western circle Lushai Division, Summary of revenue and Expenditure from the end of August 1920 to January 1921, p. 4-6, 8-10, 13-24.

¹⁹² MSA, House building and other advances no FI 1/119/10, 1949, letter from superintendent Lushai hills to Senior conservator of forests Assam Shillong, dated 30th May 1949.

Table.9: Receipts from the Lushai Hills district on timber produce (in Rupees, annas, paise).

Division	1940-41	1946-47	1947-48	1948-49
Cachar	72511-9-0	65352-7-0	13479-2-0	15365-5-6
Sylhet	N. A	64569-7-0	Incl. above	-
Chittagong	40504-14-3	52075-13-6	50919-3-3	-
Aizawl	N. A	1448-10-0	6612-5-0	17697-2-3
Total	113016-7-3	183446-5-6	192320-10-3	1715622-7-9

Source: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹³

3.8 The paradox of the conservation of wildlife:

Hunting is strongly embedded in the Mizo culture as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, not only as an important source of food but also as a symbolic role it plays in their afterlife which was so significant. This makes it not surprising that the Mizo were engaging in hunting all the time. But with the arrival of the British, in the name of preservations of wildlife the British administration take the initiative to control the hunting habit of Mizo by introducing different laws, like making an open season and close season for hunting, issuing guns license and at the same time restricting guns by permitting one gun per 15 houses etc.

Some animals were not allowed to be hunted, some were allowed with a license, some were declared vermin and a cash reward was given to a lot of different animals. For example; to hunt specific animals like rhinoceros they required a license. Certain animals like elephants were strictly protected under the Elephants Preservation act 1879. Under this act shooting and trapping were strictly prohibited. As elephants were one of the most important resources for the British government, they were used for transportation and to

¹⁹³ MSA, General Deptt., Home, Legislative, Forest, etc, 1939, letter from DCF Cachar division to Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 18th April 1941; and letter from DFO Chittagong Hill Tracts, Govt. of Bengal, dated 25th April 1941; MSA, Forest section, Forest administrative Report of the district of Lushai hills.

extract heavy logs from deep in the jungle especially in the foothills area of Assam. Wild elephants are found in the valleys of the hill tracts in a herd of about thirty to forty, sometimes in an even larger number where food was abundant. Then, once every two to three years the '*Khedda Superintendent*' would organize a big hunt to catch those elephants, which were afterwards tamed and broken for the government service.¹⁹⁴ On the other hand, fishing was not regulated as much because local fishing methods were considered straightforward in nature and did not hamper the ecosystem in rivers to a large extent. Also, they considered it impossible to effectively control such activities, but deviation from the traditional method could be dealt with effectively.¹⁹⁵

Since the number of the staff stationed in the hills were extremely limited it is difficult to assess to what extent those procedures were enforced and followed. Judging from the importance of hunting to the Mizo culture, it was unlikely that those rules and restrictions were followed properly. Moreover, there is a paradoxical nature to the British policy of preservation of wildlife, their official interpretation of wildlife conservation was extremely selective while some animal species were considered important, while some species were considered harmful declaring them vermin, offering of cash rewards for killing those animals was introduced in the district. This system without a doubt led to the destruction of wildlife in the Lushai hills to a large extent. By the year 1940, the killings of 249 Himalayan black bears and malay bears were rewarded with cash, this amount to nearly half of the total number of bears killed in the entire province of Assam.¹⁹⁶ Then later the cash reward was revised, for this, an annual budget of Rs.1200 was sanctioned. Mainly because the administration feels that the reward was too low to make a serious effect on the vermin population. The rates were specified for each specific animal, like for

¹⁹⁴ T H lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I helped govern India* , Calcutta, Firma LM Private Ltd (on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1885, p. 301.

¹⁹⁵ MSA, Protection of fishes, 1914, letter from Superententdent Lushai hills, to Commissioner Surma valley and hill district, dated 16th. January.1915.

¹⁹⁶ T H lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel*, p. 229.

example, twelve rupees eight annas for tigers, five rupees for wild dogs, five rupees for leopards, one rupee for king cobras, and four annas for cobras etc.¹⁹⁷

Table.10: Reward paid to the number of wild animals killed between 1943-44 to 1947-48 in North Lushai hills:

Years	Tiger	Leopard	Wild dog	King cobra	Cobra
1943-44	5	3	77	7	10
1944-45	10	2	61	-	-
1945-47	7	7	65	1	3
1946-47	8	11	44	5	5
1947-48	9	4	62	2	2
Total	39	27	309	15	18

Source: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹⁸

Table.11: Number of domestic animals killed by wild animals in the North Lushai hills during 1943-44:

Victim animals	Tiger	Leopard	Wild dog	Total
Mithun	138	-	34	172
Cow	198	3	150	351
Pony	4	-	2	6
Goat	10	6	31	47
Pig	87	12	21	120
Sheep	-	1	-	1
Total	437	22	238	697

Source: Mizoram State Archive¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ MSA, Forest Dept., rewards for destruction of wild animals between 1944-45, letter from Superintendent Lushai hills, to Secretary to Government of Assam, dated 21st April 1944.

¹⁹⁸ MSA, Forest Dept., rewards for destruction of wild animals between 1944-45, letters from Superintendent Lushai Hills to secretary to Government of Assam, dated 21st April 1944, 12nd April 1945 (no. 272 G), 8th April 1946 (no.III G/IV-12), 24th May 1947 (no. 3061 G), and 1st April 1948 (no.17 G/IV-12).

¹⁹⁹ MSA, Forest Dept. CB-9 For-120, number of domestic animals killed by wild animals in the Lushai hills during 1943-44, Letter No. Ex/92/43/5-G.S, letter from Rai Sahib D.C. Das Assist to the secretary to the Governor of Assam, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills Aijal, dated 18th May 1944, p. 55.

When looking at the data on the number of killing rewarded on wild animals during five years, it clearly shows wildlife must have been abundant in the district even though hunting has been practised since the pre-colonial times. But the policy adopted by the British on wildlife cause a significant change in the hunting culture of the Mizo, the colonial times is the first time the communities hunt for profit as in cash incentive for killing, in all the previous periods' animals were hunted mainly for food and to attain social status in the society in a lifetime and the after afterlife. Another significant change the British policy brought about was, because of popular cash incentive to wipe out predators, the ecological balance of species was heavily tilted in favour of animals lower down in the food chain, so naturally, the net result was an all-around decrease in the numbers of wildlife. From the above data, the destructive nature of the British method of wildlife preservation can be seen. Although, there had been to some extent a practical nature of their preservation method, like for instance declaring some of the animal vermin could be logical at times, because sometimes animals could cause havoc in and around the village and field, by destroying crops and a danger to human life. The serious harm inflicted on wildlife because of the British policy was undeniable.

3.9 Policy on Jhumming (shifting cultivation):

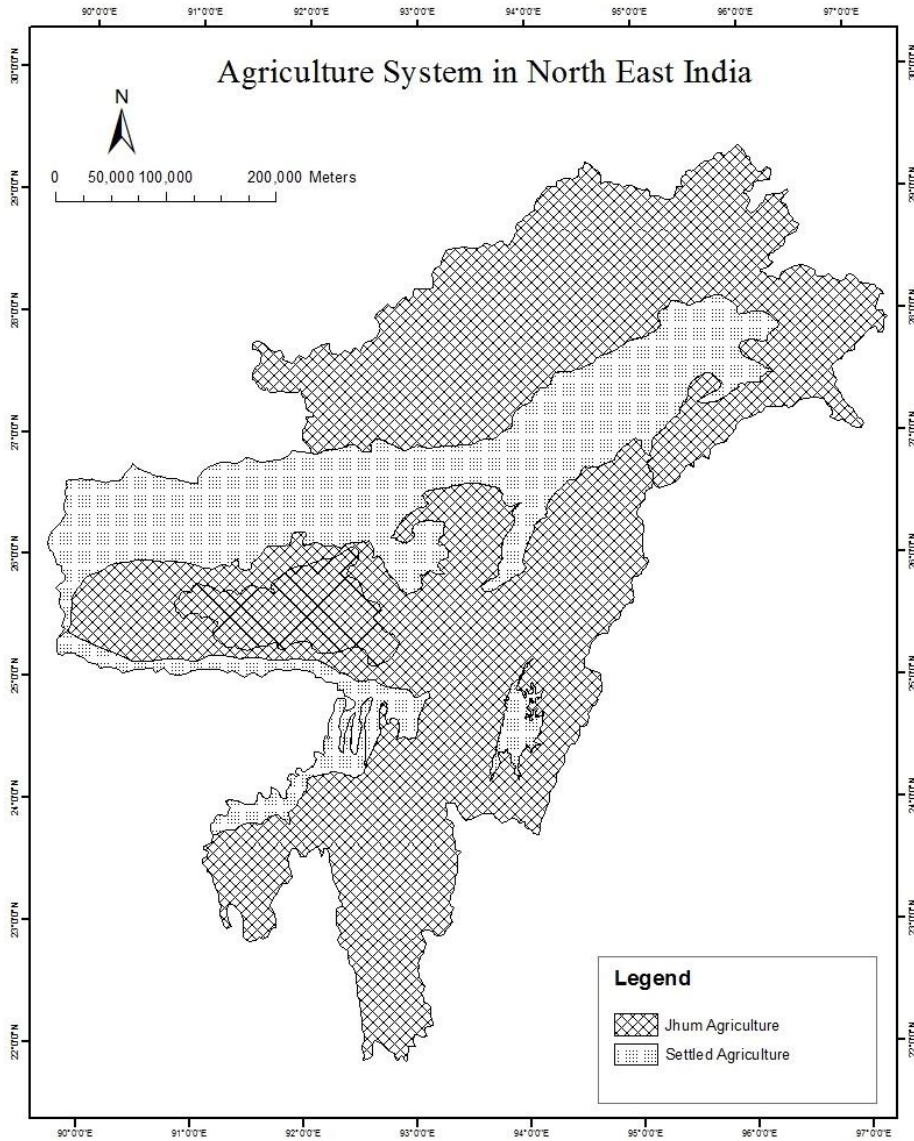


Figure. 4: Area where jhumming were practised in northeast India²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Lh Seitinthang, Cropping Pattern of North East India: An Appraisal, *American Research Thoughts*, ISSN: 2392 – 876X, Vol.1, Issue.1, November 2014, p. 492, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269389564_Cropping_Pattern_of_North_East_India_An_Appraisal (Accessed 28th October 2021)

The British always viewed shifting cultivation as a primitive method and unremunerative economically speaking. On top of that, they think it was wasteful to the valuable timber present in the area. In some other tribal areas of India, the government even try to put an end to this method of cultivation but many times this led to a violent confrontation in different part of the country. Because to the tribal communities, Jhumming was more than mere cultivation. it was a way of life for them. So, to be replaced by settled agriculture or wage labour was a radical change and transition from their way of life which is hard to comprehend. And in many cases when this radical transition happen the local economy get disrupted and create a vacuum in the system and created a space for the non-tribal landlords and moneylenders which led to the alienation of the tribals from their land.

So, learning from their experience and due to the conducive nature of the environment, they are in. The British in the Lushai hills like they did in other tribal areas of the country overlooked shifting cultivation altogether and tolerated it with some restrictions. In most of the hilly regions of the northeast, this approach was adopted. There can be several reasons why shifting cultivation remains unchallenged from the British in the Lushai hills. Some of them may be; firstly, political stability in the region seems to be their foremost concern even before economic concern. Moreover, economically speaking the Lushai hills does not provide much return so it was not attractive enough to give their attention. Lastly, it looks like even the British find it difficult to come up with a technically superior alternative.²⁰¹

Nonetheless, the British imposed a limitation on the area that can be taken for shifting cultivation. Jhumming was allowed in the fforest reserve area, inside the Inner Line Reserve it was regulated and confined to areas where bamboo grew. It was also not allowed in riverine and roadside reserves as they could hamper the prospect of timber, and within town reserves like Aizawl, Lunglei, and Champhai, it was strictly banned. So basically, as long as they are not a threat to their timber commerce, jhumming largely remained unchallenged throughout the region. This seems to be the most amicable

²⁰¹ Daman Singh, p. 50.

solution the British could come up with while ensuring that they are not stepping on each other toes.²⁰²

All of the other areas which were cultivable were under the control of the chiefs. For Jhumming an area above 4000 feet height and steep hill were naturally avoided, this leaves vast area under the preserved forest outside of the forest reserve. Jhumming had to be done on the slope mainly comprised of the bamboo forest because the slope to some extent slow down the denudation and the bamboos forest take about 4 to 5 years to regenerate. This rapid recovery of forest could be the reason the government were not necessarily too concerned about its impact on the environment.

The jhumming practice which had been practised for many generations had one significant under the colonial management. Under the colonial administration since the chiefs were assigned each territory with an issue of 'ramri lekha'. After this, a semi-nomadic style of lifestyle that was practised during the pre-colonial period was no longer possible, as a consequence, their jhumming fields were confined to a limited territory. A portion of the cultivable area that was available within their vicinity was used for cultivation in rotation in a regular interval which was very new to most of the Lushai tribe except for the Mara. Towards the end of the colonial rule with the growing population, people began to feel the pressure of staying in one place and cultivating the same area again and again. Reading the demands of the council of chiefs in 1941, it was clear that complete freedom in cultivation was a long-standing desire of the people. The resolution state that there was a shortage of jhum land for the people, so they should be allowed to cultivate the forest area near the government road with a condition that if the damage was done it will be compensated by the villagers. They also demand that riverine reserves be open for the cultivable area, as in this area cotton could be cultivated for export. But unfortunately, the government response to this demand was not reported in the concerned document.²⁰³

²⁰² Daman Singh, P. 51.

²⁰³ MSA, Agriculture Section, File no.34, Note on the proceedings of the Lushai chiefs and their conference and durbar, 1941-42, Col-1/10/41-42.

This is not to say that the government did not look for an alternative to jhumming cultivation. Initiatives were taken to find some alternative to Jhumming in a small-scale manner, for instance for the first time in 1898 wet rice cultivation was introduced at Champhai valleys, which was later extended to North Vanlaiphai in 1904 and then in 1925 at Tuisenhar.²⁰⁴ But this could not gain momentum due to environmental constraint, as valleys with running streams were sparsely present in a limited area. People who settled in the valley had to observe certain rules, as the government framed rules to regulate cultivation like restrictions on the destruction of the jungle, leaving the land fallow for more than two consecutive years, moving hamlet sites and migration. As long as they observed these rules, the rights of cultivation were hereditary, but too many restrictions were imposed in the area in order for such initiative to be successful.

The government also introduced a demonstration farm at Aizawl and Lungleh which proved that numerous crops grew in the climatic condition of Lushai hills, items like orange, sugarcane, potato, and pineapple thrive in the hills, cotton also became one of the most important crops. Later, in 1920 silk rearing was introduced by the salvation army. After much experimentation, items like cinchona, cardamom, coriander, sesame, pomegranate, groundnut, chillies, and cotton were considered to have potential. But this experiment could only reach a certain level because of the rugged nature of the terrain. And in a place where cultivation was possible, it could not take due to inaccessible markets and poor transport and communication. The British government did make some efforts in this direction in other parts of the northeast also, in the Chittagong hill tracts, the local tribes were encouraged to take plough cultivation and the chiefs were given an incentive to promote cultivation in the valley. The government even sought to extend the practice in the Naga hills as well, a high-altitude irrigated terraces with retaining walls made up of stone were introduced among Angami, Ao and Sema tribes. But this effort was done in a low-key manner for it to find a real alternative to shifting cultivation, this is why there is

²⁰⁴ Daman Singh, p. 52.

hardly any case in the north-eastern region where modern agriculture successfully replaced shifting cultivation.

3.10 Exclusion of Mizo in the commercial scene:

While all sorts of commercial transactions on forest resources took place on the Lushai hills, the Mizo were unable to gain a foothold in this scene in their areas due to several reasons. Fundamentally even the concept of the modern trading system was a novel proposition to the Mizo communities since it brings with it, the need to understand the official procedures, abilities to organize procurement and transport, an understanding of how markets work, capital investment and nature of the enterprise. Because of all these reasons, Mizo was at a disadvantage position from the start compared to the timber trader of Bengali and Assamese. Therefore, there was this deep-rooted lobby system which was very unfavourable for the Mizo was dominating the scene from an early stage.

On top of all these, the administrative system was set up in such a way that most of the operational activities were controlled by the Cachar administrator this also act as a huge natural barrier for the Mizo, essentially this means resources available in the Lushai hills were control from outside. While procurement could be organized without too much obstacle transportation was another real problem, the only possible route at that time was through the rivers like Dhaleshwari and Karnaphuli, along this river route there are dangerous streams and rapids which only experienced traders and cutters from the Chittagong hill tracts could navigate, this was another challenge because the Mizo did not excel at boatmanship in general, so boatmen were usually higher from an outsider. Overall due to limited capital and abysmal business skills, most of the forest resources extracted from the Lushai district were in the hands of the outsiders. Few activities like bidding for leases to salvage sunken logs and drift timber and extraction of minor products etc. were open up to the locals, but those are only marginal activities and even these were heavily under the control of the British.

Among the few official documents available it was possible to acknowledge the pervasive nature of British control on resources available in the Lushai hills regions. For example, there was a reference to Sukuni Karbari (a Chakma from Demagiri) being awarded the sunken log and drift timber mahals for 1933-34.²⁰⁵ Another reference to Liankhuma and sons of Aizawl, who were allowed to collect reeds for broomsticks and sale of the flowers outside the district on payment of royalty in 1947.²⁰⁶ Another one was Hrangbuaia was permitted to extract bamboos and cane from along the Tlawng and Tut river for sale in the plains in 1947 as well.²⁰⁷ In the same year, the DFO of Cachar issued orders facilitating the removal of bamboo for sale without permits and as long as royalty was paid at the nearest revenue station.²⁰⁸

Since the British administration meticulously controlled almost all the resources, even down to the smallest item which does seem to hold much value from a commercial point of view like bsamboo sticks, flowers etc. through legislation and executive measures, coupled by limited knowledge and capital of the Mizo business-wise and their naive attitude toward outsiders make the Mizo people to be largely excluded from the commercial scene.

3.11 Response of the Local to the British control of resources:

The British government throughout their rule in India were not encouraging political activities from the natives and the same logic can be applied to the Lushai hills as well, therefore there was no space and resource to sway the public opinion in that way especially in the beginning especially among tribals. However, in the later period of British rule in

²⁰⁵ MSA, Forest miscellaneous, File no. 3/1935, letter from SDO Lunglei, to Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 25th October 33.

²⁰⁶ MSA, Forest Deptt, 1947-48, noting of Superintendent Lushai Hills on application,.

²⁰⁷ MSA, Forest Deptt, 1947-48, noting of Superintendent Lushai Hills on application, dated. 2nd September 1947.

²⁰⁸ MSA, Forest Dept., 1947-48, memo. B/205 from office of the DCF Cachar division, to Superintendent Lushai Hills, 24th April 1947.

India, the idea of national consciousness gained ground, people start to give a thought on how the commoners were represented and political consciousness start to grow more than ever in different parts of the country, a snippet of this wave also reached the Lushai hills.

This new wave can be seen at a conference was organized by the superintendent of Lushai hills in 1938 with different village chiefs. In the following year in 1939, a representative council of Chiefs was formed to act as a consultative body, they had a meeting in 1941, 1942 and 1943. Then, in 1946 the representative council was enlarged to include the representative of the commoners. But was later disbanded in 1947 on the grounds that it served no useful purpose. This was also the year we saw the birth of two political parties the Lushai Commoners Union later on known as the Mizo Union and the United Mizo Freedom Organization.

The emergence of a new consciousness among the Mizo was apparent in the later period of British rule. For instance, in the recorded proceeding of the conference held in 1941, many Chiefs express an opinion that while the outside timber workers could enter their territory, their villagers were not allowed to enter. More importantly, they demand a share of revenue collected from the Lushai hills, by stating how the existing arrangement was unfair for the locals, under which the Chiefs had to see timber and bamboo taken out from their lands without getting any share in return. They also express that under such conditions how it was extremely difficult to have any interest in the preservation of the forest, and if they are allowed to make use of timber on the river banks, people would not be so eager in burning the slopes of the hills for cultivation.²⁰⁹

While looking at the face value the demand of the Chiefs was perfectly reasonable and they seem to be aware of the disadvantage of jhumming cultivation. On analyzing it in deeper the transaction of their words, it was undeniable that the western concept of capitalism creeps into the minds of the chiefs which was not a part of the traditional Mizo society before. It was obvious that although jhum cultivation will always be a source of

²⁰⁹ MSA, Agriculture Section, file no. 34, note on proceedings of the Lushai chiefs and their conference and durber, 1941-42, Vol-1/10/41-42.

livelihood to them, trees in the riverside forest were seen as a means to wealth and prosperity. Therefore, the denial of share in the forest produces was the obvious source of contention between the British and the chiefs and rightly so.

CHAPTER-IV

CONCLUSION

The present research can be divided into three parts. The first part deals with the theoretical framework of the study, starting with how the notion of studying and writing history changes with the emergence of the Annales School, how there was this realization among historians that, to truly understand how societies evolve history has to encompass every aspect of human existence. This idea give birth to the concept of ‘Total History’, with this concept the dimension of history got expanded and become even more interdisciplinary with the change in the trend of history writing. One area where historians make a new approach and yield result is environmental history. The emergence of environmental history coincided with the development of an idea or a concern for nature and the environment and the perception that environmental crisis is the inevitable future of the world. So within this trend environmental history became the emerging frontier of historical research. And to situated environmental history with the conventional history, while defining its area and boundary, a few questions were answered in the process;

- how did it all begin?
- Is it a separate sub-discipline under history or is it just an offshoot of social history, cultural history or other histories?

The answer started with a conviction that the awareness of human dependence upon nature existed from the earliest of time, though it may seem like the acknowledgement of the role of the human as the maker and un-maker of its environment may be more of a recent development. But historians since ancient times understood the value of geographical features and environment in the understanding of human societies. Then Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century introduced new ideas about nature and started making an argument that human activity affects our environment. Southeast Asia and the Indian

sub-continent were no exception to this, ancient texts like '*Ramayana*' and '*Arthasatra*' hold a clue that nature was revered in ancient times, the seed of an idea that forest and important animals needed to be protected had already been planted in the ancient time and continued right through the medieval time even in India.

In Europe and America, the idea of conservation became more pronounced after the industrial revolution, even more so with the rapid disappearance of forests. Indeed, it was in the United States that environmental history as a self-conscious discipline began to take shape. By the mid-1970s historians have, by and large, indirectly addressed various environmental or ecological issues while writing economic, social and cultural histories of various types.

It also traced the brief historiography of environmental history, how it started as a separate subject in Europe and America as an offshoot of the post-war wave of environmentalism. While in South Asia it began to emerge in the late 1980s, the historiography in this region largely revolves around the coming of colonialism as a watershed moment. While historian like Richard Grove plays down the importance of imperialist or capitalist greed behind the forest policy, Ramachandra Guha asserted that colonial forest policy was primarily driven by materialistic needs, serving the strategic and revenue interest of the British Empire. Other historians like Mahesh Rangarajan, Ajay Skaria etc also offered slightly different opinions. However, there seems to be no disagreement on the commercial exploitation and the drastic change that took place during the colonial period.

The second part highlights the ecology of the Lushai hills and the general world view of the people toward nature during the pre-colonial period when there were no outside influences. It also analyzes how the physical framework of the Lushai hills like the location, topography, climate, vegetation cover etc. plays a critical role in how settlement patterns and social structure form and develop. And how the geographical boundaries of this region and its features put pressure on the people, physical features like steep ridges, deep valleys and dense forests have kept different tribes secluded from one another and act as a natural boundary, this influences their perception about geographical space, this

led to mutual distrust and animosity among the people living in this isolated pocket of the Lushai hills region and this condition led to the development of a traditional institution called the chieftainship. Each chief then draw out their boundary of space which did not go much beyond the village itself, the plot of agricultural area, household area, hunting ground etc. delimited by the chief along with his council of '*Upa*'.

A clear understanding of the ecology of the region can be seen in how settlement areas were selected. Flatlands were naturally avoided in the early Mizo society, for safety reasons from intruders and tropical diseases. Since the only method of cultivation during this period was jhumming, after having cultivated all available land within reached from the village, the elders had to search for new places, there was a lot of superstition involved when it comes to finding new places. The Chief enjoys lots of power and sovereignty back in the day, he was the guardian of his subjects and a provider in time of need, being the supreme authority figure in the village all the resources within the village was considered his own, so rent and taxes were paid directly to him for uses and extraction of resources. But rarely did the chief act like a dictator, the Mizo society in those days appears to be egalitarian in nature.

The early Mizo believe the system was not based on scientific rationale. Their world view on nature was intertwined with their religious belief, culture, custom and tradition. They believe a creator of the universe exists, so physical phenomena like the rising of the sun, the moon, thunder, lightning or any force of nature were not worshipped as such. But different geographical features like hills, forests and rivers etc. were considered to be inhabited by various spirits. So they spent a whole lot of time in a constant endeavour to please those spirits, there was a plethora of sacrifice conducted by the priest for different occasions and different purposes. They have a strong conviction on the superstition and mysticism involved around nature, sometimes this made the early Mizo avoid or disturb those areas, the maintenance of sacred forests of some sort enhanced and protected critical elements of natural forests.

The livelihood of the people in those days entirely depends on forests for biomass and for providing cultivable lands. Apart from this forest also provides a hunting ground. Hunting in the pre-colonial period was not only an economic activity but was closely interlinked with tradition and belief systems. Hunting command deep respect in society and even in the afterlife. A close relationship that exists between the cultural space and the ecological conditions of the area was very evident in the context of the early Mizo society. The economy was primitive and subsistence-based, no villages had a surplus produced to gain extra, the advancement of the technology was uniform within the village and were relatively uniform across villages and tribes. So because of the limited needs of the people there seems to be a balance between the extraction of natural resources and the regenerating capacity of the forest.

The third part focuses on the advent of colonial power into the Lushai hills, how from that point onward there were changes in the relationship of the locals with the environment, their perception about nature and its resources underwent a massive transformation because of the change brought about by administration, policy and the way resources were managed. All these processes led to structural changes from top to bottom throughout the colonial period socially, politically and culturally.

The British forest policy and the way resources were managed in the Lushai hills had a wide impact, the impact of this process goes beyond the environment and affects the socio-cultural process of the people tremendously. Traditional consciousness and relations concerning forests and their resources underwent a profound transformation. While there were changes in the patterns of life, many traditions, cultures and ideologies which existed in the pre-colonial time continued to exist in some aspects of life in the colonial period. This dichotomy disturbed the balance in social values, belief systems, leadership patterns and institutional mechanisms etc. This leads to overall changes in the very structure of the Mizo society.

Throughout the colonial period, policies were designed to protect their commercial interest. So, control was exercised on the resources down to the smallest items, in the

process, the government tried to incur expenditure as minimum as possible, therefore little investment was made for infrastructural development. When the British colonized India economic incentives were what instigated political imperialism which led to control of natural resources, political supremacy was used as a tool to create wealth at the expense of a huge depleting resource. With regards to the Lushai hills, the immediate reason to conquer the Lushai hills was basically to protect the interest of British subjects and their commercial establishments in the neighbouring plains area of the region. So maintaining political stability seem to out weight economic incentive at least in the beginning. Nonetheless, even in the Lushai hills, the interests of the people never occupied a centralized position. As long as a stable administration was maintained and their commercial interests were not disrupted even though the return they got from this region was minor compared to other parts of the region, other things like environmental issues and the interests of the locals were not much of a concern. The underlining motive of this territorial expansion has always been a manifestation of the continuation of the British mercantile colonialism of the 18th century.

The British were meticulous in their management including humans as resources. The retainment of chieftainship enables the British to have an effective but inexpensive administration for the British. But on the other hand for the Mizo, this significantly reduces the position and the power of the chiefs to a mere custodian of resources for the government. By establishing control over the natural resources, the British changed the existing patterns of resource ownership, management, access and utilization and they were replaced with systems more suited to meet the requirements of the imperial power.

Even though the Lushai hills were not entirely ravaged by colonial commercial force, unlike many other colonized regions. The Mizo lost out in time, infrastructure like proper roads, educational institutions, scientific knowledge and industrial enterprise and infrastructure development hardly took place during the British administrations apart from the work done by the missionaries, while in many other parts of India modernization bring in gains in their infrastructures. Most of the socio-economic development was under the

initiative of christian missionaries. Maintaining peace in the Lushai hills was a priority for the British government and their policy was carefully designed to bring about minimal changes and tried to stray away from all forms of political activities. Because of this, the Mizo tribes enter the post-independence era without a single representative body to represent the people, while by the 1930s in many parts of the country provincial election were organized.

The British rule brings subtle changes in the political scene by institutionalizing the chieftainship as hereditary with the approval of the local government. With the emergence of church in villages through the work of missionaries, elders were appointed by the local congregation, through this a new class in the society began to emerge even though their roles were generally confined to the religious role, nonetheless, this led to tussle with the authority of the chief on certain occasions.

Historically speaking the interaction of people and their environment in the Lushai hills evolved tremendously during the twentieth century, largely due to the British forest policy and how the resource was managed at this time. In a larger context, this brought changes at the same time continuity in the culture, polity and economy. Some aspects of traditions and customs have been followed right through the pre-colonial, colonial and early post-colonial periods.

4.1 Research findings:

Four brought categorised parameters can provide a basic framework for tracing the continuity and changes over time from pre-colonial to colonial times and even to post-colonial period:

Firstly, their concepts and perceptions about natural resources, pre-colonial Mizo belief systems were shaped by the animistic religion which conferred supernatural powers on the element of nature. The concept during this time was that the spiritual element of nature

was so revered that human was subordinate to the evil spirits embodied in nature, in order to live in harmony with the surrounding environment they had to engage in an effort to appease the spirits constantly. With the permanent occupation of the Lushai Hills by the British along with the wave of christianity, a new style of management and policy on resources was adopted and introduced in the region, this gave space in the mind of the people to rethink rationally their concept of nature and their interaction with the environment. Religion, education and government policy redefine the relationship between the individual and nature, people started to dismiss superstition and place man and nature on an equal footing, and sometimes men in a higher position through government policy and the concept of christianity. In many instances, the government introduction of the legal system on resource use somewhat alienated the people from nature, but at the same time gave a sense of community ownership and collective responsibility of local resources. This put many old traditions like hunting, gathering of basic needs and cultivation etc. from a mere concession given by the chiefs to a right.

Secondly, the geographical limits of control and access to resources. No definite determined resource domain existed during the pre-colonial Mizo society. Although they were specified arrangements made between villages through customs and traditions, they were subjected to changes and defined only in words. This system changes immediately after the British administration more systematised political boundaries were introduced, with this initiative the collective domain of different tribes and villages became finite and unchangeable. Towards the later colonial period, people started to feel pressure on the space they occupied for resource utilization especially on land for cultivation, this was further accentuated by rapid growth in population. On top of this, the administration saves certain areas for itself, even though community rights of cultivation and collection of forest produce for consumption were allowed to some extent in this area, but overall, this limits the right of the people on natural resources.

Thirdly, there was a structural transformation in the political institution. The British absorbed the village chief into their administrative system and they were no longer the

sole authority of the land and their villages. The chieftainship institution which governs the allocation of resources give the certain privilege of resources use among the families and define their boundaries in the pre-colonial Mizo society was reduced from the rightful owner of the land to the appointed custodian of the British. Later on, even the institution of chieftainship which glue together the traditional society was abolished and all the land was vested in the state.

The little-known area about Mizoram when it comes to resource management is the role played by village institutions in contemporary times. These village institutions neither derived from the traditional forms of leadership nor from the modern system of local self-government, at the sometimes it had a subtle trait of both. After the British left India, the hereditary office of the village chief was replaced by the village council who were democratically elected, this new institutional structure retained most of the functions of the Chief but under a democratic framework and they are empowered to an extent that will not be encountered anywhere else in the country.

The management of the local forest was entrusted to the village council after independence, the small and homogenous nature of the village inculcated collective interest, added by the climatic condition of the region had huge contributions in safeguarding tropical rainforest like Mizoram. Land and forest of this region have a huge capacity of inherent regenerative ability combine this with low pressure of population is a good combination, and the absence of the external pull of commercial forces is also a big factor for an absence of large-scale deforestation. Lastly, the village council with its systematic empowerment from the government emerged as the main institution for the management of the forest. This to some extent gave a foundation for the system of village management of forests.

With concern to the government institution, the Forest Department in Mizoram was constituted in 1972, compared to other parts of India the management of forests by the government is fairly a recent development. Before, the reserve forests were mainly under the control of Assam and some other issues related to the forest were dealt with by the

local administration. From this, it was clear that the state management of forest resources had not changed much since the British had left India.

Fourthly, the technological aspect. This part remained almost unchanged even in the present time, unlike other parameters discussed above, it remained almost static even today. Among Mizo communities activities like hunting, gathering and Jhumming was their main means of subsistence well past into the post-colonial period and contemporary period. People relied mostly on human energy, simple tools, local material and their skills and awareness were still heavily relied on indigenous base knowledge. To this day, there were few visible changes in the conventional techniques of shifting cultivation and hunting equipment. On top of this, the dependency on Jhum and local biomass resources remain the same in the rural areas, although this was lessened with the availability of alternative products in the market in more urban areas.

For the Mizo society, forests remain the central natural resource governing the basic needs of the people. They are the main sources of timber and bamboo for housing, fuel for cooking, provide a vast variety of fruits and vegetables. Apart from this, they are the main regulator of the springs that feed the hilltop villages, bind the soil together in a steep slope region and are home to wild birds and animals which are an important source of food for the early Mizo society and even in the contemporary times. The periodic clearing and burning of forests supply the essential nutrients that the soil lacks in normal conditions and make it cultivable for food and cash crops. So, the state of the forests will always remain an important determining factor of the quality of life for the majority of the people, this is determined by the way in which they are used and managed.

Even though the government is taking up a lot of initiative in an endeavour to eradicate the traditional shifting cultivation, many schemes are designed to persuade the people to give up this way of life and in some areas, the government initiative did find some success, but in most of the region, '*Jhumming*' always remain the most dominant method of cultivation. Now the question remains is jhumming remain the most prevalent form of cultivation because it is a tradition that had been in practice for many generations or is it

because of a lack of better alternative, which could actually work in difficult terrain and climate condition like Mizoram. The second part of the statement seems to be a more plausible answer because the cultivators, in general, seem to be quite open to new ideas and superior means of livelihood, if options are available which are proven and within reach. History has shown that Mizo in general is quite adaptable to change.

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MSA, Forest dept, CB-7 For-83, total revenue realized from Lushai Hills, letter No. B/998 from A. Adhikari Esquire Divisional Forest Officer Cachar Division, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 26th April 1932, p. 35.

MSA, Forest Dept. CB-4 For-49, letter No: B/48 from T.V Owden Esquire, Assist. Conservator of Forests Eastern Bengal and Assam Cachar Division, to the Superintendent in charge Lushai Hills Forest Division, dated 21st April 1913, p. 23.

MSA, Forest Dept. CB-7 For-79, Assam Western circle Lushai Division, Summary of revenue and Expenditure from the end of August 1920 to January 1921, p. 4-6, 8-10, 13-24.

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Interviewed, Dated, 4th 2020, Pu. Jitendra Kumar (IFS), with Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Planning & Development, Government of Mizoram.

Interviewed, Dated, 9th February 2020, with Pu. Lalthlamuana Pachuau (IFS) Chief Conservator of Forests Administration, Government of Mizoram.

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APPENDIX – I

CB-4
Forest-491

16

1

E. B. & A. Schedule I(A), Form No. 14.

No. B/453

FROM

Mr. Milkanta Mukherjee

Extra Assistant

CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,
Sylhet Division

TO

The Superintendent,
Lushai Hills

Dated Sylhet, the 14th July 1913

SIR,

With reference to your letter No B/70 dated the 18th June 1913, I have the honour to inform you that the total revenue derived from the Lushai Hills Forests during the Forest year 1912-1913 (1st July 1912 to 30th June 1913) amounts to Rs 2599-11-9 (Two thousand five hundred ninety, nine annas eleven and pies nine only)



I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant

Abdullah Mulla
Divisional Forest Officer,
Sylhet Division

23

77 (2)

No. 13/48

FROM

J. V. Owen Esquire,
Asst CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS, Cachar Division
~~EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM,~~

TO

The Superintendent, In Charge
Lushai Hills Forest Division.

Dated Silchar, the 21st April 1913.

SIR,

Sir,

In reference to your letter no. 18/26 dated the 10th instant, I have the honour to give below the amount of forest revenue realized in this Division, on produce removed from Lushai Hills during the financial year 1912-13.

Sonai Range	Rs 10,204/3/
Silchar Check Station	" 941/1/6
Chitraguri Range	" 29,123/6/9
Seatak Range	" 486/7/
	<hr/>
Total Rs	40,755-2-3.



I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant
[Signature]

ln. 25/4/13

J. V. Owen
Asst Conservator of Forests
Cachar Division

APPENDIX – II

FOREST DEPARTMENT, EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM.

No. B/176

From

L. M. S. Teague, Esqr.,
Asst. Conservator of Forests, Eastern Bengal and Assam,
Cachar Division.

To

The Superintendent, Lushai Hills,
Aijal.

Silchar 7th July
Dated _____ the _____ 1909.

Enclosure nil

Sir,



With reference to your letter No. B/31 dated the 23rd June 1909, I have the honour to inform you that the total revenue realised in the Lushai Hills from July 1908 to June 1909, comes to Rs 37,972/6/6 (Thirtyseven thousand nine hundred seventytwo annas six and pice six only) of which the following amounts were realised in the three different ranges as shown below:-

Malijuri	...	Rs 32,063 -11-0
Sana	...	Rs 5,826 -5-0
Saaltik	...	Rs 82 -6-0
Total		Rs 37,972 -6-6

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
your most obedient servant,

APPENDIX – III

CA-8
Forest-1001

(25)

(26)

BIRD & CO.,
Managing Agents.

(RECEIVED)

SURMA VALLEY SAW MILLS, Ltd.

SAW MILLS, OIL MILLS & TEA CHEST FACTORY.

Bhanga Bazar, P. O., Sylhet.

Telegraphic Address:

"Hardwood" Calcutta.

"Logs" Bhanga Bazar.

Steamer Station—BHANGA BAZAR.

Railway Station—BHANGA, A. B. RAILWAY.

BHANGA BAZAR, 2nd. May. 1917.
(SYLHET.)

IN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE

No. **F36574**

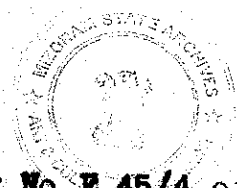
To

The Superintendent,

Lushai Hills.

Aijal.

Sir,



In continuation of my letter No. F 45/4 of 7th. April and in further reference to your letter No. 263 iv, vii-1 of 4th. April.

Your representative met Mr. Ring and measured up the rocks on the Umarkhal. These rocks are situated about 1½ miles from the mouth of the stream and cover about 500 yards. Mr. Ring reports that there are a considerable number of trees up this stream which he estimates will take about two seasons to work out. The majority of the trees are of a class of timber we also urgently want for the Ishapore Rifle Factory.

He did not go to see the upper reaches of the Pakua River. This is where there will be a lot of blasting to be done. We believe there is a lot of timber in the upper reaches of the Pakua if the river was only cleaned but we are asking Mr. Ring to see the place personally.

May we beg to enquire how your representative did not go to the upper reaches of the Pakua? Also we should be glad to hear what you

By
19/5

33

2

Civ No. 4

From

A. J. W. Milroy, Esqr.,
Conservator of Forests, Assam.

To

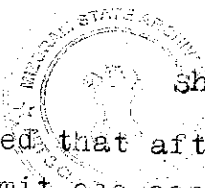
All Divisional Forest Officers in Assam,
Including Khasi and Jaintia Hills and
Lushai Hills and
The Botanical Forest Officer.

1935

52

19. 3. 35

VII - 1



Shillong, the 12th March 1935.

It is requested that after this season Divisional Forest Officers will submit one copy of their plantation and Taungya programme for the approaching spring to the Conservator and one to the Silviculturist.

It will be the latter's duty to discuss with Divisional Forest Officers on the spot any items of the soundness of which either he or the Conservator feel doubtful, reference being made to the Conservator for final discussion and orders when agreement cannot be reached.

Programmes should normally be sent in by the New Year.

The Silviculturist will draw up thinning programmes for all plantations in the Province, but as these will take some time to complete, Divisional Forest Officers will please proceed without delay to thin such plantations as require it, consulting me if they find difficulty in deciding what should be done.

The majority of older plantations in most divisions are suffering from lack of thinnings, which should no longer be postponed, and generally speaking, having in view the rate at which new plantations, and consequently our commitments, are increasing, thinnings will have to be on the very distinctly heavy side in the expectation that the operations cannot be repeated for a considerable number of years.

This is already the practice in Bengal, and needs some hardening of heart on the part of the officers detailed for the work.

Pure Gomari plantations should be ruthlessly thinned as this alone can mitigate loranthus attack.

It should be accepted that the proper maintenance, including timely thinnings, of existing ~~px~~ plantations must have precedence over the formation of new ones.

Forwarded by

Md Ibrahim

Offg: Head Clerk.

Aug 5 35

Sd. A. J. W. Milroy,

Conservator of Forests,
A S S A M.

*fact:
I don't think
that we have
any business to do
with this.*

*The
New Year*

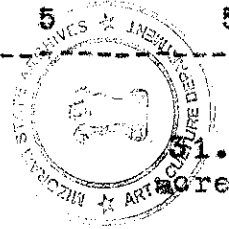
APPENDIX – IV

CB-8
Forest

Form No. 18(B)
Forest Department, Assam.
Artificial Reproduction.

6

Division.	Kind of plantation.	Area in acre			Crea- tion.	Expenditure during the year.	Total expenditure from commencement.		Reve- nue du- ring the year	Total revenue from date of creation of plan- tation.	
		On 1st April 1934.	Added during the year.	Excluded during the year 1935.			creation	Upkeep			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lushai Hills	Timber and Bamboo	31.85			31.85 acres.		The plantation was started and maintained by the Forest subordinates of this Division.			Nil	Nil



Forwarded by,

S. K.

Superintendent,
In charge Forests,
Lushai Hills.

1935.
Lushai Hills.

96

64

57

216
38

~~FF~~
A

10/1/31

lis No. 9

From

A. J. W. Milroy, Esq.,
Conservator of Forests,
Western Circle, Assam.

To

The Divisional Forest Officer, Khasi
Garopara
Garo Hills,
Lachar
Sylhet
and the Deputy Commissioner, I/c Forests,
Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

1930-31
20-
16-2-31

Shillong, the 10th February 1931.

4

2 Royalty on lac is fixed at Rs. 2/- per maund with
effect from the 15th February 1931 until further orders.



Ed. A.J.W. Milroy,
Conservator of Forests,
Western Circle, Assam.

Note file
L.H.

Supds.
142

Memo. No. 108-111

Dated Shillong, the 10th February 1931.

Copy forwarded to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills
for information.

note
16/2/31

Ed. A. J. W. Milroy,
Conservator of Forests,
Western Circle, Assam.

Forwarded by

L. D. D. D.
Superintendent,

Office of the Conservator of Forests,
ASSAM.

APPENDIX – V

3 1

E. B. - 2
Forest - 18

No. G.

From

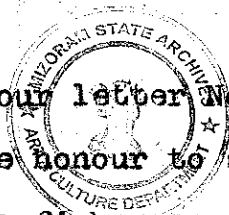
Major H. W. G. Collett, B. A.
Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

To

The Secretary to the Board of Revenue,
Eastern Bengal and Assam.
Sh. Dacca.

Dated Aijal the October 1907.

Sir,



T

In reply to your letter No. 406--- dated
the 6th. July 1907, I have the honour to state as follows:-
L.R.

2. I am much interested as a fisherman with the enquiries and before the receipt of the Board's letter I had taken certain steps for the better preservation of small fry &c in these hills. When the original reference was received it seemed that the purport of the enquiry was to increase the supply of fish where there was a demand for it.

3. There is practically no demand for fish in the Lushai Hills. The Lushais catch fish in a number of ways described in the answers to question 10 and to prevent their doing so will be wellnigh impossible. Their methods are objectionable & wasteful and there are some reasons for imposing certain limitations. On the other hand there is never likely to be the means of enforcing many restrictions. The extent of the district approaches that of the Surma Valley. It is sparsely populated. The number of Government servants is small and to protect the thousands of miles of waterway would be a task altogether incommensurate with the objects in view. At the same time the Lushais are amenable to discipline and to a reasonable extent obey orders.

4. The conditions being as above the points for decision appear to be as follows:-

- (1) How far do the destructive methods of fishing of the Lushais

(3) (2)

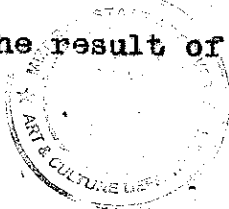
Lushais influence the supply of marketable fish in the plain districts of the province?

(2) If to an appreciable extent, how far would be it practicable to modify such methods

5. From the list of the fish known and caught in these hills attached to the answer to question 41 it appears at least varieties of marketable fish breed in these hills there is no doubt they suffer to a considerable extent although the density of population in the district ^{and 12 to 15} ~~62,454 to the 7,227~~ square miles must in itself be a considerable protection. The river directly affected by destructive local methods are the (1) Tipai (2) the Sonai, (3) The Dhaleswari. (4) The Longai all of off these rivers run into the Surma Valley. (5) Indirectly the Borak of which the Tuivai is a tributary is also affected

In the Southern Hills the rivers affected are (1) the Karnafuli to a limited extent (2) the Koladyne. The latter river however runs also through a Independent territory & the Chin Hills, & Arracan Hill tracts before it reaches the plains.

6. During next cold weather enquiries will be made as to practical measures to prevent the wanton destruction of breeding fish and small fry. No doubt something can be done but it is useless to lay down rules which have no chance of observance. The result of these enquiries will be reported in due course.



I have the honour to be

sir,

Your most obedient servant

Major

Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

(4) (2) (19) (3)

Answers to Questions A.

1. The area of the Lushai Hills is 7,227 square miles. The population of the district is 82,434 according to the Census of 1901. All Lushais eat fish when obtainable which is only on occasions & then in small quantities.
2. There are fish in all the rivers. It is impossible to estimate the extent of the river fisheries. They must be several thousand miles but with the exception of the Koladyne every river in the district is easily fordable except during the rains & even the Koladyne can be crossed on foot in February, March & April at certain places. Large fish are therefore very limited & only to be found in the pools of the large rivers.
- 3-- 9. Answers are nil there are no fishermen by trade in these hills.
10. There are three methods of fishing adopted by the Lushais.

(1) Dams. There are made of timber & bamboos and are very common. The local name for them is Sanga Ngoih. This is the commonest method of catching fish but as far as I can ascertain it is not destructive to very small fry which manage to escape.

(2) The second method is by poisoning (Sanga-rul in Lushai). The poison usually employed is the root of a tree (Lushai name RU) There are other poisonous plants a Creeper called Ngaih-hih a less virulent plant Kang-ding and the fruit of the RUTHEI. The last mentioned is usable during the rains but the other poisons are only efficient when the rivers are low. Poisoning is general and although I have prohibited it I have reason to believe that it goes on much as usual. Fewer fish are killed by poisoning than is generally supposed. Many revive & escape & the poison is usually only thoroughly effective in confined waters.

(5) (19) (4)

(3) The third method is the Cast net. There are two of these that with the large & that with a smaller mesh. The former is the len pui and the latter the len te & their respective prices are from 2-4 & from 2-3 Rupees. They are made by Lushais & not often sold.

11- 14 No answers possible.

13 (a) See answer to question 10.

13(b) No estimate possible.

15 (a) No. (b) No. (c) No.

16. No reliable information at present available. I hope to be able to collect some during the ensuing cold weather

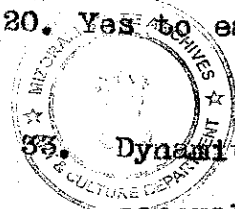
17-18 Nil.

19(a) Probably yes. There are only fish which are admitted to be destroyed during the spawning are the Nga-
- lim a very small fish caught in October and November in which months they are said to spawn.

(b) See above generally through the hills -to eat

(c) Yes but I foresee great difficulties in taking efficient preventive measures.

20. Yes to eat



21. Dynamiting very rare & prohibited - poisoning general & although prohibited is also general.

It would be useless to forbid poisoning without efficient machinery to carry out the orders.

Every effort will however be made to discourage it.

39. Nil.

40. See covering letter .

41. The information as far as practicable is given below.

APPENDIX – VI

To

THE

Conservator of Forests,

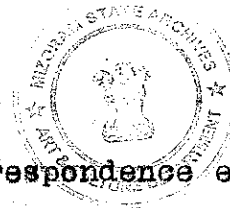
Assam.

Dated Shillong, the

1903.

29th July

SIR,



With reference to the correspondence ending with your letter No. A-36, dated the 11th June 1903, on the subject of the rules for the management of forests in the Lushai Hills, I am directed to say that the Officiating Chief Commissioner is of opinion that the rate of royalty on Bees-wax exported from the Lushai Hills to Sylhet and Cachar should be Rs. 5/- (five) per maund, and on that exported to Chittagong Rs. 4/- (four) per maund, the latter being the rate in force in the Chittagong Hill tracts. The license fee for the purchase of wax in the Lushai Hills should be fixed at Rs. 3/- only.

2. I am to add that draft rules for the management of forests in the Lushai Hills have been forwarded to the Government of Bengal for approval, and pending issue of the rules, effect should be given to the above orders.

I have etc:

(Sd.) J. Donald,

For Secretary to the Chief Commissioner,

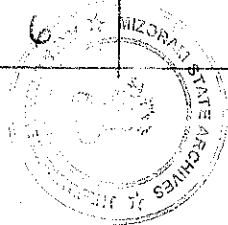
Assam.

APPENDIX – VII

CB-9 -
Forest - 120

Number of Domestic Animals killed by wild Animals
during April 1943-- 1944 Lushai Hills

Names of Victim	Gargal Mythun	Cow.	Pony	Goat	Pig	Sheep	Total	Remarks
Tiger	{ 129	187	4	9	86		415	}
	{ 9	11		1	1		22	
Leopard		3		6	12	1	22	
Wolf	{ 34	¹¹ 139	2	² 28	21		¹⁴ 224	}
Total	163	329	6	43	119	1	661	



83

GOVERNOR OF ASSAM.

5

Letter No. Ex/92/43/5 - G.S.

From

Rai Sahib D.C. Das,
Assistant to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam.

To

The Superintendent Lushai Hills, Aijal.

Shillong, the 18th May, 1944.

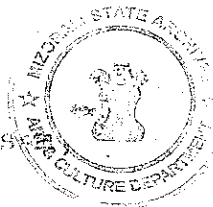
No. 337-9/IV-12

From

The Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

To

The Secretary to the Governor of Assam,
Shillong.



Dated Aijal, the 21st April 1944.

Subject:- REWARDS FOR DESTRUCTION OF WILD ANIMALS.

Sir,

Ref. Your No. Ex/92/43/2-G.S. of 19th November 1943.

A sum of Rs 462/8/- was spent in 1943-44 against Rs 860/4/- in 1942-43 and Rs 1161/4/- in 1941-42 for rewards for destruction of wild animals. Rewards were paid for the following wild animals during 1943-44:-

5 Tigers (4 @ Rs 12/8/- and 1 @ Rs 9/-)	---	Rs	59-0-0
77 Wild dogs @ Rs 5/-	.....	Rs	385-0-0
3 Leopards @ Rs 5/-	.....	Rs	15-0-0
7 King Cobras @ Rs 1/-	.....	Rs	7-0-0
10 Cobras @ Rs -/4/-	.....	Rs	2-8-0

Total Rs 462-8-0

The following shows the number of domestic animals killed by wild animals in the North Lushai Hills (figures for South Lushai Hills is not available) during 1943-44:-

Killed by -

	Tigers.	Leopards.	Wild dogs.	Total.
(1) Nythians	138	-	34	172
(2) Cows	198	3	150	351
(3) Ponies	4	-	2	6
(4) Goats	10	6	31	47
(5) Pigs	87	12	21	120
(6) Sheep	-	1	-	1
Total	437	22	238	697

One person was reported to have been killed by a tiger during the Year 1943-44.

Please sanction the extension of the ~~rate~~ ^{rate} of the grant ^{for} the rewards for the year 1944-45 according to the rates approved in your No. 5399 G.S. of 19.3.1940.

Revised

For Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

16/5

APPENDIX –VIII

(19)

(7)

Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration of the Tushal
Hills District for the year 1919-1920.

Chapter I.

(1) Constitution of State Forests.

(i) Reserved Forests.

Section 1 - Alteration in area

1 - No alteration in area was made during the year under report

(ii) Protected Forests.

5. None

(iii) Unclassed State Forests or public forest land.

5 - Nil

(iv) Leased Forests.

4 - There are no changes in the forests/area leased out to Surma Valley Saw Mills Company Ltd. during the year - working areas were leased out to other timber traders as usual for a year in the Sonai and Rukni basins.

Section 2 - Forest settlements :-

5 - There are 7 hamlets (including 5 malwag hamlets) consisting of 234 houses of which 200 houses were assessed to house-tax at Rs 2/- per house which is the usual rate of house-tax in these hills for Imphal. The whole amount of house-tax viz Rs 400/- was realized and credited during the year.

6. The boundary line between Reserved and Unreserved forests was again cleared this year at a cost of Rs 12/- per mile under the supervision of Forest subordinates in this division. The total length cleared was 50 miles.

7. No survey was made during the year under report.

Chapter II.

Management of State Forests.

Section 1 - Regulation of management.

(a) Preparation and control of Regular working plans.

8 - As there is no Forest Officer, no working plans could be

be undertaken.

(b) Preliminary working plan reports.

9 - None were prepared.

(c) Annual plan of operations.

10 - No annual plans of operations were prepared for want of competent Officer.

Section 2 - Communications and Buildings :-

(a) Roads and Bridges.

11. There are no forest roads or bridges in this forest division.

(b) Buildings.

12. None

(c) Miscellaneous works :-

13 - Nil

Section 3 - Protection of Forests.

(a) General protection.

14 - There were no forest offences during the year.

(b) Protection from Fire.

15 - No such operation seems to be necessary in this division. Thumping in tree forests on the bank of the navigable rivers and as well as in Reserved forests is prohibited.

(c) Protection from Cattle.

16 (i) In the reserved and unreserved forests, buffaloes, cows, bullocks and other animals grazed at different rates of fees.

(ii) The cattle trespass act is not in force in this district.

(d) Protection against injuries from natural causes.

17 - No report of any damage was received.

Section 4 - Silviculture.

(a) Natural reproduction.

(i) State of existing reproductions.

18 - No seeding of the principal timber species was reported during the year.

(ii) Measures for inducing or aiding reproductions.

19 - No experimental measures were adopted during the year.

(b)

(b) tending operation in Natural crops.

20 - Nil

(c) Artificial reproduction.

(i) Regular plantation.

21 - Rubber trees.

have been planted in many villages in the district. 25,418 trees are reported to be alive including those in the government garden at Aijal. No tapping was done during the year. The cost of up-keep of rubber plantation was Rs 224-5-1 which presents the pay of plantation watchers.

(ii) Taungya plantation.

22 - Nil

(iii) Other form of artificial reproduction.

23 - Nil

Section 5 - Exploitation.

(a) System of managements.

(i) Major Forest produce.

24 - No changes in the system of management during the year.

(ii) Minor Forest produce.

25 - Minor produce such as Bees-wax etc was exported in small quantities under permits.

(b) Agency of exploitation.

(i) Departmental Agencies.

26 - None

(ii) Purchasers.

27 - As no accounts of timber sold are maintained here information as to the quantity of timber extracted by purchasers are not available in this Office.

(iii) Rights and privileges.

28 - Nil

(iv) Free grant

29 - Nil

(c) Outturn and sources of Forest produce.

30. No details are available here.

Chapter III.

Financial Results.

REVENUE.

31 - As I have no ~~adequate~~ details of revenue realized outside the division, no Classification, except for the revenue realized here, could be given as required by Conservator's circular No.5 (A) dated the 21st May 1918. The following statement compares the revenue of the year under report, with that of the previous year.

	1919-20	1918-19
Realized in Cachar Division	53,783 - 8 - 3	55,451 - 3 - 9
" Sylhet "	6,559 - 12 - 3	5,040 - 0 - 0
" Chittagong Hill Tracts	25,197 - 13 - 9	36,718 - 14 - 6
" in the district	1,487 - 15 - 7	1,518 - 13 - 3
Total	87,009 - 1 - 10	78,728 - 15 - 6

32 - The decrease is due to fall in revenue realized in Cachar and Chittagong Hill Tracts Divisions which is mainly due to the fact that the timber traders could not take down all their logs they felled, for want of sufficient water in the rivers at the end of their working season.

EXPENDITURE.

33 - The total expenditure of the year was Rs 3,022-13-5 as detailed below:

	1919-20	1918-19
A. Conservancy and works	960 - 3 - 1	860 - 11 - 3
B. Establishment	2,062 - 10 - 4	1,581 - 14 - 6
Total	3,022 - 13 - 5	2,442 - 9 - 9

There has been an increase of Rs 580-3-8 in expenditure during the year under report mainly due to part of expenditure incurred for boundary clearing last year, having been debited to this year, and also payment of war and grain compensation allowances.

the

The existing establishments consist of one forester on Rs 35/-, 2 guards on 14 and 5 guards on 12/- each. There are 4 temporary plantation watchers on Rs 5/- each.

Chapter IV.

Research and experiments.

34 - No researches or experiments were tried, for want of experienced officer, during the year.

CHAPTER V.

Administration:-

35 - There is no forest officer in this division. The existing forest subordinate staff is as shown under para 33. All the subordinates, except one man of Gurhwal District, are Jushais.

The Forester Vaia Jushai did usual touring visiting working areas of timber traders.

Forester Vaia and other subordinate staff, worked well during the year under report.

The general health of the establishment was good.

The 2nd Clerk of the Superintendent's office (general department) does the work of divisional forest office in addition to his other duties.

Dated Aijai,
The 22nd July 1920.

Superintendent,
In charge forests,
Jushai Hills.

15

Forest
TO

(A)

Jatinga I.B., Assam, 20th Feb. 1921.

C

7

From Wm. J. Wright,
C/O Postmaster,
Silchar.

To: The Deputy Commissioner,
Lushai Hills Tract,
Ajjal.

Sir:-

I have the honor to ask you for information regarding Leases for Mineral Oil in the Lushai Hills Tract.

I am a geologist for the Whitehall Petroleum Corporation, 47 Parliament St., Westminster S.W.1, London. We hold Certificate of Approval No. 3506 R., dated 2nd. November, 1920, in the Province of Assam.

Will you kindly let me know whether or not any Prospecting Licenses, or ~~Mineral~~ Mining Leases have been granted for Mineral Oil in the Lushai Hills Tract.

If any have been granted I would like to have a copy made of the plans showing the extent of the leases. I am quite willing to pay the required fees for having the plans copied.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

Wm. J. Wright.

1920-21. N
128
27-2-21

To
Recd

Jatinga Inspection Bungalow, 20th Feb

APPENDIX – IX

Copy of letter No. A. 291 dated the 23rd June 1932 from the Divisional Forest Officer, Cachar Division, to the Conservator of Forests, Assam, Shillong. Through the Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

Sir,

I have the honour to send herewith a list of the Lushai villages that have been found in the Cachar Inner Line Reserve and Lushai Inner Line Reserve for your kind perusal. There is a remark to this effect in the draft working plan-report that was drawn by Mr. Owden - reproduced below for your information.

"In the Lushai Hills portion of the reserve there are two Lushai villages viz; Manglian and Manchor or Zalala and 3 Melvang or Road Constructors' hamlets viz; Bilkhawthlir, Kharsawl, Rengte. These villages jhum in a portion of the area under permission of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills. They are supposed to jhum only in bamboo areas and are forbidden to jhum within one mile of either bank of the navigable rivers Sonai and Rukni. The number of houses which has been allowed to jhum has been permanently fixed by the Superintendent, of Lushai Hills. It appears the number has increased considerably. I am sending a map showing the approximate position of the villages, as reported by the 2 Lushai Forest Guards deputed to take a census of the number of houses.

The following villages have been found jhuming inside the Lushai Inner Line Reserve Forests:-

1. Kolosib	-	49 houses	(Headman) Raja Taihranga.	Circle
2. Bailum.	-	3 "	" Do.	II.
3. Kawihruilian	-	39 "	" Dohaunga.	
4. Palsang		26 "		
5. Khawdungsei	-	40 "		
6. Thinsat	-	49 "		
7. Zohmun	-	30 "		
8. Vaitin	-	50 "		
9. Khawpuar	-	24 "		
		<u>310</u>		

13 Hairep. 1



APPENDIX – X

The following houses have been found in Cachar Line Reserve.

(1)	Dairep village falls inside the reserve, but they are jhuming outside the Cachar Line Reserve.....	13 houses	
(2)	Bilkhawthlir - 22 houses on the Lushai road Melveng basti(Road Contractor).....	22	"
(3)	Kharzawl - 16 houses; 2 miles away from Lushai road Melveng Basti.....	16 houses	
(4)	Saipum | Mangliana	30	"
(5)	Saiphai |	15	"
(6)	Mauchar	49	"
(7)	Tinghmun ... ..(Barak reserve)	28	"
(8)	Maurawp(Bairam) Sawla	6	
		160	



Sd. Illigible.

Divisional Forest Officer,
Cachar Division.

11-5-32 and according to L.V.'s report
dated 20-5-32 the time to clear
the areas were
24-5-32 when the areas were
already grown with cotton by the 2 Lushais.



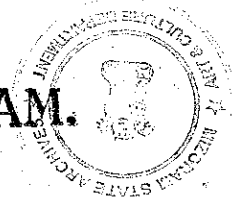
It has been stated that the 2 Lushais
concerned have been jhaming on the abandoned areas
since permission to the 6 accused were granted till
November 1932.

If the statement of Kholban Lien and others
concerning as regards clearance of the areas still the 2
accused are transgressors into the Sylhet Division as
they have no permission to do so. There would not have
been any objection, if the areas were already cleared,
by the persons who got permission to do so.

The Deputy Ranger is of opinion that the areas
were already cleared as stated by Kholban Lien & others
as the jhama cutting is generally done in January & Febru-
ary each year, but what I am of opinion is that there had
been a misunderstanding about the especial permission
given for jhaming till Dec. 1932 to the 6 accused,
and the 2 Lushais considered to have been given a gene-
ral permission and accordingly they cleared the area and
burned. The area being very small and contained bamboo etc.
hence it was not impossible for them to cut and burn the
areas in May 1932 when permission for jhaming was allowed.

.....

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM.



OFFICE OF ~~the~~ Divisional Forest Officer,
Cachar Division.

		DEPARTMENT: GROUP, BRANCH,	Diary or Register No.
Enclosures,	FROM A. K. Adhikari, Esquire Divisional Forest Officer Cachar Division.	Department,	
Maps or Plans,		Branch.	
Spare Copies,		Collection No.	
Class of Papers,		Number and year of File.	
Reply No.	Issued Date.	SUBJECT:- Reference:- Your No. 3571-72-G, dated the 17th March 1932.	Serial number in File. Number and date of orders issued.

No. 13/998 dated 26/4/32

To

The Superintendent

Lushai Hills

1932-38

251

29.4.32

L-1

Sir,

I have the honour to furnish below the total amount of revenue realised from Lushai Hills Forests showing figures separately for each Revenue Station for 1931-32 as requested in your letter under reference,

Lakhipur Revenue Station - Rs 443-8-6
 Sonai Revenue Station..... Rs. 16,699-8-0
 Matijuri Revenue Station. Rs 12,461-6-0
 Sealtek Revenue Station. Rs 71-2-6

Total Rs. 29,675-9-0

incorporate

Amo

29/4

Your obedient servant

A. K. Adhikari
 Divisional Forest Officer,
 Cachar Division.

D. C. M. 24/4

GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL.

OFFICE OF THE Divisional Forest Officer,
Chittagong Hill Tracts.

FOREST DEPARTMENT.
GROUP.
BRANCH.

No. 130/1-7

FROM

N. Pal, Esq., B.A. (Oxon), I.F.S.
Divisional Forest Officer,
Chittagong Hill Tracts.

To

The Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

A I J A L.

Rangamati, Dated the.... March 1932.

Subject:—

Sir,

With reference to your letter No.3570G dated the 17th March 1932, I have the honour to give below the total revenue realised in this Division for Lushai Hills Forests at the following Stations during the year 1931-32 i.e. to end of June 1931.

Barkal Revenue Station	...	Rs.166-12-3
Karnafuli " "	...	0-6 -9
Total		<u>Rs.167- 3-0</u>
Deduct 20% share for Chittagong Hill Tracts Division	...	33- 7-0
Total Lushai Hill revenue		<u>Rs.133-12-0</u>

Am...

In Corporate
Am...
Superintendent,
Lushai Hills
2-24-32

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant.



C. Pal 25/3

Divisional Forest Officer,
Chittagong Hill Tracts.

(Summary of the restrictions on shooting outside reserved forests.)

The Local Administration has prescribed the following close times for the wild birds and animals specified in the schedule :—

SCHEDULE.

Species.	Close time.	Government order.
1	2	3
I.—WILD BIRDS.		
Hen florican, Peahen, Herons, Egrats, Rollers, Kingfishers, Hoopoe, Rufous short-toed Lark or Ortolan, Black Drongo or King Crow, Jungle Babbler or Seven Sisters, Black-headed Oriole, Mynahs of all species, Common Hawk Cuckoo, Wood-Peckers of all species, Bhimraj, Bee-eaters and Marabou Crane.	The whole year.	
Sparrow, Finch, Tit, Wren, Pied wag tails, Bluejay, Fly catcher, Honey sucker, Raja and Rani, Bulbul, Starlings, Thrushes, Magpie, Robin and Larbu.	The whole year*	Local Administration's Notifications No. 2140-R. and No. 2141R., dated the 18th May 1914, and No. 3235R., dated the 4th August 1914.
Peacock	The whole year, except in the district of Goalpara where the close time shall be from 1st March to 30th September.	
Pigeon	From 1st March to 15th June.	Local Administration's Notification No. 2140R., dated the 18th May 1914.
Jungle fowl and Pheasant	From 1st March to 30th September.	
Cock florican, Black partridge, Swamp partridge and Quail.	From 1st April to 30th September.	Local Administration's Notifications No. 423R., dated the 29th January 1917, and No. 5846F., dated the 25th June 1920.
Duck and Teal	From 15th April to 30th September.	Local Administration's Notifications No. 2140R. and No. 2141R., dated the 18th May 1914.
II.—WILD ANIMALS.		
Females, other than female Hares, and immature males of the undermentioned species, Rhinoceros outside reserved forests, hornless deer and deer with horns in velvet.	The whole year	
Antelopes (serow, takin and goral), Bison (mithan), Buffalo, Deer and Hares.	From 1st June to 31st October.	Local Administration's Notification No. 2140R. dated the 18th May 1914.
Swamp and Hog deer	At all times except when they have full heads.†	Local Administration's Order No. 2223R., dated the 29th June 1916.

* Applies only in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

† Applies only within the areas under the control of the Darrang Game Association in the case of members of that Association.

Dated Shillong,

A. R. EDWARDS.

The 20th August 1920.

Second Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

APPENDIX – XI

(21)

I. Definition.

Log - A piece of wood in the round over three feet in girth at the larger end.

Pole or house post - A piece of wood in the round 1 foot and up to 3 feet in girth at the larger end.

Sapling or fencing post - A piece of wood in the round under 1 foot in girth at the larger end.

Scantling - Sawn or squared timber.

Knee - A curved piece of wood used as a rib or brace on the inside of a boat.

Crook - A knee 16 square inches or less in section and about 10 feet long abruptly bent and used in ship-building as stem and stern post.

Dug-out - A boat formed of a hollowed out log.

Gada, ish, launti and jawal - Parts of plough.

Firewood - Wood under 8 feet in length, unsuitable owing to hollowness, crookedness or other defects, for conversion into scantlings and suitable only for use as fuel.



II. Classification.

(a) For timber in log scantlings, knees, crooks and parts of ploughs.

Class A - Jarul, Teak and Mahogany.

Class B - Gamhar, Chapalish, Kamdeb, Nageswar, Chikrassi, Tali, Telsur, Toon, Gurjan, Pitraj, Jam, Champa, Narikel, Bollam & Khair-jan.

Class C - Gundroi, Bandarhola, Tezbohah, Badam, Boira, Chaongri, Koroi, Uriam, Bhadi, Kainjal and Dakrum.

Class D - All other species.

(b) For dug-outs.

Class A - Jarul and Teak.

Class B - Chapalish, Bollsur, Telsur and Gamhar.

Class C - Kamdeb, Tezbohah, Gurjan, Pitraj, Toon and Champa.

Class D - Bandarhola, Gundroi and Jam.

Class E - All other species.

III Rates of royalty.

(a) For timber in log.

- Class A - 4 annas 6 pies per cft.
- Class B - 3 annas 6 piecē " "
- Class C - 2 annas 6 piecē " "
- Class D - 1 anna 3 piecē " "

(b) For scantlings, knees, crooks and parts of plough.

- Class A - 6 annas per cft.
- Class B - 5 annas " "
- Class C - 3 annas 6 pies per cft.
- Class D - 2 annas 6 pies " "

(c) For Dugs-outs.

- Class A - 6 annas per cft.
- Class B - 4 annas 9 pies per cft.
- Class C - 3 annas per cft.
- Class D - 2 annas 6 pies per cft.
- Class E - 1 anna 6 pies " "



Export of Jarul dug-out except with the permission of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills is prohibited.

(d) For Fuel.

- Firewood when removed in boats - 6 pies per maund (of 3 cft)
- Firewood when removed in/log - 3 pies per cft.
- Charcoal - 6 annas per maund.

Logs of classes A, B and C shall not be removed as fuel.

(e) For poles or house posts and sapling.

- Over 2' and up to 3' in girth at larger end - 5 annas 6 pies each.
- Over 1' and up to 2' in girth at the larger end - 4 annas 2 pies each.
- Sapling - 2 annas each.

Class A, B and C shall not felled for house post or sapling.

Class A, B and C shall not be felled for house post or sapling.

(f) For bamboos.

Species.	Royalty per 1000.
Chataya	Rs. 3-12-0
Kaliseri	" 4 1 0
Muli	" 5 0 0
Orah	" 5 10 0
Mitenga and Dalu	" 6 9 0
Nali	" 2 8 0
Bazali	" 1 14 0
Bariala	" 20 0 0

(g) For Canes.

Kerak and Bhudum	.....	2 annas each.
Gallack	.....	Rs. 4-1-0 per 1000
Other kinds.	.....	Rs. 2-8-0 " "

(h) For Sungrass.

Rupees 3 per 1000 bundles each of 1'-6" in girth.
 Rupees 27 " " " " of 4'-6" "

(i) For other minor forest produce.

Maida per 1000 bundles of 10	.....	Rs. 3 2 0
Kuruspaths " " 10	.....	" 4 12 0
Gondaki " " " 10	.....	" 6 12 0
Plantain leaves " " 10	.....	" 0 12 0
Cane leaves " " 10	.....	" 0 15 0
Tara leaves " " 10	.....	" 0 15 0
Ooampatha " " 10	.....	" 2 8 0
Hetalapatha " " 10	.....	" 0 10 0
Pitali leaves " " 10	.....	" 0 12 0
Kukilota per bundle of 10	.....	" 0 1 0
Stone " hundred cft.	.....	" 1 8 0
Shell " " "	.....	" 0 10 0
Honey per maund.	.....	" 1 8 0
Wax " "	.....	" 4 0 0
Chaulmugra seed per maund.	.....	" 3 0 0
India rubber " "	.....	" 20 0 0
Bamboo xxx baskets each.	.....	" 0 0 2
Bamboo mats " "	.....	" 0 1 0

W. H. C.

APPENDIX – XII

8 Forest

① / 111

C.B-7
Forest - 80

No. 2/71

FROM

J. S. Owden, Esquire.,
Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Cachar Division.

TO

The Conservator of Forests,
Western Circle, Assam, Shillong.
Through the Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

Dated Silchar, The 29th June 1920.

1920-21
3243 ✓
3.7.20

Sir,

One Munshi Anjad Ali Majumdar of Kanakpur village Cachar District has applied to me for permission to extract rubber from the Lushai Hills and pay royalty at 12½ % ad-valorem rates. This seems to me most fair and I would request you to let me know if it may be allowed. Of course we must draw a distinction between Root and branch rubber and I would suggest that with regards root rubber there should be no change in the scheduled rates. The price of rubber varies considerably and it is fairer I think to take a percentage of its value.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

J. S. Owden
Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Cachar Division.

T.M. De 28/6

Public Instruction Form No. 26A (New).

Assam Schedule IA, Nos. 26 to 41.

[Approved in letter No. 1448, d. 23-1-05.]

Forest. 8.

1920-21

45

9-7-20.

No. 234 D/c

107/97

(2)

FROM

Mr. J. Needham

Sub-Divisional Officer,

Lungleh.

To

The Superintendent,

Iashai Hills Aijal.

Dated Lungleh The 5th July 1920

SIR,

The petition of Azim Khan for a 30 years lease of rights to collect Garjan oil is enclosed. He now claims to be allowed the right to collect same to the source of the Karnaphuli, which is included in Sadar.

Garjan Oil is an oil derived from the three or four species of Dipterocarpus. It is collected by incising the bark of the tree and applying heat. The trees are not in consequence killed. These trees are fairly numerous in the foot hills of this Sub-division.

Applicant says he hopes to collect from a hundred to two hundred maunds per annum and that the price varies between Rs 10/- to Rs 20/- a maund. It is mainly used for painting the bottoms of boats to prevent borers from damaging the wood. He has applied for a 30 years lease as the preliminary arrangements will be costly. I think a ten years lease would however suffice and if the experiment is successful we may get competition. I have no copy of the Forest code in my Office and ~~have~~ cannot suggest as to fees. The Royalty could be decided by the Forest Department and of course the lessee would have to take out necessary permits for his employees.

I have the honour to be

P.T.O.

From.

J. S. Ouden. Esq.

Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Cachar Division.

To

The Conservator of Forests,

Western Circle, Assam. Shillong.

Through the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar.
Dated Silchar the 31st July 1920

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. G/110 dated the 24th July 1920, I have the honour to submit herewith a revised notice for the sale of bees wax and honey Mohal for publication in the Gazette. The offers must include monopoly fee and royalty and the Mohal will be sold for the period from 1-9-1920 to 30-6-1923. The conditions of the form are submitted herewith for favour of your approval.

2. I beg further to state that the president, Manipur State Durbar and the Superintendent, Lushai Hills have been referred to on the subject of the inclusion of Manipur and Lushai Forests in the Mohal. The publication of the notice in the Gazette may therefore, be kept in abeyance till replies from them are received.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,
Your most obedient servant.

J. S. Ouden
Dy. Conservator of Forests,
Cachar Division.

M. Ali.

SO/A 7.

Memo No. B/-65-B-----

dated Silchar the 31st July '20

Copy forwarded to _____ for information and favour of report at an early date if he has any objection to the drainage areas of the _____ Lushai Forests into Cachar being included in the Mohal. Nothing is known of the yield obtainable from Lushai Forests,

P. T. O.

a/125- B 9 125 3

*1720-21
61
5-8-20*

S

13131 (7)

No. K/451

FROM

A. W. BRUNT, Esquire.,
CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,
WESTERN CIRCLE, ASSAM,

TO

The SUPERINTENDENT, LUSHAI HILLS,
A I J A E.

Dated Shillong, the 23rd August 1920 191.

1920-21
92
30.8.1920

SIR,

With reference to your letter No. A/31, dated the 27th July 1920 regarding grant of a monopoly of the right to collect Gurjan oil in the Lungleh Sub-Division, I have the honour to forward herewith for your information copy of my letter No. K/403, dated the 7th August 1920 to the Divisional Forest Officer, Chittagong Hill Tracts and his reply thereto. It appears that the process of extraction of oil is injurious to trees and in consideration of the small amount of revenue involved I do not consider it advisable to grant ^a lease. The only reason to grant the lease would be that possibly the oil would be extracted illicitly and removed without any payment, in which case we should get what we can out of the operation but I am not aware how far this could be controlled.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

Conservator of Forests, Western Circle,
Assam.

[Handwritten notes and signatures in the bottom left corner]

55

Forest
5.

To
The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills,
Aijal.

Sir,

I have the honour most humbly and respectfully to lay the following lines for your kind consideration and favourable orders:-

Year.....
Reg. No.....
Date.....

That I have got two elephants with which I extracted six hundred timbers in my registered property mark in the year 1326 B.S., from the patta of M. Amjad Ali Mozumdar and Babu Romoni Mohan Das.

That this year I have made no arrangement with any one on the firm belief that I shall be favoured with a patta to work with my elephants under your honour.

That I am ready to deposit the required amount of money and that I shall abide by the Forest Rules and Regulations.

Under these circumstances I most humbly pray that your ~~honour~~ honour will be kind enough to grant me a patta in the Sonai up, from Khulisherra to Kakar Khal and for which act of kindness I shall, as in duty bound, ever pray.

Handwritten notes and signatures on the left margin.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,
[Signature]

S/- Irfan Ali Laskar,
P.O. Sonabaukh,
Village - Kajidar.
Dt. - Cachar.

Dated the 14th }
November 1920.

No. K/028

From

1919-20
170
8-3-1920

BABU S. C. MUKHERJI,
SUPERINTENDENT, OFFICE OF THE
CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS, WESTERN CIRCLE,
A S S A M.

To

The SUPERINTENDENT IN CHARGE LUSHAI HILLS FOREST DIVISION,
A I J A L.

Dated Shillong, the 25th February 1920.

Mr. A. W. Blunt,
Conservator of
Forests, Western
Circle, Assam.

Sir,

With reference to your telegram No.A/64, dated the 9th
February 1920, I am directed by the Conservator of Forests,

Western Circle, Assam to
forward herewith copy of
the marginally noted --

1. Notification No.1591-R, dated 30th March 1917
2. Notification No.2596-R, dated 26th May 1917.

Notifications by the Chief Commissioner of Assam containing the
rates and rules for the regulation of grazing by professional
graziers in the Unclassed State Forests of the Assam Valley
Districts and to say that the rates at present in force in the
districts of Cachar and Sylhet are as follows :-

Rates in Cachar and Sylhet.

Buffaloes Re.1/- per annum.
Other horned
cattle - Annas 4 per annum
Elephants - Rs.15/- per annum
or Rs.1-3-0 per month.

2. In this connection I would point out that there are no
special grazing rules prescribed for your District and that so
far grazing has been regulated by the Superintendent's executive
order in accordance with rule 1 of the Unclassed State Forests
rules at page 97 of the Assam Forest Manual. Should you --
however wish to have definite rules sanctioned by the Local
Administration for the Lushai Hills, you may submit formal --
proposals through the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill
Districts.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

S. Mukherji
Superintendent,

Office of the Conservator of Forests,
Western Circle, Assam.

BIO-DATA

NAME : RVL Thianghlima
FATHER'S NAME : R Ronghaka (L)
SEX : Male
DATE OF BIRTH : 24th February 1988
NATIONALITY : Indian
CATEGORY : Scheduled Tribe
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Chanmari, Aizawl, Mizoram

Details of Education Qualification:

Sl.No	Name of Examination	Subject	Division	Board/ University
1.	HSLC	-	First	MBSC
2.	HSSLC	Arts	Third	MBSC
3.	B.A	History	First	Madras University
4.	M.A	History	First	University of Hyderabad
5.	JRF-NET	History	-	UGC

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE	: RVL Thianghlina
DEGREE	: Master of Philosophy
DEPARTMENT	: History & Ethnography
TITLE OF DISSERTATION	: British Forest Policy and Resource Management in the Lushai Hills
DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION	: 22.07.2019
(Commencement of First Sem)	
COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEM/ DISSERTATION	: 15.01.2020
(From conclusion of end semester exams)	
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
1. D.R.C	: 21.05.2020
2. B. O. S	: 09.06.2020
3. SCHOOL BOARD	: 12.06.2020
4. MZU REGISTRATION NO	: 1900175
4. M. Phil. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE	: MZU/M.Phil./605 of 12.06.2020
5. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION	: June 2022

Paper presented on *'Ecology of the Lushai Hills and the Early Mizos'* in the XL Annual Conference cum Seminar of Mizo History Association on *'Evolution of Mizo History, Culture and Identity'* during February 25-26, 2021 at Govt. Johnson College, Aizawl, Mizoram.

Prof. K. Robin
Head of Department
History & Ethnography

ABSTRACT
BRITISH FOREST POLICY AND RESOURCE MANAGMENT IN THE
LUSHAI HILLS

SUBMITTED BY
RVL THIANGHLIMA

SUPERVISOR
PROF. K. ROBIN

DEPARTEMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL-796004

2021

Introduction:

The present study intends to analyze the broad contour of the British forest policy and the management of natural resources in the Lushai hills. Evaluating the ecological changes, more specifically the transformation that took place between flora, fauna and humans in the area. The process such as forest control and management, regulation and preservation, was a critical site in which colonial governance consolidated its hold over its expanding empire. Although the British empire was not built upon the structure of processes like forest management and regulatory mechanisms and strategies of natural resource control alone. The management of strategic natural resources did nevertheless aid the British in the task of empire building.

This process not only impact the environment but also the socio-cultural conditions of the people. The traditional consciousness and the relation concerning Forest and their resources in the North East region of India underwent a massive transformation with the advancement of colonial power in the region. Traditional patterns of life have been changed, but at the same time, many cultural and ideological aspects continued. The colonial process changes the 'traditional' patterns of cultural life, disrupting the values, belief system, leadership patterns, and institutional mechanisms.

As far as the Lushai hills are concerned a study from the environmental history approach was rare and almost non-existence. Hence, as this was one of the rarely explored areas of research in the history of Lushai hills, the present dissertation attempts to fill this gap of a Micro-level of history by highlighting the intricate nature of colonial control on natural resources and its implication in the larger context.

Objectives of the Study:

- The main objective of the study is to analyze the unexplored areas of environmental history in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the colonial period in the Lushai hills.
- The study will also analyze the Mizo worldview on nature before the European intervention, and the symbiotic relationship between man and nature during early society.
- Examine colonial forest policy and resource management in the Lushai Hills and highlight the true intention behind their policy.
- Lastly, it will examine how the colonial knowledge system perceived and transformed the traditional knowledge system and practices.
- And how this brings about changes in the socio-economic, and cultural life of the people, and the local response to these changes.

Methodology of the study:

The study will essentially be a Historical analysis of the British Forest policy and its impact on the Lushai hills. An interdisciplinary approach has to be adopted in a study like this and to analyze the problem at hand, drawing expertise and insights from experts in the field of forestry, Geography, and Environmental science etc. will be extremely crucial. Reports, journals, and other documents collected from other fields will form an important tool for this study.

Other sources will be also be procured from relevant archival records in the National Archives of India New Delhi, State archives of Assam and Mizoram, Missionary reports, and Gazetteers. Other sources like published books, papers, and journals, etc. will be consulted for conceptual clarity and a better structural framework. Oral History will also be invoked in this study and unstructured interviews will be conducted wherever necessary. Therefore, this study will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, which will reflect the multifaceted nature of this study.

The present research can be divided into three parts. The first part deals with the theoretical framework of the study, starting with how the notion of studying and writing history changes with the emergence of the Annales School, how there was this realization among historians that, to truly understand how societies evolve history has to encompass every aspect of human existence. This idea give birth to the concept of 'Total History', with this the dimension of history got expanded and become even more interdisciplinary with the change in the trend of history writing. One area where historians make a new approach and yield result is environmental history. The emergence of environmental history coincided with the development of an idea or a concern for nature and the environment and the perception that that environmental crisis is the inevitable future of the world. So, within this trend environmental history became the emerging frontier of historical research. And to situated environmental history with the conventional history, while defining its area and boundary, a few questions were answered in the process;

- how did it all begin?
- Is it a separate sub-discipline under history or is it just an offshoot of social history, cultural history or other histories?

The answer started with a conviction that the awareness of human dependence upon nature existed from the earliest of time, though it may seem like the acknowledgement of the role of the human as the maker and un-maker of its environment may be more of a recent development. But historians since ancient times understood the value of geographical features and environment in the understanding of human societies. Then Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century introduced new ideas about nature and started making an argument that human activity affects our environment. Southeast Asia and the Indian sub-continent were no exception to this, ancient texts like Ramayana and Arthasatra hold a clue that nature was revered in ancient times, the seed of an idea that forest and important animals needed to be protected had already been planted in the ancient time and continued right through the medieval time.

In Europe and America, the idea of conservation became more pronounced after the industrial revolution, even more so with the rapid disappearance of forests. Indeed, it

was in the United States that Environmental history as a self-conscious discipline began to take shape. By the mid-1970s historians have, by and large, indirectly addressed various environmental or ecological issues while writing economic, social and cultural histories of various types.

It also traced the brief historiography of environmental history, how it started as a separate subject in Europe and America as an offshoot of the post-war wave of environmentalism. While in South Asia it began to emerge in the late 1980s, the historiography in this region largely revolves around the coming of colonialism as a watershed moment. While historian like Richard Grove plays down the importance of imperialist or capitalist greed behind the forest policy, Ramachandra Guha asserted that colonial forest policy was primarily driven by materialistic needs, serving the strategic and revenue interest of the British Empire. Other historians like Mahesh Rangarajan, Ajay Skaria etc. also offered slightly different opinions. However, there seems to be no disagreement on the commercial exploitation and the drastic change that took place during the colonial period.

The second part highlights the ecology of the Lushai Hills and the general world view of the people toward nature during the pre-colonial period when there were no outside influences. And analyze how the physical framework of the Lushai hills like the location, topography, climate, vegetation cover etc. plays a critical role in how settlement patterns and social structure form and develop. And how the geographical boundaries of this region and its features put pressure on the people, physical features like steep ridges, deep valleys and dense forests have kept different tribes secluded from one another and act as a natural boundary, this influences their perception about geographical space, this led to mutual distrust and animosity among the people living in this isolated pocket of the Lushai hills region, and this condition led to the development of a traditional institution called the chieftainship. Each chief then draws out their boundary of space which did not go much beyond the village itself, the plot of agricultural area, household area, hunting ground etc. delimited by the chief along with his council of 'Upa'.

A clear understanding of the ecology of the region can be seen in how settlement areas were selected. Flatlands were naturally avoided in the early Mizo society, for safety reasons from intruders and tropical diseases. Since the only method of cultivation during this period was jhumming, after having cultivated all available land within reached from the village, the elders had to search for new places, there was a lot of superstition involved when it comes to finding new places. The Chief enjoys lots of power and sovereignty back in the day, he was the guardian of his subjects and a provider in time of need, being the supreme authority figure in the village all the resources within the village was considered his own, so rent and taxes were paid directly to him for uses and extraction of resources. But rarely did the chief act like a dictator, the Mizo society bac in those days the Mizo society was very egalitarian in nature.

Early Mizo believes the system was not based on reason and logic. Their world view on nature was intertwined with their religious belief, culture, custom and tradition. They believe there was one creator of the universe, so they do not worship physical phenomena like the rising of the sun, the moon, thunder, lightning or any force of nature. But different geographical features like hills, forests and rivers etc. were considered to be inhabited by various spirits. So, they spent a whole lot of time in a constant endeavor to please those spirits, there was a plethora of sacrifice conducted by the priest for different occasions and different purposes. They have a strong conviction on the superstition and mysticism involved around nature, sometimes this made the early Mizo avoid disturbing these areas, the maintenance of sacred forests of some sort enhanced and protected critical elements of natural forests.

The livelihood of the people in those days entirely depends on forests for biomass and for providing cultivable lands. Apart from this forest also provide a hunting ground, hunting in the pre-colonial period was not only an economic activity but had a closely interlink with tradition and belief system. Hunting command deep respect in society and even in the afterlife. A close relationship that exists between the cultural space and the ecological conditions of the area was very evident in the context of the early Mizo society. The economy was primitive and subsistence-based, no village had a surplus produced to gain extra, the advancement of the technology was uniform within the

village and were relatively uniform across villages and tribes. So, because of the limited needs of the people there seems to be a balance between the extraction of natural resources and the regenerating capacity of the forest.

The third part focuses on the advent of colonial power into the Lushai hills, how from that point onward there were changes in the relationship of the locals with its environment, and their perception about nature and its resources because of the change brought about administration, policy, and the way resources were managed. This led to structural changes from top to bottom throughout the colonial period socially, politically and culturally.

The British forest policy and the way resources were managed in the Lushai hills had a wide impact, The impact of this process goes beyond the environment and affects the socio-cultural state of the people tremendously. Traditional consciousness and relations concerning forest resources and their resources underwent a profound transformation. While there were changes in the patterns of life, many traditions, cultures and ideologies which existed in the pre-colonial time continued to exist in some aspects of life in the colonial period. This dichotomy disturbed the balance in social values, belief systems, leadership patterns and institutional mechanisms etc. This leads to overall changes in the very structure of the Mizo society.

Throughout the colonial period, policies were designed to protect their commercial interest. So, control was exercised on the resources down to the smallest items, in the process, the government tried to incur expenditure as minimum as possible, so little investment was made for infrastructural development. When the British colonized India economic incentives were what instigated political imperialism which led to control of natural resources, Political supremacy was used as a tool to create wealth at the expense of a huge depleting resource. With regards to the Lushai hills, the immediate reason to conquer the Lushai hills was basically to protect the interest of British subjects and their commercial establishments in the neighbouring plains area of the region. So, maintaining political stability seem to out weight economic incentive at least in the beginning. Nonetheless, even in the Lushai hills, the interests of the people never occupied a centralized position. As long as a stable administration was

maintained and their commercial interests were not disrupted even though the return, they got from this region was minor compared to other parts of the region other things environmental issues and the interests of the locals were not much of a concern. the underlining motive of this territorial expansion has always been a manifestation of the continuation of the British mercantile colonialism of the 18th century.

The British were meticulous in the management of their resources including humans. The retainment of chieftainship enables the British to have an effective but inexpensive administration for the British. But on the other hand, this significantly reduces the position and the power of the chiefs to a mere custodian of resources for the government. By establishing control over the natural resources. The British change the existing patterns of resource ownership, management, access and utilization and replaced them with systems more suited to meet the requirements of the imperial power.

Even though the Lushai hills were not entirely ravaged by colonial commercial force, unlike many other colonized communities. Mizo lost out in time, infrastructure like proper roads, educational institutions, scientific knowledge and industrial enterprise and infrastructure development hardly take place during the British administrations apart from the work done by the missionaries, while in many other parts of India modernization bring in gains in their infrastructure. Most of the socio-economic development was under the initiative of christian missionaries in the Lushai hills. maintaining peace in the Lushai hills was a priority for the British government and their policy was carefully designed to bring about minimal changes and tried to stray away from all forms of political activities. Because of this, the Mizo tribes enter the post-independence era without a representative body to represent the people, while by the 1930s in many parts of the country provincial election were organized.

The British rule brings subtle changes in the political scene by institutionalizing the chieftainship as hereditary with the approval of the local government. With the emergence of church in villages through the work of Missionaries, elders were appointed by the local congregation, a new class in the society began to emerge even

though their roles were generally confined to the religious role, nonetheless, this led to tussle with the authority of the chief on certain occasions.

Historically speaking the interaction of people and their environment in the Lushai hills evolved tremendously during the twentieth century, largely due to the British forest policy and how the resource was managed at this time. In a larger context, this brought changes at the same time continuity in the society, culture, polity and economy. Some aspect traditions and customs have been followed right through the pre-colonial, colonial and early post-colonial periods.

Research findings:

Four brought categorized parameters can provide a basic framework for tracing the continuity and changes over time from pre-colonial to colonial times and even to post-colonial period:

Firstly, their concepts and perceptions about natural resources, Pre-colonial Mizo belief systems were shaped by the animistic religion which conferred supernatural powers on the element of nature. The concept during this time was that the spiritual element of nature was so revered that human was subordinate to the evil spirits embodied in nature, to live in harmony with the surrounding environment they had to engage in an effort to appease the spirits constantly. With the permanent occupation of the Lushai hills by the British along with the wave of christianity, a new policy and style of management on resources was adopted and introduced in the region, this gave space in the mind of the people to rethink rationally their concept of nature and their interaction with the environment. Religion, education and government policy redefine the relationship between the individual and nature, people started to dismiss superstition and place man and nature on an equal footing, and sometimes men in a higher position through government policy and the concept of christianity. In many instances, government introduction of the legal system on resource use somewhat alienated the people from nature, but at the same time gave a sense of community ownership and collective responsibility of local resources. This put many old traditions

like hunting, gathering of basic needs and cultivation etc. from a mere concession given the chiefs to a right.

Secondly, the geographical limits of control and access to resources. No definite determined resource domain existed during the pre-colonial Mizo society. Although they were specified arrangements made between villages through customs and traditions, they were subjected to changes and defined only in words. This system changes immediately after the British administration introduced political boundaries, with this initiative the collective domain of different tribes and villages became finite and unchangeable. Towards the later colonial period, people started to feel pressure on the space they occupied for resource utilization especially on land for cultivation, this was further accentuated by growth in population. On top of this, the administration saves certain areas for itself, even though community rights of cultivation and collection of forest produce for consumption were allowed to some extent, but overall, this limits the right of the people on natural resources.

Thirdly, there was a structural transformation in the political institution. The British absorbed the village chief into their administrative system and they were no longer the sole authority of the land and their villages. The chieftainship institution which governs the allocation of resources, give the certain privilege of resources use among the families and define their boundaries in the pre-colonial Mizo society was reduced from the rightful owner of the land to the appointed custodian of the British. Later on, even the institution of chieftainship which glue together the traditional society was abolished and all the land was vested in the state.

The little-known area about Mizoram when it comes to resource management is the role played by village institutions in contemporary times. These village institutions neither derived from the traditional forms of leadership nor from the modern system of local self-government, at the sometimes it had a subtle trait of both. After the British left India, the hereditary office of the village chief was replaced by the village council who were democratically elected, this new institutional structure retained most of the functions of the Chief but under a democratic framework, and they are empowered to an extent that will not be encounter in anywhere else in the country.

The management of the local forest was entrusted to the village council after independence, the small and homogenous nature of the village inculcated collective interest, the climatic condition of the region had huge contributions in safeguarding tropical rainforest like Mizoram. Land and forest have a huge capacity of inherent regenerative ability combine this with low pressure of population is a good combination, and the absence of the external pull of commercial forces is also a big factor for an absence of large-scale deforestation. Lastly, the village council with its systematic empowerment from the government emerged as the main institution for the management of the forest. This to some extent gave a foundation for the system of village management of forests.

With concern to the government institution, the Forest Department in Mizoram was constituted in 1972, compared to other parts of India the management of forests by the government is fairly a recent development. Before the reserve forest was mainly under the control of Assam, and some other issues related to the forest were dealt with by the Local administration. From this, it was clear that the state management of forest resources had not changed much since the British had left India.

Fourthly, the technological aspect. This part remained almost unchanged even to the present time, unlike other parameters discussed above, it remained static even today. Among Mizo communities activities like hunting, gathering, and jhumming was their main means of subsistence well past into the post-colonial period and contemporary period. People relied mostly on human energy, simple tools, local material and their skills and awareness is also still heavily relied on indigenous base knowledge. To this day, there were few visible changes in the conventional techniques of shifting cultivation and hunting equipment. On top of this, the dependency on Jhum and local biomass resources remain the same in the rural areas, although this was lessened with the availability of alternative products in the market in more urban areas.

For the Mizo society, forests remain the central natural resource governing the basic needs of the people. They are the main sources of timber and bamboo for housing, fuel for cooking, provide a vast variety of fruits and vegetables. Apart from this, they are the main regulator of the springs that feed the hilltop villages, bind the soil together in

a steep slope region and are home to wild birds and animals which are an important source of food for the early Mizo society and even in the contemporary times. The periodic clearing and burning of forests supply the essential nutrients that the soil lacks in normal conditions and make it cultivable for food and cash crops. So, the state of the forests will always remain an important determining factor of the quality of life for the majority of the people, this is determined by the way in which they are used and managed.

Even though the government is taking up a lot of initiative in an endeavour to eradicate the traditional shifting cultivation, many schemes are designed to persuade the people to give up this way of life and in some areas, the government initiative did find some success, but in most of the region '*Jhumming*' always remain the most dominant method of cultivation. Now the question remains is jhumming remain the most prevalent form of cultivation because it is a tradition that had been in practice for many generations or is it because of a lack of better alternative, which could actually work in difficult terrain and climate condition like Mizoram. The second part of the statement seems to be more plausible answer because the cultivators, in general, seem to be quite open to new ideas and superior means of livelihood, if options are available which are proven and within reach. History has shown that Mizo in general is quite adaptable to Change.