

**BRITISH COLONIAL SURVEILLANCE IN INDO-BURMA
FRONTIER**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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K. LALCHHUANPUIA

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BRITISH COLONIAL SURVEILLANCE IN INDO-BURMA FRONTIER

BY

K. LALCHHUANPUIA

Department of History & Ethnography

Supervisor

Dr. KHWAIRAKPAM PREMJIT SINGH

Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in History & Ethnography of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL: MIZORAM
Phone : 0389-2330531/0389-2330410**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “British Colonial Surveillance in Indo-Burma Frontier” submitted by K.LALCHHUANPUIA in fulfilment of Doctor of Philosophy in History is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree.

It is recommended that this thesis be placed before examiners for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Dr. KHWAIRAKPAM PREMJIT SINGH)

Date:
Place: Aizawl

Supervisor

DECLARATION
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
JUNE, 2025

I **K. LALCHHUANPUIA**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History & Ethnography**.

Date :
Place : Aizawl

(K. LALCHHUANPUIA)
Candidate

(Prof. KISHOR GAIKWAD)

Head

(Dr. KHWAIRAKPAM PREMJEET SINGH)

Supervisor

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(K. LALCHHUANPUIA)
Candidate

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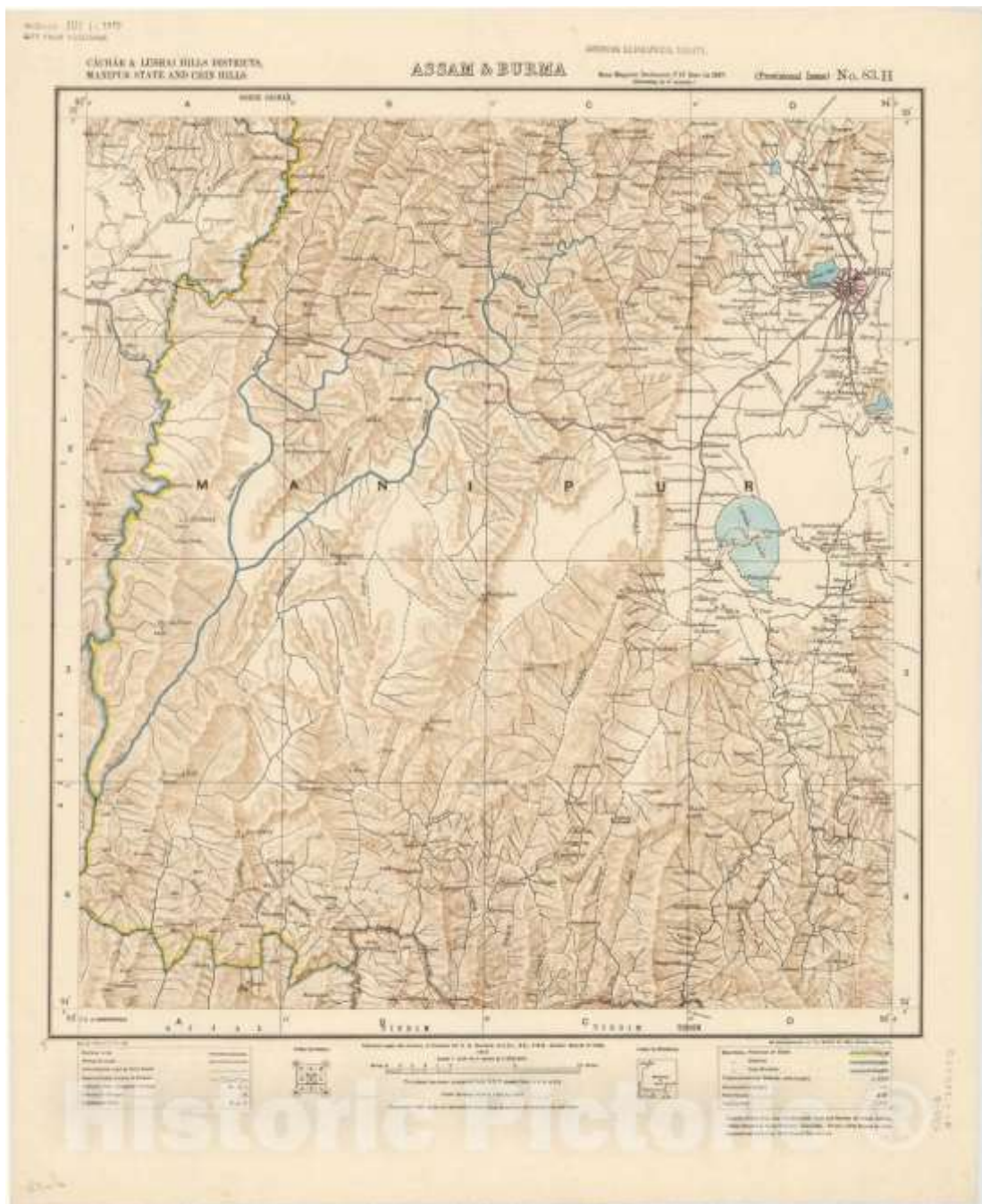


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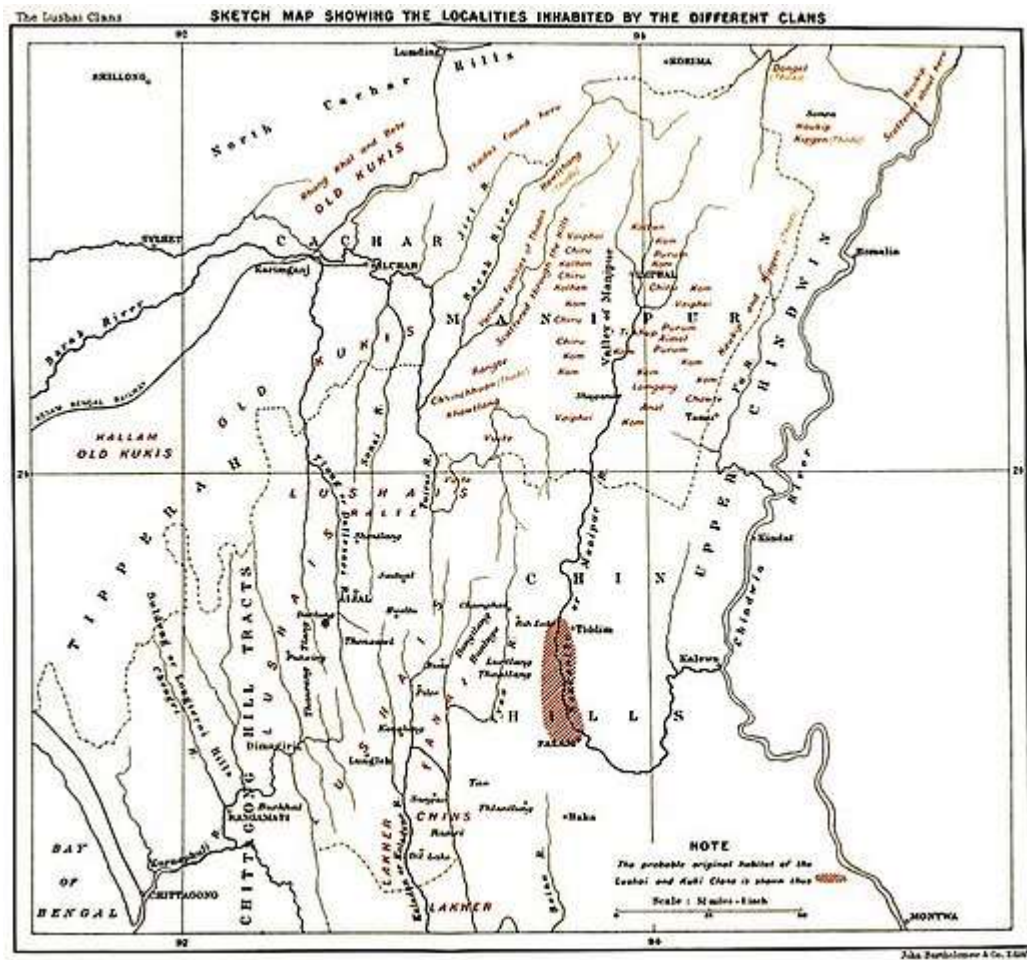


Figure : Chin Lushai Map Inhabited by Different Tribes

Glossary

Bawi Phun	: Noble class
Boinu	: Kolodyne river
Chawmhrawih	: Invitation of friends to provide field service and prepare lunch in return
Chia hrin	: Descendant of commoners.
Hlawhbung	: Men provide reciprocal agricultural service.
Hlawn	: Heritable goods and property for female.
Hnam nei	: Individual possess with evil spirit.
Hreitlung	: Axe
Indum	: Village garden
Innchungkhar Sal	: Household slave living with master
Innlak Sal	: Slaves living on their own, but still serving as a master.
<u>Khua Bawi</u>	Village Chief.
Khua nih a hnuai hna	Individual received special mandate
Khua-hrum	Guardian deity.
Khua-vang	Saman
Khuakulh	Village fortification
Kulhbing	Stockade erected in centre of the village for defence purpose.
Lailo	Agricultural field associated with warm land.
Lo	Agricultural field
Lopil	Jungle sanction for cultivation
Lu laak hnam	Tribes of head hunters.
Mi-chia Phunthiang	Commoners possessing clean spirit

Mi-chia Phunthianglo	Commoners possessing evil spirit
Michia	Commoners
Mithat Sathat	Demonstration of prowess in slaying human adversaries and wild animals
Phunsang	: Higher clan
Pum-trek	: Chin beads
Ralpi	: Combat war.
Rammu	: Head-hunting expeditions.
Ramuk Bawi	: Chief extending power more than one village or having satellite villages.
Rawlral	: Guerrilla warfare.
Ro	: Heritable goods and property for male.
Rung Tlang	: Mountain located above present Halkha.
Sal	: Slaves.
Simpi	: First village settlement with proper administration of the Lai.
Soser	: Blacksmith.
Tlangau	: Village crier.
Tlangbawi	: Village priest.
Tuhmui	: Hoe
Vengrawih	: Adjacent families or hmalets perform agricultural duties for the household.
Zolo	: Agricultural field associated with cold land.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Myanmar frontier, stretching approximately 1021 miles, represents a culturally rich region where numerous ethnic tribes and communities have coexisted for centuries. This coexistence has been sustained by a unique ecosystem facilitated through various forms of negotiations, protocols, governmentality, and indigenous political and economic mechanisms, which have enabled them to manage their culture and traditions collectively. Of course, similar to other regions of the world, this transnational region has experienced wars, raids, internal feuds, and subjugation by more powerful rulers. Although these disturbances were undoubtedly frequent, the indigenous populations typically resolved them swiftly among the involved parties, as they were familiar with each other's social and cultural order and shared a closer understanding of emotional reconciliation. Following the First Anglo-Burmese War, the archaic dynamics of the region underwent a significant transformation under the occupation of the English East India Company, in fact the indigenous population experienced substantial losses, as their practices and epistemologies were either knowingly or unknowingly transferred or deleted when they could not adapt to the colonial environment.

The new concept of territoriality, shaped by colonial authority and its subsequent legacy intertwined with nationalism in postcolonial era, has created a complex environment, therein a tough challenge to narrate indigenous histories, as the “given frame” was manufactured and imposed by external entities. To trace the history of survey and mapping and colonial surveillance in the Indo-Burma frontier, the focus has been narrowed to the Chin and Lushai Hills during the colonial period, rather than addressing the entire region and its population.

The earliest mention of the Chin Hills and its people was found in the Burman inscriptions of the Pagan kingdom of the 13th century, referring to Chin highlanders as ‘allies’ or ‘comrades.’ After the centuries gap, a detailed account of Chin Hills was found in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1904), where he

divides it into four groups: Central Chin, Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin Hills. Grierson explicitly mentioned the various tribes which established their settlements in specific geographical locations. The Lais, Lushais, Zahaus, and Mara tribes are the principal inhabitants of the Central Chin Hills, whereas the Zo (Yo) tribes dominate the Northern Chin Hills, and the Lais rule the Southern Chin Hills. The Chin conglomerate tribes belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic category. During colonial times, the main settlements of the Chin tribes were Hakha (capital city), Thantlang, Matupi, Falam, Paletwa, and Mindat in Myanmar; the Lawngtlai and Saiha districts of Mizoram in India and the Chittagong Hills Tracts in Bangladesh were largely dominated by them.

As per Gordon Luce's assumptions, the Chins might have reached Hukong Valley in the three junctions of international boundaries of Tibet, China, and Burma around 400 A.D. on their way to the Chin Hills.¹ According to legendary folklore, before their settlement in the Chin Hills, their first settlement in Myanmar was at the foothill of Chindwin Valley, then shifted to various places, namely Monywa, Shwebo, Oaksa, Letsa, and Phau areas, respectively.² Later, they reached the Run river, which slowed their movement. In Simpi, the Chins perhaps launched the first village community system.³ Further and finally reached Lailun cave (6 miles from Falam) and made this region the centre of the Lai/Chin tribes' centre of power, branching out their clan throughout the Chin Hill Ranges, reaching the Lushai Hills and Bangladesh.⁴ In the postcolonial era, 'Chin' became an umbrella term representing most of the tribes that settled in the Chin Hills. All the tribes settled in the Chin Hills are commonly known as Chin.⁵ Chin somewhat became related to an administrative unit rather than based on a particular tribe.⁶

¹ G.H. Luce, 'Old Kyaukse and the Coming of Burman,' in *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol.XLII, 89

² Luce, "Old Kyaukse", 89.

³ Jangkhongam Doungel, *Lai Chieftainship and its Impact in Politics*, (New Delhi: Balaji Publications, 2015), 56.

⁴ Rothang, *Tuanbia*, (manuscript), 3.

⁵ The word *Shendus* was referred to *Lais* and *Maras* settled in territories of Southern Lushai Hills and Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh by colonial ethnographers like: T.H. Lewin, N.E. Perry and E.B. Elly.

⁶ Doungel, *Lai Chieftainship and its Impact in Politics*, 56.

The Lushais, Kukis, or Chin (Lais) tribes have a strong imaginary/mythological space, the ‘*Chhinlung*’ (mythological cave) on the ‘lower realm’ from where they emerged.⁷ Until the British intervention, even after expeditions, the Chin tribes were not only tussling with neighbouring tribes but also conducting raids in the Arakan and Ava valleys in Myanmar in search of food and slaves.⁸

As one of the features of the ‘Treaty of Yandaboo’ (1826), the British acquired Arakan province, which shares the boundary with the Chin Hills, from Myanmar ruler. Since pre-colonial times, the Chin tribes maintained some passes between Arakan and Chin Hills, and on and off, they raided the Arakan Valley and continued the process after the British occupation of Arakan Valley.

In the 1830s, British India had minimal topographical and geographical information about the Chin and Lushai Hills.⁹ Constant disturbances and raids forced the colonial power to go on an expedition to subdue the unruly Chin tribes. Under the supervision of Lieutenant, T. A. Trant, the 38th His Majesty’s Regiment expedited the Chin Hills from the Ava side, along with a surveyor.¹⁰

According to Lieutenant T.A. Trant:

*‘The people who inhabit the range of mountains that separate Ava from Aracan, and who are termed Khyen, are very different in character and habits from their Burman neighborhoods: appearance, the men are much inferior to the Burmese, their countenances being flatter, and not so regular: the dress also differs; it is straightforward; a black cloth, striped with red and white, is thrown over the shoulders, as black fabric is worn around the loins, and a black jacket is occasionally used.’*¹¹

⁷ Kenneth Vanbik, *Proto-Kuki-Chin: A Reconstructed Ancestor of the Kuki –Chin Languages*, (California: The Regent University of California, 2009), 1.

⁸ Chhawnmanga, *Mizorama Michengte*, (Aizawl: Hnamte Allied Industry, 1985), 3.

⁹ George Basalla view on the spread of western/colonial science in colonial countries has three phases, reconnaissance (exploration, trade, conquest, colonization and systematic exploration of nature), Residential Scientist and independent scientific tradition. Here the colonization process in Chin Hills did really follow Basalla’s reconnaissance process in plain Indian subcontinent is questionable.

¹⁰ He was the first officer who used the term *Khyen* or *Chins* as a context.

¹¹ Lieutenant T A Trant, ‘Notice on the Khyen Tribe inhabiting the Yuma mountains between Ava and Aracan,’ in *JASB*, Vol- XVI, 1828, 261.

The major problem faced by the British during the Chin Hills' reconnaissance campaign was difficulties in obtaining transport corps that could endure the subtropical Arakan climate and the deep/wild forest of Chin Hills. The British transport/labour corps and soldiers suffered from tropical diseases and epidemics.

The continuous raids of the Chins on their neighbouring tribes became a headache for the colonial-administered area of the Arakan and Chittagong Hill Tracts. They were very desperate to collect precise information about these tribes and terrains. In 1833, Lais committed a raid in a village a few miles beyond the northernmost police outpost. Shortly thereafter, they came down and the villages were under British control. In 1838, a small expedition was carried out to punish raiders.¹² However, the frontier remained periodically disturbed by the Chins from the hilly areas. Again, during the cold season between 1847 and 1848, the Chins carried out two different raids in the frontier villages of the Arakan and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Several proposals have been made to control the Lai inhabited area through the Arakan side, not the Chittagong Hill Tracts.¹³ Many outposts were reorganised and posted to push back the Chin raiders. To punish those found guilty, a village expedition was laid out under Lieutenant Henry Hopkinson, the Principal Assistant Commissioner of Akyab, in December 1847.¹⁴ This expedition tremendously helped in acquiring knowledge about the Shendus (Lais), who inhabited near the Kolodyne River.

Along with the expedition report, Lieutenant Henry Hopkinson proposed that unless the British intervenes and controls a single administration, the Chins would be more or less liable to incursion. However, his recommendation was delayed due to the Indian 'Great Revolt of 1857.' Therefore, after a thorough review of the proposal, the whole country east of the cultivated plains of Chittagong should be removed

¹² Report on Progress made in Arakan, 19-20.

¹³ Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, (Calcutta: Reprint Delhi, 2001), 335.

¹⁴ Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, 335.

from the previous regulation and created as a separate non-regulation district under a Superintendent.¹⁵

The great Kuki invasion of 1860 simultaneously elevated the sense of fear of the remaining hilly tribes of the British regime and the uncontrolled area. This, in turn, stabilised the hilly regions until the arrival of Sir Cecile Beadon as the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in April 1862.¹⁶ The new Bengal Lieutenant policy brought peace among frontier tribes through European officers. After cautious revision, the Arakan Hill Tract came under the commissionership of Burma, where Bengal's control over Arakan ended.¹⁷

To implement and pursue the policy suggested by Beadon in which granting of a small police allowance to each chief to maintain peace and to prevent people from attacking their neighbour, Captain Thomas Herbert Lewin carried out a journey with two native servant and six policemen as escort to the Blue Mountain region (Lawngtlai, Mizoram) in November 1865. He explored an unknown area to spread peace and surveyed every village. However, on 15 December 1865 Lai warriors shot and wounded him while sitting in his hut.¹⁸ Somehow, he reached Akyab on 20 December 1865 where he met two colonial officials, Sir Arthur Phayre and Major Henry Munro. The trio decided to punish the culprit and made a fresh start in January 1866.¹⁹

To consolidate the unruly hills, three different governors were assigned to go on an expedition to the Lushai and Chin tribes. The expedition force reached Aizawl in May 1890. Correspondence letters between the Secretary of the State of India and the British Government of India revealed the measures that the British India government took to secure the proper administration of the Southern Lushai Hills.

¹⁵ B.P. Barua, 'Extension of British Administration to the Chittagong Hill Tract', in *Proceeding of the History Congress*, Muzaffarpur Session, 1972, 514-519.

¹⁶ Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes*, 342-344.

¹⁷ HH Dodwell, 'The Cambridge History of India', vol. VI, in *The Indian empire 1858-1918*, Cambridge university press, 1964(reprint), 441.

¹⁸ T H Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Help to Govern India*, (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2005), 146-182.

¹⁹ Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Help to Govern India*, pp. 146-147.

The southern Lushai Hills were under control and constituted a separate charge under the Governor of Bengal.²⁰

Later, with all efforts, the British managed to recruit the Lai men to reach the unruly Chin Hills. Subsequently, they established the Chin Hills Battalion for the operation and occupation of the Chin Hills terrain.

Major Henry Bumey, the Company's Resident at the Court of Ava, in his report to George Swinton, Chief Secretary at Fort William in Calcutta, stated:

“The Khyens in the neighbourhood of Aeng are we understand amongst the most civilized of their tribe and from that vicinity, and the hills northward to the Koladyne, as far as our influence extended great number of these mountaineers, all of whom are practiced porters could be assembled at Aeng with little delay, whilst Mugs and other coolies could be engaged for the same service from the different districts of Araccan and Chittagong to meet any demand we can possibly foresee”.

After the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Fort William on 29 January 1892 the following resolution was passed:

Most of the conferences believe that it is desirable that the whole tract of the country, known as the Chin-Lushai Hills, should be brought under one administrative head as soon as this can be done. They also considered it advisable that the new administration be subordinate to Assam's Chief Commissioner. Sir J. Dormer and Sir Alexander Mackenzie would defer any final decision as regards the eastern part of the Tracts till further information is obtained.

The first thing to be done for the control of these hill tracts is to improve the communication between crucial places such as Cachar and Aizawl, Aizawl and Lunglei, Aizawl and Manipur, and the posts situated respectively on the eastern and western sides of the Tracts. The opening of these lines is a work of pressing important. The necessary commissariat staff should also be provided to arrange

²⁰Foreign Department Report on Chin- Lushai Hills September, 1892, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, 41.

transport and supplies, until the Tracts can offer them for itself.²¹ However, Carey stated that it was impractical for Assam to administer the Chin Hills, that the Chin Hills was as much part of Burma; the Chins sympathise and associate with Burma and not the Lushais or Assam and it will be simpler and more convenient for this tract to be administered from Rangoon than from Shillong, Chittagong or a central Chin-Lushai Headquarters.²²

Statement of Problem

The British employed various surveillance tools, techniques, and control strategies to stop the raids, gain administrative control of the areas, and gain the confidence of the local populace in the valley to further their colonial interests. Records on these matters show a lack of unanimity and uniformity. This study analyse the colonisation process through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and the employment of surveillance programs over the Chin Hills.

Imdad Hussain, Pum Khan Pau, Lain H. Sakhong, David Zou and J. Zorema had extensively worked on the Chin Hills frontier problems, comprehensive colonial policies and the indigenous tribes' various culture, polity, society and economy. Every scholar has a unique approach, understanding, interpretation, and narratives. Greater parts of historical works need to be critically examined and reconstructed through further research. Some scholars mentioned the Chin Hills based on the Chin conglomerate tribes settled in Manipur and Chin State by overshadowing the role of the numerically dominant Lai tribe. Further, available literature indicates a conspicuous absence of oral sources in constructing a history. This study combined published, recorded, ethnographic, and oral sources.

The scholar visits various historically important places, interviewing knowledgeable local experienced people, which helps to triangulate between the local perspective of the past on the one hand and colonial observation of the past available in written forms to rewrite history.

²¹ Foreign Department Report on Chin-Lushai Hills, September, 1892, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, 1.

²² Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai hills September, 1892, (1980: Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl), 44.

This study employs a transnational, comparative approach from a global connection perspective in dealing with the Chin Hill people. Because the polycentric approach seems more feasible than the monocentric approach, we found more convergence than divergence among the Chin-Kuki Hill tribes. Writing the precolonial and colonial history of the highlanders of northeast India based on modern geopolitical boundaries obstructs the correlation between events and outcomes. Therefore, writing the history of this tribe beyond national boundaries is a more appropriate approach.

Anthropological and ethnographical works of Chester U. Strait, Carrey and Tuck, and Lieutenant Trant, T.H. Lewin, G.H. Leus, G.A. Grierson, Charles Paton, and Shakespeare, A. G. McCall and Captain G.C. Rigby talks about indigenous social structures, habits and customs, and belief systems. However, based on Chin-Kuki-Lushai cultural closeness, researching the divergences and convergence of their indigenous belief system from historical perspectives is essential.

Review of Literature

'Lai hnam Chin Hills atanga lo chhuk hmasate', written by Upa Manglinga Hlawmcheu, deals with the Lais (Pawi) ethnic group who have been migrated from Chin Hills to Lushai Hills. It provides information on how different chiefs established villages and expanded their territories. However, it mentions clearly that Lais (Pawi) once collected as many tributes and taxes from the surrounding communities. Moreover, the conflict between Lallula Sailo and Thlanrawn Chief, which later turned into war against each other, is clearly stated. Unfortunately, there is no information on the facts and figures of their settlements. Therefore, further research is required in this regard.

B. Lalthangliana's work *'Pi Pu Zunleng Chatuan Romei Pi Pu Zunleng A Zam Zodaiah'* provides information on the history of Lushai, tracing their origins, ancestors, culture, land and home. Aiming to encourage the Lushai culture, where Western cultures influence the minds of Mizo youngsters, this book describes how the Lushai ancestors gave more importance to elders, different ways of life such as establishment of villages and houses, dresses, festivals, cultivation (food gathering),

rearing of domestic animals, marriage and divorce, economy, *Zawlbuk* (Bachelors' dormitory), sacrifice, traditional funerals, folklore, etc. Although B. Lalthangliana gives great information regarding the norms of the Lushai, it fails to highlight the relationship and traditional differences between the Lais and the Lushais.

Zatluanga's book, *Mizo Chanchin (History of Mizo)*, presents an enlightening story of how humans evolved into the world based on the bible. He specifically traces the Mizo tribes, their ancestors, customary laws, and settlements in their present homeland. Thus, the author mentions tribal warfare between Pawi and Lushai chiefs, which created confusion. It is clearly stated that Lai and Lushei were different tribes, and early writers usually named Lais as separate tribes, which needs further authentic research.

'Mizo Chanchin: B.C. 300 - 1929 A.D. (Mizo History), written by Col. V. Lunghnema is one of the few books dealing with traditional Mizos and their neighbouring tribes. He continuously stressed the similarities, traditional customs, folk songs, and material culture from side to side, which enabled us to identify the nature of ethnicity among Mizos. Remarkably, he includes all the cognate tribes in a single tribe known as Mizos. However, tribal warfare in relation to the Lai tribes is rarely found, which requires in-depth study.

A.S Reid's work *'Chin-Lushai Land'* provides information on how the British administration laid out many military expeditions in the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills. By subduing a powerful chief among the Chin and Lushai Hills, implementing colonial diplomatic skills has been highlighted. Tribal warfare imposed by the Chin and Lushai chiefs, as well as imposing fines among the ferocious and war-like chiefs by the British administration, is clearly stated. Moreover, agreement among the chiefs would further assist in gaining and suppressing the powerful Chin and Lushai chiefs in creating British administration within the Chin-Lushai land. Various tribal warfare exercises by the Lushai and Lai chiefs have been noted.

Another book worth mentioning in the history of tribal warfare is Captain G. C. Rigby's *History of Operation in Northern Arrakan and the Yawdwin Chin Hills -*

1896-97', which precisely highlights the role and function of the British military expedition as well as the officials' diary, where we acquire knowledge relating to tribal warfare. The book provides information regarding the gazette of villages, possession of guns, nature of the country, transport (method of carrying loads), climate, communication, supplies, fauna and flora, geological sites, and so on. On the other hand, although it is enlightening, the names of persons, villages, and rivers are quite confusing and require further research.

N.E. Perry's work, '*The Lakhers*', traces the early relationship with the Shendus, which refers to the Lais and Maras settling in the Kolodyne belt. It also defines that the Lakhers (Mara) were a sub-tribe of the Pois (Lais). The term Shendus covers all Haka (Halkha) chin tribes. Hence, the book describes the accounts of Mara and Lai chiefs with abundant historical records.

Carey and Tuck's '*Chin Hills, Vol. 1*' outlines the beginning of the British administration in the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills, which deals explicitly with the social customs, economic status, armour, and administrative setup of the Chin (Lais) in the Chin Hills. Fascinating is the local manufacture of gunpowder and bullets, which are normally used for hunting and tribal warfare purposes. Hence, the chief's role and function are clearly defined in society and the expansion of its territory. Tribal warfare carried out by the Chin and British military expedition against offenders and suppressing perpetrators is well recorded in detail. In contrast, particular names such as Hakas (Halkha), Klang Klang (Thantlang), and Yokwas (Zokhua) are misinterpreted.

'*Wild Races of South-Eastern India*' by T.H. Lewin deals with the relationship of the hill chiefs to the British authorities, their system of administration, and the people of the hills. The book also provides information about the disturbing activities of the Lai Chiefs, such as a surprise attack, plunder, and raids in the British protectorate area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, along with the Lushai Chiefs. The book provides clear information about specific raids and tribal warfare committed by hilly tribes.

A.G. McCall, in his book '*Lushai Chrysalis*', discusses the social and cultural life of the Lushai and their customs and religious life in pre-colonial times. Chapter 11 of the book clearly highlights the various wars committed by the different tribes of the Lushai Hills, which include Shendus (Lais), Lakhers, and their military expedition. This book is a valuable source for understanding the war-like character of hill tribes and their war tactics.

'*The North-East Frontier of India*', written by Alexander Mackenzie, is a valuable source which contains the history of the North-Eastern tribes, their early relationship with the British, and the British mode of dealings with them. In Chapter 11, the author discusses various outrages or warfare committed by the Lushai or Kookie (Kuki) tribes. In different chapters, the author also highlights the Shendus and others' raids and the Great Kookie Invasion of 1860, until the birth of subsequent events.

'*Pawi Chanchin (Pawi History)*', published by Tribal Research Institute, Directorate of Art & Culture, Government of Mizoram, is a great work dealing with the origin of the Pawi, their background, migration, administration and settlement. It also deals with the traditional beliefs, religion, marriage system, burial procedure, customs, and traditional practices of early Pawi (Lais). The author provides a wealth of information on the history, society, and culture of the early Pawi.

'*Lai Nunphung (Chin Culture and Traditions)*' is the work done by Stephen Nikio. This book provides valuable sources related to the traditional culture and practices of Lais, who are scattered across different parts of the world. This book contains various features, such as a marriage system with a specific bride price and domestic animal slaying for marriage. Moreover, it discussed a different divorce system in which a dispute arose between partners or among family members. The right to succession is well indicated among the sons of the Lais family. The significance of festivals and feasts observed on various occasions is elaborated upon. At the same time, it details the treatment of death or the burial system beyond life after death. However, using the term chin creates confusion, as Lais employed various names regarding geographical boundary differences, which require further research.

Chhawnkio, in his book *'Lai Miphun Thawhkehnaak Tuanbia'* (*Origin and Identity of Lai tribes*), covers the origin and settlement of Lais, colonial rule, and the establishment of an independent Myanmar country. It is one of the few reliable books written by a tribe. The early chapter focuses on how the Lai tribes came into being, relations with neighbouring tribes, and various stages of migration from China to the present Chin Hills in Myanmar. Details of migratory routes from plains to present inhabited hilly areas, the establishment of specific villages with populations, and surrounding tribes who live along with the Lais are mentioned. Royal clans such as *Chinzah*, *Hlawngchhing*, *Khenglawt*, *Zathang*, and *Hlawancheu* ancestors deal with the common masses and exercise their authority within the village setup and its tributary villages. It highlights tribal society, where disputes arise between villages regarding territory, resulting in war. The first encounter with the British, subsequent resistance by the Lais over imperial power, and the gradual pacification with the coming of a missionary of the Chin Hills are elaborated. Moreover, the end of colonial rule and Myanmar's independence were elaborated upon. Despite giving many histories of Lais, it places more importance on Myanmar. There is a lack of history of the Chins inhabiting the Bangladesh and India borderlands, which opens ground for further research.

'Mizoram a Michengte (Dwellers of Mizoram)' is a book written by Chhawnmanga, which focuses on the Lai tribes of Mizoram. This book precisely traces the Lais and neighbouring tribes who reside in present-day Mizoram, in particular, the different stages of migration taken up by a different clan of the Lais within Mizoram, along with the establishment of villages until the final settlement of the southernmost part of Mizoram. It also discussed the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1871-1872 and the second expedition of 1888-1889, resistance against the British, the uprising of Kuki and Lais in Chin Hills, and the subsequent administration under the British. However, the absence of important documents about the Chin Hills and the concentration on the Lushai Hills creates grounds for further research.

'Chuahkehnaak (Lai History in Lai)' is a book published by the Lai Autonomous District Council of Mizoram. This book highlights the various theories of the Lai identity and how the word '*Chin*' came into the limelight and is used as a

generic term in the Chin Hills. The origins of Lai are a myth due to a lack of proper facts and figures, yet many assumptions and theories have been laid out by tracing as far as present-day China. It provides details of the movement and establishment of renowned towns such as Halkha, Falam, Thlantlang and Matupi in the Chin Hills and Village administration along with their tributary villages, which extended as far as Cox Bazaar (in present-day Bangladesh) in the pre-colonial era. Socio-economy is the most important factor to survive as a tribe, due to its absence, which opens up another ground for further research.

‘*Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*’ by James C. Scott explores why well-intentioned state-driven social engineering schemes to improve human conditions often lead to disastrous outcomes. Scott criticises the “high modernist ideology” as a sort of overconfidence in scientific and technical progress, centralised planning, ability to redesign the society which often ignores the importance and complex web of local practices and informal social systems. In this book, the author provides multiple historical examples from different parts of the world, such as Soviet collectivisation and Tanzanian villagisation, which validate his theoretical establishments and debates. Part 4 (The Missing Link) of this book strongly emphasises the indispensable role of meticulous practical knowledge derived from local experience and practices in creating functional social systems. The author clearly mentions that the state should never disown informal processes in society and oversimplify the centuries-old social mechanism which has always remained complex. Scott’s overemphasis on critiquing the state control of high modernism and its failures sometimes underestimates the successes of some state-led projects.

James Hevia’s ‘*The Imperial Security State: Knowledge and British Imperialism*’ examines the significant role of military intelligence in shaping the strategies and operations of the British Empire from the late 19th century onwards. Hevia employs a historical analytical approach, utilising archival sources namely military reports, training manuals, route books and operational handbooks. The book delves into the history of military intelligence and the integration of empirical sciences into military practices. It explores how irregular warfare in underdeveloped

terrains often exposed gaps in the British regime, creating epistemological crises in imperial security. This book has become invaluable for the critical study of surveillance, military expeditions, reconnaissance, road construction and the evolution of triangulation, surveying and mapping in the Chin and Lushai Hills during colonial times.

Mathew H. Edney's book, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*, serves as a foundational text for understanding the intersection of cartography, colonial governance and imperialism within British Empire since its colonial establishment in the Indian Subcontinent. The book illustrates how the English East India Company (EIC) used mapping as a tool to consolidate and establish a confirmatory space for British power in South Asia. It reflects that the EIC's efforts in producing a series of maps of Indian Subcontinent were not merely driven by a passion for cartographic science but were instruments of colonial power, reflecting their colonial perceptions and governance needs. Edney notes that the British mapped "their India" rather than the "real India" the objectivity of mapping and colonial ideologies with rhetorical justifications for their projects. The book deals with the evolution of cartographic practices, the impact of mapping on British, and intriguingly narrates the cartographic anarchy which generally found in stitching together a series of surveys reports and to produce a comprehensive map. Although the author discusses the role of natives in survey data collection and mapping, he leaves ample room for other scholars to conduct further in-depth research on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping modern maps.

'*Ruling the Savage Periphery Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State*' by Benjamin D. Hopkins offers an in-depth exploration of complex nature of modern frontiers, primarily shaped by imperial practices rooted in colonial expansionist policies. The book elucidates how colonial frontier governance reflects the administrative strategies employed to control indigenous populations, resulting in economic exploitation and cultural erasure. In postcolonial states, the enduring influence of colonial legal frameworks on contemporary governance and social structures is also addressed by the author in this seminal work. Hopkins utilises the

theory of frontier governmentality, centre-periphery relationships, sovereign pluralism and colonial spectre of savagery, which portrays indigenous people as “savage” to justify their governance and subjugation. The book bridges political theory, history, anthropology and international relations by demonstrating how governance at the margins shaped state institutions and the global structure.

‘*Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*’ by Thongchai Winichakul delves into the historical and conceptual formation of Siam (now Thailand) as a modern state. Thongchai intricately discusses the concept of the “geo-body” emphasising that Siamese nationhood is not an organic or gradual phenomenon but rather a modern construct shaped by colonial encounters and cartographic practices. The book highlights the pivotal roles played by French and British colonial forces along with Thai elites, in defining Siam’s boundaries, cartographic mapping, treaties, and other political negotiations. It combines history, geography and other disciplines to analyse how the discourse of geo-body shaped Siam’s identity. Thongchai vividly mentions how mapping altered natives’ understanding of territory, sovereignty and national identity leading to the creation of a modern geo-body. The book is valuable for scholars studying colonial cartography, mapping, colonialism, imperialism, as it provides insight into how a peripheral region or community grapples with the loss of its indigenous spatial conceptions and identity to modern mapping and geography.

Bernard S. Cohn’s ‘*Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*’ is a seminal work that critically dissects the colonial power’s cultural project of control, and Cohn says that this project is not merely an endeavour of economic exploitation or military domination but rather a complex power play aimed at subjugating the natives from all possible directions, not just through physical forces but more so through the invisible yet potent element of knowledge. The book highlights how the British used knowledge as a tool for domination, transforming Indian languages, legal systems and cultural artifacts into objects of colonial control. Cohn elucidates the systematic methods employed by the British colonialists, namely surveys, censuses, and museology, which were used to classify and control Indian society under his own term “investigative modalities”. The author discusses how

colonial knowledge reshaped Indian cultural forms by codifying vernacular languages and reinterpreted Indian texts, marginalising indigenous epistemologies, and establishing a colonial “truth regime.” Chon also explores how colonial policies shapes and redefined cultural identities.

Area of Study:

The study primarily concentrates on the Indo-Myanmar frontier, with a particular emphasis on the Chin State in Myanmar and the southern region of Mizoram in India. The research scope extends from the punitive expedition in the southern Lushai Hills and the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90, continuing up to the 1940s.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To trace the Chin community's traditional social system and worldviews
2. To explore the indigenous Chin art of war and technological knowledge of saltpetre manufacture and the possession of guns
3. To examine the establishment of colonial surveillance institutions and work such as surveys and mapping in this transnational region
4. To analyse the British disarmament/licensing of gun policy implemented in this frontier

Methodology:

In the realm of historical academia, it is conscientiously understood that matters that describe the nature, location, and collection of primary sources and other explanations about secondary sources are perhaps more ritualistic and overtly focused on tertiary matters rather than the core, especially in the context of doctoral research work. By default, all researchers are bound to hunt for these sources to build a historical research narrative of their respective fields. This research utilises military intelligence records, route books, military reports, and correspondence from military intelligence housed in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, along with other online archival sources.

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates history with geography, anthropology, sociology, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, and

science and technology studies. It primarily utilises a qualitative methodology by examining colonial archival materials, vernacular sources, and relevant secondary literature. Although oral interviews were conducted during the research process, their contribution to the overall study was minimal. The historical discourse is grounded in a transnational historical approach to comprehend how colonial powers shaped territories beyond the confines of postcolonial nationalist debates. This study specifically focuses on three key aspects of colonial control: surveying, mapping, road construction, and disarmament policies. It also examines visual materials such as maps, sketches, and photographs from intelligence reports and general reports on the operations of the Survey of India. It also seeks to explore the close relationship between knowledge production and imperial control by critically analysing route books, military reports, and maps. These elements constituted an epistemological project that “framed imperial strategies” and “produced the very object of intervention” within this territorial space.

Rather than presenting a simplistic imperial narrative of colonial surveillance, this research adopts a comprehensive methodology to examine the ‘colonial imperialist body’ and its interactions with indigenous communities. Here, the term ‘body’ serves as a metaphor representing the territories, culture, and politics of the Indo-Myanmar frontier space and the communities inhabiting it. This approach facilitates understanding how colonisation processes affect indigenous peoples while simultaneously analysing the colonial administrative apparatus itself.

The primary objective is to investigate the surveillance mechanisms employed by British colonial authorities in this frontier region. While various surveillance strategies exist, this study focuses specifically on two areas for in-depth analysis: land survey and mapping practices and disarmament policies (euphemistically termed “licensing of guns”). This focus enables a deeper understanding of British colonialism beyond mere physical occupation or warfare, exploring the persistence of coloniality even after formal colonial rule has ended. This perspective is particularly relevant when considering the evolution of surveillance theory from Jeremy Bentham's panopticon concept to Michel Foucault's surveillance theories, biopolitics, and governmentality.

This research employs critical cartography to analyse colonial maps not as neutral geographical representations, but as socially constructed tools reflecting specific ideologies and power structures. This approach reveals how mapping practices implicitly established racial hierarchies by defining indigenous lands as “empty” or “unknown” and characterising native inhabitants as “unruly” people requiring civilisation.

Decolonial theory serves as a framework to critique the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ within cartography and surveillance practices. The methodology involves identifying how indigenous place names were erased and replaced with colonial designations, and how traditional village-naming conventions were gradually altered to align with colonial administrative preferences. Similarly, an analysis of disarmament policies reveals multiple dimensions of colonial control, including the undermining of cultural pride associated with firearms, weakening indigenous resistance capabilities, and implementing firearm licensing as a sophisticated surveillance mechanism that allows colonial authorities to monitor individuals through registration numbers.

Through this systematic methodological approach, this research challenges the concept of impenetrability in colonial knowledge production by demonstrating how indigenous peoples actively contributed to and shaped the colonial understanding of the region despite being portrayed as passive subjects in official narratives. This critical examination reveals the complex power dynamics underlying cartographic practices and disarmament policies on the Indo-Myanmar frontier during British colonial rule. In this study, primary data was collected from three main archival institutions: state archives, church archives, and other native primary sources, such as chronicles and monographs. Relevant secondary sources were also collected and reviewed. In addition, the researcher collected oral sources through open-ended, scheduled interviews. Collected oral sources undergo transcription and are shaped into oral testimony for use as an alternative/supplementary source in writing the history of surveillance and colonialism in the Chin Hills. Data classification, amalgamation, interpretation, and

narration are based on British colonial-established institutions of surveillance and services.

Chapters

Chapter I: Introduction

Besides the literature review, methodology, and objective of the study, this chapter deals with the social structure and Chin's worldview.

Chapter II: Pre-colonial Polity and Warfare

Chin's economy and political relationship with the valley state and subjects, raids, the art of war of the Chin tribe, and traditional knowledge of making gunpowder are sub-themes of this chapter.

Chapter III: Colonial Survey and Mapping

This chapter highlights the British efforts to make the road to the Chin Hills and how they continuously conducted a series of surveys and mapping of the Chin Hills for political and security reasons. The struggle of surveyors while mapping the Chin Hills is laid out here and how did indigenous people begin interpreting time and space from a Western perspective.

Chapter IV: Disarmament/Licensing of Guns as a Surveillance Tool

This chapter gives an account of the British licensing of guns, implemented first in the Chin Hills, followed by the Lushai Hills, which weakened the Chin chiefs' power. Disarmament/licensing, such as taping and monitoring over the indigenous community, and the headache of the British government in trailing the firearms from Chin Hills to Lushai Hills.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The chapter makes a critical evaluation and analysis of the research findings.

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CHAPTER - II

PRE-COLONIAL POLITY AND TRADITIONAL WARFARE

In the upper regions of Myanmar, Mizoram in India and some parts of Bangladesh are home to the settlement of Lai's populations. Social and cultural divisions were played out within each family. Many groups which fall under the Northern Chin umbrella have sociocultural ties, although they may differ.²³ The Lais which are more remote from the Burmese valleys, practice jhum cultivation along with other neighbouring tribes. The Lais and other surrounding tribes may have moved to their present hilltop homes to escape the conflict and violence of the Shan-Burmese wars in the 18 and 19 centuries. As is the case with many other highland communities in Southeast Asia, these wars caused great migration.²⁴ In the political social order of Chin culture, there is a mix of decentralised and equal elements which coexist with hierarchical subgroups which are mostly in the Thantlang and Halkha areas. For ease of reference, this group will be loosely put forward as the term 'Chin' at times also with 'Lai' interchangeable.

Geographical location and settlement patterns

Professor Gordon Luce, in his *Journal of Burma Research Society* (1954), claimed that the Lai people moved to the Hukong Valley, which is at the intersection of Tibet, China, and Burma, around 400 AD.²⁵ They first occupied Chindwin Valley and later occupied two places in Myanmar: present-day Monywa and Shewbo. They traversed through Oksa and Letsa and moved to Phau which is located on the Chindwin River, until they reached the Run River. They advanced their migration through Tawk until they created their first permanent village structure in Simpi. After some years of residence there, they migrated again and finally settled in the famous Lailun cave, which is roughly six miles from Falam town, in the Chin hills.²⁶

²³ F.K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, (Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 1980), 5.

²⁴ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 149.

²⁵ G.H. Luce, "Old Kyaukse and the coming of Burman". *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol.XLII, Rangoon university press, Rangoon, 89.

²⁶ Rothang, *Tuanbia*, unpublished, 3.

Lai established settlements in the Upper Burma region, which is now called Chin Hills. This area lies between 24th and 21° 45' latitude and 93° 20' and 94° 5' longitude, forming a parallelogram shape stretching for 250 miles from north to south and is 100-150 miles wide. Its mountainous topography consists of deeply cut rift valleys east of heavy-folded mountain systems. The area is bordered by Assam and Manipur to the North, Arakan to the South, the eastern Burmese plains, and Westward towards the Tripura and Chittagong Hills tracts. Dominating from North to South occur principal mountain ranges at an elevation of five to nine thousand feet 'Imbuk Tlang' which happens to be one of the most prominent hills rising above these ranges. The Letha range is significant, as it serves as the boundary watershed dividing the Chindwin River from Manipur.²⁷ Initially, Rungtlang serves as primary watershed for the southern hills, where its peckettes channel water towards Myittha and Chindwin minus some portion becomes westward towards Boinu (Kolodyne) river flowing southerly through highland regions discharging into Bay of Bengal. Thereupon this derivates western precipitation drainage along with 'Boinu' Kolodyne river.

The Lais were scattered in various geographical areas depending on their sustenance and livelihood. The major focus of Lais habitation is at presently in the Chin Hills of Burma, southern Mizoram, and Bangladesh. Before colonial interference, Lai leaders successfully built the topmost power in their areas, which included the southernmost part of Mizoram State, Arakan, Chittagong, and Manipur State.²⁸

The southernmost part of Mizoram is largely inhabited by the Lai community. Their settlements are mostly along the Kolodyne river, which extends across several villages throughout the valley. In the past, this community seemed to associate security with conventional military protection and support during natural disasters, epidemics, and conflicts.²⁹ This has greatly shaped their social organisation

²⁷ Intelligence Branch, Division of the chief of the staff army head Quarter, India. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*. 1st ed. Vol. V. (Simla, India: Government Monotype Press, 1907). <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924007613528>

²⁸ Jangkhongam Doungel, *Lai Chieftainship and its impact in Politics*, (Meerut: Balaji Publications, 2021). 32.

²⁹ Interview with Manghmunga, on 13th October 2016, Lawngtlai.

through marriage ties and power relationships; hence, many households prefer to live in a village under a dominant clan wherein they offer protection from any threat.

Chin Polity: Decentralized Authority in the Chin Hills

In the Pre-colonial period, all men were treated equally, and class distinctions were hardly known among Lai ancestors. The Lai economy factor compels them to move depending on the land for cultivation to various places in search of livelihood. This compulsion-group system led to the emergence of a leader based on strong, brave, and wise men within the group. Therefore, wise and brave men, irrespective of any clan, rose to the position of chief for the new village establishment and maintained a succession of ranks based on the clan among the Lai Tribes. Therefore, the majority of the Lai-dominated villages were hereditary chieftains.³⁰

Prior to British intervention in the region, the Lai community maintained well-structured social and political institutions. A notable characteristic of Lai's political system was the hereditary succession of chiefs, which was restricted to specific families or clans, thereby reflecting the fixed attributes of certain descent groups. Within the Lai hereditary framework, a fundamental distinction exists between aristocratic and commoner clans known as Bawi and Chia, respectively. Governance of the traditional village system was predominantly responsible for the leading lineages within the aristocratic clans. In instances where leadership was non-hereditary, it could be transferred to lineages of non-aristocratic clans that did not hold aristocratic ranks. Additionally, some headmen within the Lai community wielded autocratic powers, whereas others relied more heavily on the counsel of elders.³¹

Hierarchies and Homesteads: Examining Social Tiers in Traditional Chin Communities:

The social organisation of the Lai community was displayed in a three-tiered system which greatly impacted the structure of society. At the top of this system sat an elite called the *Bawi Phun* or the Noble clan which comprised the Chief (called *Khua*

³⁰ Wanna Kyaw Htin Pu Ngun To, *Laimi phun thawkehnaak le khua tlaknaak*, (written in Burmese, 2007), 50-51.

³¹ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 139.

Bawi and *Ramuk Bawi*), Priest (*Tlangbawi*), and other aristocrats (*Phunsang*). The middle tier was occupied by a wider segment of the population, known as *Michia* or commoners. This commoner class was divided into two sub-categories: *Mi-chia Phunthiang* common people considered clean and *Mi-chia Phunthianglo* common people believed to have evil spirits or who practiced witchcraft. The bottom of this social pyramid was categorised as servitude, called *sals* or slaves. The slave class consists of *Innchungkhar Sal*-household slaves living with their master and *Innlak Sal*-slaves living on their own but still serving as a master.³² *Bawi Phun* included particular lineages such as *Zathang*, *Hlawnhhing*, *Chinzah*, *Khenglawt*, and *Hlawnceu*-few believed to have heavenly authorization to rule.³³ They held power over matters pertaining to their respective settlements; divine rights were what they believed had been bestowed upon them. To understand the different levels of this social structure, one must look at the important tiers of societal construction.

Bawi-Phun / Noble class:

Within the Lai society, the noble lineages, identified as *Bawi-phun*, derived their authority from a spiritual mandate bestowed by *Khua-hrum*, their guardian deity. This divine sanction evolved into a system of hereditary leadership, in which noble families passed down their ruling positions through generations.³⁴ All commoners acknowledge and accept this hereditary governance system. Noble families maintain detailed genealogical records that directly connect them with their clan founders or village ancestors. They viewed their leadership roles through the dual lens of political and spiritual authority, embedding their power deeply within their patrilineal clan structure. These noble families performed specific rituals to maintain sacred connections with *the Khua-hrum*. They held exclusive rights to conduct sacrificial ceremonies honouring *Khua-hrum*, which further legitimized their authority.³⁵ The ritualistic foundation of chiefly power significantly influenced public acceptance of noble leadership. Villages actively sought chiefs from these noble lineages, considering that they divinely favoured individuals. This spiritual

³² Lian H. Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, (Thailand: NIAS Press Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003), 35-36.

³³ *Pawi Chanchin*, (Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 2011), 69.

³⁴ Dounge, *Lai Chieftainship and Its Impact in Politics*, 40.

³⁵ Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 5.

endorsement elevated the chief's status, earning them profound respect and reverence within their community.

Khua Bawi / Village Chief:

First, the choice of village leaders followed an intricate system, prioritising the many attributes of hopeful candidates. At the same time, existing clan wars and tribal battles forced people to look for those who would be physically strong, but also integrated skills necessary for furthering village success.³⁶ Such qualities include wisdom, strength, and the ability to be fair to all types of social groups. The village elders and notable citizens' assembly on councils discussed possible successors when a vacancy arose in leadership. Once they agreed on a particular individual, he would be informally acknowledged through a special ceremony by carrying a pig to the house of the new leader, as an expression that indeed a new leadership appointment had been made. An ideal candidate should have advanced great acumen, especially in uniting one villager with another to maintain social cohesion.³⁷

This shows how smart the old ways of governing were, where leaders were judged based on their ability to maintain peace and work for the good of the whole community. Therefore, the need for togetherness and social bonding in the village pushed the chief to take on many duties, which eventually gave rise to hereditary leadership, known as the royal clan or Bawi Phun, before the British came.

Khua Bawi was the leader of a self-governing village who received mandate from *Khuahrum* the power and duty to oversee all political, religious, social, and economic matters within its area. *Khua Bawi* had the authority to choose members of the village committees as well as distribute land and local rules. In Lai society, only members of the royal clans or the chief's family were allowed to hold such positions. It was chiefly a hereditary right of the chief's family and was passed on under customary laws and traditions, mainly from father to son. Simply put, chief succession was limited only to sons; in addition, it confined this particular leadership role to a specific family or clan. This trait forms a major aspect of the conglomerate

³⁶ Chester U Strait ThD, *The Chin People : A Selective History and Anthropology of the Chin People*, n.d.

³⁷ Stephen Ni Kio, *Lai Nunphung (Chin Culture and Traditions)*, 373-374.

tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic groups, based on a hereditary system and traditional governance practices among all tribes in the Chin ethnic group.³⁸

Consent of Khuahrum or Guardian God

The Lais sought divine approval from their local deity, *Khua-hrum*, before establishing new villages in the sacred territories. The divine sanction, "*Khua nih a hnuai hna*", plays a crucial role in community development. *Khua-hrum* selected specific individuals to receive this sacred mandate, typically choosing patriarchal leaders from the *Bawi-Phun*, a royal clan known for its ritual purity.

The concept of ritual purity encompasses several key elements. Leaders needed to demonstrate freedom from witchcraft (*Eih thiam*), protection from the evil eye (*Hnam nei*), the absence of slave ancestry, and separation from the common clan (*Chia hrin*) lineage. Through these distinctions, the *Bawi-phun* established themselves as *Khua-hrum*'s chosen lineage in Chin society.

The validation process involved consulting with *Khua-vang*, a spiritual intermediary who communicated directly with *Khua-hrum*. Clans waited for confirmation of their chosen status before approaching *Khua-hrum*'s domain or initiating the village establishment. Only after receiving this divine endorsement did *Khua-hrum* assume the roles of their divine guardians and protectors.

These crucial points justify the significance of *Khuahrum* in relation to the *Zathang* clan of the *Halkha* chiefs. After the Shan took over its ancestral territory in the Kale Valley in the thirteenth century, Lais accepted the claim that the Lailung cave near Falam was the site of early settlement. They left for Zotlang after living in peace for a while, and it was from this place that the *Zathang* clan-led by two brothers named Sui Hlei and Hlawn Za arrived in Phailen. Hlawnza, the younger brother, assassinated Suihlen and took over as the clan chief as a result of a power struggle.³⁹ Nevertheless, Hlawnza's ability to offer sacrifices for the village's well-being is not acknowledged by the divine entity *Khuahrum* through Suihlen's prescribed sacrificial practice. The Hlawnza family was cursed as a result of these

³⁸ Dounge, *Lai Chieftainship and Its Impact in Politics*, 38.

³⁹ Chawnkio, *Lai Miphun Thawhkehnaak Tuanbia*, (Halkha, offset printing Shin Thanh Yangon, Myanmar, 2000), 80.

events and he was unable to prosper. His children and domestic animals had begun to die one after another. Hlawn Za was forced to leave Phaileng with all of his supporters and found a new village at the base of Mount Rungtlang named Halkha.⁴⁰

Traditional governance

In administering the village, the chief appointed the village officials. Importantly, the chief would never try any case without the advice of the Council of the Elders. Besides, the council of elders some village officials were worth mentioning, the Blacksmith (*Soser*), the village crier (*Tlang au*), and the Priest (*Tlang Bawi*). The village blacksmith for his rendered service was given one basket of paddy from every household once a year, with the hind legs of the animals shot or trapped. However, it varies from village to village, where the village crier had the privilege of choosing a plot of agricultural land along with the other officials of the village and was regarded as a reward for his service. The Priest's reward was more or less the same as that of the village crier.⁴¹

In the Lai community, important representative bodies that helped in making decisions were the councils of the elders. Normally, these councils comprise members chosen or elected according to the norms established by the chief from higher clans or groups within the tribe. The chief not only leads them but also plays an important role because this council had determination powers on issues such as laws, regulations, and the distribution of resources benefiting the entire village. Each village had these systems of traditions, practices, and governance that were very distinct from one another, thereby affecting how traditional village meetings would be composed, sized, and their authority.

Selection of village site

The establishment of traditional villages varies by region. When exploring the village site, a leader was chosen along with the party and proceeded towards the proposed village site carrying a red cock tamed inside a bamboo basket along with spears. The

⁴⁰ Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 6.

⁴¹ K. Lalchhuanpuia, *Tribal Warfare of the Lai in Pre-Colonial Mizoram*, (Aizawl, M. Phil Dissertation Unpublished, 2016), 15.

water source was the first and foremost location in the village.⁴² The system described above was used during the initial period.

Once the proposed site was confirmed by the pioneer, the spear was placed in a vertical position, a bamboo box containing a red crow was laid, and prayers were recited as follows:

“Kannih nih hika hmun hi zungzal hngetchan awk le khuasaknak ca ah kan halhcang. Pawcawmnak le khimnak ding hmun si kun kaw, mah arhli hi amah le a khuan can tawn ning ah tloh lo teiin khuang ko law”

Free Translation:

We asked about the settlement and reliance on this place.

Let the red cook crow not be deterred to the site to provide an adequate livelihood.

If the cook crows normally from midnight to the next morning, while the party halts at the site, it is a clear indication that the site was favourable for the proposed village. On some occasions, if deterrence occurred with the cook crowing, eventually they eagerly spent the next night waiting for the cook to crow normally, and if they succeeded, the party confirmed the settlement.

An old man of a ritually clean clan was told to make a waterhole from a small stream nearby to meet the village's needs. A stone was placed on one of the high hills for the guardian God or *Khuahrum*. *Rirang* trees were planted by that stone, and the village told new settlers who would come from a ritually clean clan to do religious jobs. Blacksmiths and warriors were selected for protection.

Once the founder of a water hole, blacksmith, and priest were present in the proposed location, a large fat pig was slaughtered as a sign of meeting the requirements. Accordingly, the process of constructing the village began. The process of slaughtering pigs was a sign of the procedures required to establish a village and to mark that the official of the village had given consent to it.

⁴² Pawi Chanchin, 73.

When these prerequisites were met, the process of setting up the villages began in earnest. This means coordinated efforts to build permanent dwellings, organise communal spaces, and establish basic governance structures. The tools and implements for construction and life were made available by the Blacksmith, and social cohesion was fostered by the priest. The waterhole is a critical resource for both human consumption and agriculture; it forms the cornerstone of the village's long-term viability. Such an orderly approach to village formation sets the stage for further development and enlargement of rural communities; more complex societal structures were about to emerge.⁴³

Ral Ven or Village Defense System

The main aim of the leading position was to ensure the safety and confidence of the people at the hamlet against attacks and beasts, and to form energetic and strong governance for society. Chin societies showed deep knowledge in protective building and public safety by making secure villages. This habitation was marked by strong wooden fences which served many purposes: they stood as the first line of defence against enemies, marked off the village limits, kept off wild animals, and instilled a feeling of security as well as communal belonging; the fences represent the power of the settlement.⁴⁴

The fortifications showcased designs that had been developed and built with advanced planning. Defense-in-depth was achieved through several layers of timber posts, and the exact spacing between posts prevented enemy infiltration. Stockade heights were strategically chosen to maximise protection, and strong timber species were selected for stockades to ensure longevity. Often, these fortifications take advantage of the natural terrain when integrating them for defensive purposes. These advanced barriers known as '*Kah cham*' comprised timber fortifications in which strong wooden posts were firmly driven into the earth-perimeter defence at its best.

⁴³ Stephen Ni Kio, *Lai Nunphung (Chin Culture and Traditions)*, 372-373.

⁴⁴ Stephen Ni Kio, *Lai Nunphung (Chin Culture and Traditions)*, 374.

Ram Uk Bawi / Chieftom

Ram Uk Bawi was a chief who extended his sway territorially over these several villages by dint of both war and marriage alliances. The degree to which he exercised control over these villages depended on the chiefs' ability to forge good bonds with the people of the villages. At the same time, in all Ram Uk Bawi's controlled villages, separate independent ruling chiefs persisted, who had to pay tributes or taxes to him in return for defense and protection. Apart from that, in a conflict situation, all such tributary chiefs would come together as one with Ram Uk Bawi against their respective adversaries, as per the longstanding tradition of protection.

Within the *Ram Uk Bawi* system, hereditary-based politics played a crucial role and nowhere does anyone dispute the fact that the *Ram Bawi* rank carries special privileges and regularly receives tributary payments from the villages under their influence. In essence, the same clan or alliance with several villages would fall under the head of the chief or *Ram Uk Bawi*, since the extended villages were regarded as weapons of territorial expansion for the head village. On the contrary, neighbouring villages with no affinal ties established alliances with *Ramuk Uk Bawi* for protection and security reasons. In the comprehension of the *Ramuk Bawi* system, Zophei and Lautu circles in the southern part of the Halkha division, Chin Hills do not have the *Ram Uk Bawi* system. However, they maintained their independence status through matrimonial alliances, paying tribute to a junior line of the protecting clan that was sent to live among them; they were not conquered by the Halkha, but rather were under its power and protection.⁴⁵

However, in the Falam Sub-division villages, a democratic system of governance was adopted by a council of elders in which all council members were appointed from the royal clan;⁴⁶ However, Carey stated that this was not the case in reality, as wealthy men of non-aristocrat clan extract could become connected with

⁴⁵ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 141-142.

⁴⁶ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 141.

the hereditary Chiefs by marriage: and this is how the Tlaisun promoted a commoner to the rank of chief.⁴⁷

According to Lehman, Halkha was the most influential village in the entire Chin Hills region and functioned as the main centre of authority in the Central Chin Hills. The name "Haka" is a corrupt word used by the colonials whereas the Chins themselves used the term "Hal-kha," meaning "bitter-request." This interpretation is believed to represent the Halkha people's assertiveness and perceived arrogant, rigid aristocratic temperament, particularly among Halkha Bawi. However, Tiddim and Falam, who were hostile and aloof, supported this viewpoint. In the Halkha realms, it is quite interesting to note that no single supreme chief exists; nevertheless, with several local branches headed by the Chiefs, especially the Sangpi and Sangte lineages' hereditary heads, the Zathang clan commanded considerable power. Each leader had dispersed satellites and allied jurisdictions.⁴⁸ Virtually anyone in the full-status *Bawi* ranks within the *Bawi* clans, such as the Zathang and Khenglawt clans, had possible chief entitlements.

The two most significant chiefdoms in the Chin Hills were Falam and Halkha; therefore, they would often be at war. The Falam-Halkha dispute covers the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Arakan, Chin Hills, and Lushai Hill territory, known as the Falam-Halkha realm, where it is assumed that many Lais tribes settled. To prove their supremacy, the Lai rulers of Falam and Halkha imposed taxes and tributes on villages within their domains. Therefore, they extended tax collection to the Sailo chiefs, who ruled the governing clans of the Lusei clan from 1894 to 1895.⁴⁹

Within the Lai-dominated jurisdiction with respect to the Chin and Lushai hills, the chiefs followed the hereditary system of chieftainship based on royal clans among the Lais. The powerful Lai chief clans were as follows:

⁴⁷ Carey S, Bertram and HN Tuck, *The Chin Hills, Volume I*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd, 2008), 202.

⁴⁸ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 142.

⁴⁹ Jangkhongam Doungel, "Chieftainship as a Traditional Dominant Political Institution of the Lais: A Case Study of the Lai Chieftainship of Mizoram" in *Society and Politics in North East India* Proceeding Volume of XVIth Annual Conference of the North East India Political Science Association, Ed. Dr. N.G. Mahanta (Demow: Demaw college Assam, 2008) 74-82.

Hlawancheu Chiefdom:

The Hlawancheu clan, a royal line of the Lais from the Chin hills, was the first to colonise and establish its control in the Lushai hills and extend its sovereignty to the Chittagong Hill Tract. According to Dounghel, the groups includes Bawm, Pang, Miria, Fambawl, Vanphawng, Hauheng, Tuallawt, Bunghai and Ramlawt led by Vanhnuaityira Hlawancheu. The period of expansion happens around 1770-1772 A.D. The earliest known settlement of the Hlawancheu chiefs in Chin hills includes Tlaihmun, Mangkheng, Thlanrawn, Hmunpi, Laizo, Zamual, Lenhna, Sertlangpui and Dawn.⁵⁰ In Mizoram, however, numerous villages were found along the western bank of the Koladyne River in the South Lushai Hills, namely, Sangau, Pangkhua, Thaltlang, Lawngtlai, Bungtlang, and Saikah. Vanhnuaityira hlawancheu died in 1820 and was succeeded by his son Liankunga Hlawancheu, who was said to have collected taxes and tributes as far as the cox bazar during his reign.⁵¹

Zathang Chiefdom:

The Zathang clan started by setting up homes and taking control of the Chin Hills. Many small villages were part of a large chiefdom in the Zathang-dominated area called Halkha. The Zathang clan was divided into two categories: Sangpi and Sangte clans. Present-day Halkha Village is broken down into different small communities controlled by both the Sangpi and Sangte Zathang groups. Traditionally, three brothers made up the Zathang clan: Hranglungchung, Darkhuahchung, and Khenglawt. They perform the ceremonies together. This includes Rungtlang adjoining its streams or rivers that can easily flow between these two places. Since this has easy access, acknowledging this fact from a geographical standpoint, the Chief of Halkha suggested Sangau for future settlement.

In response, Sangte Zathang sent one of their trusted men to clear the jungle on Sangau Mountain for further cultivation to preserve the area for future settlement. Later, Dokhuai, the Chief of the Halkha, was entrusted with the establishment of a new village. Prior to this, Dokhuai sent trusted warriors, Phunhnawm Tlangchhan,

⁵⁰ Dounghel, *Lai Chieftainship and Its Impact in Politics*, 61-64.

⁵¹ Manglinga Hlawancheu, *Lai Hnam Chin Hills atanga lo chhuak hmasate* (Lawngtlai: Baptist Printing Press, 2004). 17-18.

from Tlangrua village and invited the Fambawl, Bung hai, Aihniar, and Chhiato clans to accompany them in establish a new village on the new settlement at Sangau. Once the Zathang chief occupied Sangau, Phunhnawm Tlangchhan shifted to South Vanlaiphai and worshipped a large rock later known as the Phunhnawm rock. After that, he returned from South Vanlaiphai, established Cheural village, and became chief with the recognition of the Zathang Chief. As there was controversy with the Hlawmcheu chief, Sangkam Zathang went to Vawmbuk and became the chief in 1884 and consolidate the Halkha chiefdom in the Lushai hills by establishing number of villages namely, Archhuang, Pangrang, Tialdawnglung and Lungzarhtum respectively.⁵²

Chinzah Chiefdom:

The Chinzah clan concentrated its power on the Thlantlang and Lungzarh villages in the Chin Hills. They constituted a strong chiefdom of 20 villages in the Thlantlang circle all under their sway. The tributes and taxes on these villages were normally collected by Chinzah chiefdom. The two brothers Zahnaak, who ruled over Thlantlang, and Zahngo, who ruled Lungzarh village, shared the governance of the Chinzah clan. The Chief of Lungzarh, Zahngo, had influenced the Lushai Hills before the British intervention there. Notable Warrior Hnialum, Famchun, and Bawitlung clans accompanied Zahngo Chinzah during this expansion period. These warriors were the foremost paces ahead of the Chinzah chief, settling new land.⁵³

The Chinzah clan also formed strategic matrimonial alliances with the Sailo clan in the Lushai Hills. This alliance solidified when Bualchhuma married Nozingi Tialcheuva Chinzah's daughter. This marriage strengthened the relationship between the two clans, leading to a sustained peace. They came down from Lungzarh and established Dawn Village and Khuanghlum Village. Taihmunga son of Tialcheuva Chinzah established Cherhlun, expanded the village to Ngharchhip, and lived peacefully with the clan. The Chinzah clan was the one who migrated from Northern Lushai hills, and in the process of expansion, they term numerous streams and rivulets in Lai's name, such as Vanva presently located near Thenzawl and

⁵² Dounge, *Lai Chieftainship and its impact in Politics*, 65.

⁵³ Z Hengmang, *Lai Hnam Tobul*, 2nd ed. (Lawngtlai: Pawi District Council, 1987), 36-39.

Hmawngva below Present Lunglei town, and literally indicates that 'Va' refers to Lui (River) in Mizo.⁵⁴

The Chinzah chiefdom expanded its southern territory by founding important villages: Lungtian, Vartek, Fungkah, Lungpher, and Bualpui 'Ng.' This further secured the Chinzah chiefdom's position within the Lushai Hills.⁵⁵ Hausata Chinzah and his military ventured on raiding expeditions as far as the Karnafulli River in Chittagong to demonstrate that this area rightfully belonged to the influence of Chinzah chiefdom. Besides their own community of Lai, which got extended further by merging with Mara territory where they are known as "Chozah" in their dialect, an ungoverned settlement worried the Mara people enough that they asked for leadership from Thlantlang chief for their communities. This is how it came about that Chinzah would rule over Chapui, Siata, Chakhang, and Chhualung - all Mara villages. In addition, two villages-Lungbun and Niawhtlang came under Chhualung Village as tributaries. Historically, these Chinzah leaders moved straight from Thlantlang village to claim their rights in these new lands.⁵⁶

Hlawnhhing Chiefdom:

The Hlawnhhing clan was recognised as one of the five royal clans in the Chin Hills and virally beyond the southernmost parts of the Lushai Hills. Serkawr chief Chhumhmung, in his dated September 2, 1981 statement, rebutted Mr. Carey's claim about two separate Hlawnhhing clans of the Lais and Maras. Chhumhmung said that only one Hlawnhhing clan was later invited by Mara people to rule over their villages. The Hlawnhhing clan came from two brothers, Khamrei and Nithang; hence, their descendants maintained separate genealogical lineages based on these two names of ancestors rather than two separate clans as posed earlier by Carey.⁵⁷

Leisen village, located on the hills of Chin, invited Alkheng, son of Nithang Hlawnhhing, to be chief during the period of settling at Thlantlang. They put up the community at Chakhang and further pushed West into what later came to be known as the Southern Lushai area. From there, the clan went on to establish more villages

⁵⁴ Hengmang, *Lai Hnam Tobul*, 38.

⁵⁵ Pawi Chanchin, 71-72.

⁵⁶ Dounge, *Lai Chieftainship and its Impact in Politics*, 70-71.

⁵⁷ Hengmang, *Lai Hnam Tobul*, 40.

around it, like Siata, Ainak, and Phuisang. Pushing further towards the Tuisi River, they later established Khupi village and then Theiri village, after which they moved to Beukhi, near Saiha village.

However, the people considered the Alkheng insufficiently braved and lacked a warrior spirit. This led them to invite Lianchi, known for his bravery and warrior spirit, to rule the Mara people. From Beukhi, Lianchi established an extensive network of villages: first Serkawr, then Maubaw, Theiva, Lataw, Tawngkawlawng, Lawngban, Paithar, Saizawh, Lawngmasu, and Lawngphi. He expanded his territory from Saiha by establishing villages in Rawmibaw, Phalhrang, and Resikah. B. Sangchema, a former MDC, confirms their Lai ancestry. The historical connection between these communities' manifests in their names: Tlungsen village accepted Alkheng as their chief, while Serkawr village identified themselves as Tlosai to represent their chiefs. These variations in names - Tlungsen (recorded by Halkha), Leisen (in Tlantlang), and Tlosai (among the Maras) - all refer to the same historical lineage.⁵⁸

People voluntarily accepted and maintained an old practice of inheritance. One big good thing about this was the coming of royal families, where strong leaders ruled many other heads over large areas. Although each village was managed by one head, these leaders knew of the higher power to which they paid taxes and gifts. All the groups were protected and safe in exchange for firm leadership. The Lai people mostly liked chiefs from royal families as long as the line of ruling stayed within their own family or group. Therefore, old chieftainships and chiefdoms such as those of Chinzah, Khenglawt, Hlawnhhing, Zathang, and Hlawnceu Chiefs in the Chin Hills area are seen as the royal families of the Lais; they are called leaders.⁵⁹

Traditional Slavery in Lai Culture

Slavery was deeply rooted in Lai's cultural pre-colonial society and was regarded as one of the most prestigious components among the chiefs. Slavery, therefore, constituted one of the mechanisms of social differentiation, since an individual could climb higher in the social hierarchy by acquiring slaves. In this way, an economic

⁵⁸ Hengmang, *Lai Hnam Tobul*, 41.

⁵⁹ Dounel, *Lai Chieftainship and its impact in Politics*, 40.

requirement simultaneously served to strengthen the existing domination. The economic base of the Lai people was largely agriculture, so there was a great need for working hands in the fields; hence, enslaved people became a vital workforce whose forced labour helped raise productivity in such a village-based economy. Apart from agriculture, slave labour proved equally important because of their involvement in highly complicated sacrificial rites and religious feast-related manual work that required much handwork.

Pathways into slavery are multifaceted, with individuals entering servitude through various means. Military conquests and organised raids were prominent methods; individuals captured during military conflicts were invariably enslaved. In addition, leaders orchestrated raids with the explicit objective of capturing individuals to augment their slave populations. Chin folklore is replete with narratives such as "*Thli Chawn and Hlawn Ang*" which celebrates a Chin hero renowned for conducting numerous slave raids and capturing hundreds of Burman slaves. Colonial records extensively document Lais's slave raids against communities in Burma and Bengal. These raids were so significant that Carey and Tuck contended that the British invasion of Chin land was primarily motivated by a desire to halt the slave raids conducted by the Chin in the newly occupied Chindwin Valley and Bengal Valley.⁶⁰

Debt Bondage: Within the Chin community, there were individuals falling into substantial debt and traps without fulfilling financial settlement. This resulted in loss of property and difficulty in maintaining normalcy that compels them to surrender to the debtors by serving them as free labourers or slaves until the required financial burden was solved. With respect to traditional judicial norms, if an individual found stealing goods or items, he was subjected to surrender any of his offspring into slavery until the fine was paid off, and this stringent measure functioned both as a punitive action and a deterrent.

Voluntary Enslavement Several factors contributed to the phenomenon of voluntary enslavement: Individuals seeking refuge from adversaries, financial obligations, or legal penalties would seek asylum through enslavement in exchange

⁶⁰ Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 41-42.

for protection and sustenance. Impoverished women, lacking the means for self-sustenance, would request enslavement from neighbours, offering their labour in return for food and shelter. In certain instances, family members compelled individuals into servitude as a method to resolve familial debts.⁶¹

Inn lak Sal were essentially anonymous individuals without clan name (Phun) affiliation. The Chin proverb - '*Phung ngei lo, hram ngei lo*' meaning 'a man without a clan name is like a tree without roots' - captured their marginalized position. This nameless status rendered them rootless outsiders within Chin society despite their relative independence compared to domestic slaves.⁶²

Categories of Slaves in Lai Society

Drawing upon the accounts of Ukmang Zathang and colonial administrators, the classification of slaves within Lai Society can be delineated into distinct categories:

1. **Chief's Slaves (*Sal*):** This category represents the most significant group, consisting of slaves directly owned by the chief. The Chief exercised complete control over these individuals, possessing absolute authority over their lives, irrespective of whether they resided within the chief's household or elsewhere.
2. **Domestic Slaves (*Inchungkhar Sal*):** These slaves resided within their master's households and were regarded as possessions rather than human beings. They were responsible for the majority of arduous labour, including tasks such as clearing forests and harvesting crops. Domestic slaves can be bought, sold, or traded, with the value of one male slave equating to two or three Mithun (cattle) or a parcel of land. They were often included in marriage transactions with the bride's father providing a slave as a dowry to the groom. Among the highest-noble families, a "slave price" (*Sal man*) was required as part of the bride price for their daughters. In extreme cases, these slaves could be buried alive alongside their deceased masters. Historical records indicate that, upon the death of a Vuangtu chief's son, one slave was buried alive with the deceased child.

⁶¹ G. Brown, *Burma Gazetteer, Upper Chindwin*. (Rangoon: Government Printing Press, 1909), 19.

⁶² Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 41-42.

3. Independent Slaves (*Inn lak Sal*): These slaves lived independently from their master's households in separate dwellings yet remained under the authority of their master. Although their labour was similar to that of domestic slaves, they could not be given away as part of marriage dowries or sold to others. Their status was lower than that of ordinary free individuals. *Inn lak Sal* were essentially anonymous individuals without clan name (*Phun*) affiliation. The Chin proverb – “*Phung ngei lo, hram ngei lo*” meaning “A man without a clan name is like a tree without roots” - aptly captures their marginalised position. This nameless status rendered them rootless outsiders within Chin society, despite their relative independence compared to domestic slaves.⁶³

War Captives:

War captives were put into enslavement with no fixed terms until their ransom was paid. The release of Burmese captives was specifically demanded to be paid between Rs.100 and Rs.1000; if this payment was not made, they had to represent them in agricultural and labour-intensive work.⁶⁴ War captives hardly ever quietly took the new status of enslavement. They tried to escape whenever an opportunity was given and fled back to their villages; if not possible, they fled to some neighbouring settlement for protection. This set up is in great contrast with enslavement by debt or household slavery, where enslaved individuals could buy their freedom through personal agency, whereas such an avenue did not present itself to war captives.

Rights of Slave Owners

Slave holders carried out countless rights over their slaves. There had been a practice that a man possessed the same rights over his slave as he did over his dogs; he could kill or sell them at his will. Village chiefs would even take female slaves as concubines if they are desired. Despite the absolute authority wielded by owners, the offspring of slaves, even those born to slave concubines of chiefs, were excluded from hereditary rights and succession within the chiefly ranks. Their enslaved status

⁶³ Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 41-42.

⁶⁴ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills Vol I*, 204.

rendered them permanent outsiders, barred from inheritance, thereby reinforcing the rigid social hierarchy of Lai's society.⁶⁵

The Pre-colonial Lai polity in the Chin and Lushai hills was characterised by a distributed yet unified networks of chiefdoms, supported by hereditary leadership, spiritual beliefs, and social hierarchy. This system shaped the region's political, social, and economic dynamics for generations before facing the challenges of colonial rule and modernisation.

Traditional Warfare and Raids in Chin Society

The Lai communities of the pre-colonial period experienced thriving inter-village armed conflict; hence, it was an important part of their inter-settlement relations. Continuity could be sustained through some sort of contest within a competitive environment, as per the principle of evolution, where more efficient communities dominate less efficient ones. Therefore, inter-village warfare was indeed a means for dominant groups to organise structures, secure resources, and assert power. The martial legacy thus created an essentially dynamic setting, whereby power constantly oscillated and territorial configurations rested upon military verdicts. It is in such warfare that the exercise of martial prowess stands about community survival at this unambiguously formative stage of Lai's development.⁶⁶

Causes of Traditional Warfare

Several factors drove armed conflicts between villages in Lai's cultural region. Inherited blood feuds between communities created cycles of retaliatory violence that passed through generations, serving as the primary cause of inter-tribal conflicts. These hostilities, maintained through oral traditions, have established lasting conflict patterns. Disputes also arose from competing territorial claims and resource distribution disagreements with communities conflicting over land boundaries and usage rights. Economic factors shaped conflict patterns, as stronger villages targeted wealthy communities through strategic raids to seize assets and improve their economic positions through forced redistribution. This combination of historical,

⁶⁵ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills Vol I*, 230.

⁶⁶ Interview with RT Hnialum, on 2 October 2016, Lawngtlai.

territorial, and economic factors created conditions for inter-village warfare among Lai communities. These conflicts portray reasonable strategies for communities to survive challenges in difficult environmental and social contexts.⁶⁷

Traditional War Strategy

In the pre-colonial period, the Lais employed sophisticated military strategies that were well-suited to their mountainous terrain and socio-political organisation. Prior to the commencement of hostilities, Lai warriors dispatched spies to infiltrate target villages and gather intelligence on enemy locations, defensive arrangements, and potential attack routes. Consequently, military expeditions were meticulously planned to optimise their effectiveness. The timing of the attacks was strategically calculated considering weather conditions and the agricultural calendar, particularly when adversaries were occupied with harvest activities.

Lais in the pre-colonial period employed advanced military strategies that were well-suited to their mountainous terrain and socio-political organisation. Before the traditional warfare commenced, Lai warriors sent spies to infiltrate target villages, gathering the required information against their adversaries, such as defensive arrangements and potential attack routes. Consequently, military expeditions were meticulously planned to optimise their effectiveness. The timing of the attacks was strategically calculated considering weather conditions and the agricultural calendar, particularly when adversaries were occupied with harvest activities.

J. Shakespeare stated the following:

“The pois are, I am sure, a more savage race than the Lushais, and, living in an open country, have been more accustomed to fighting in the open than the Lushais, and this has made them braver and more venturesome, and in this respect they are certainly less willing to confess themselves beaten and quietly escape from rule. On the other hand,

⁶⁷ K Zohra, *The Maras Indigenous Tradition and Folk Culture* (Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre, 2013), 148.

*these very qualities are grounds for hoping that the Lais will better repay the trouble being spent on them".*⁶⁸

The Lais challenged the British administration through cross-border raids on villages, ignoring colonial authority in the region, and imposed long-standing raids against neighbouring tribes. On the other hand, British authorities implemented a pacification strategy to suppress resistance through military and political actions, aiming to integrate Lai territories into colonial dominance.

Inter-tribal warfare was a prevalent practice among hill communities and a distinctive characteristic of tribal societies in the region. This martial tradition was embedded within tribal groups across northeastern India before British colonial expansion. Throughout its global history, warfare has manifested across diverse civilisations.⁶⁹ The Lai communities in the Lushai and Chin hills engaged in armed conflicts with neighbouring groups for defined objectives. In their early cultural evolution, they were known as head hunters (*Lu laak hnam*). The community highly esteemed those who demonstrated a prowess in slaying human adversaries and wild animals, known as *Mithat Sathat*.

In the traditional warfare system, opponent heads were slain to prove that they were real hunters and regarded as *Pasaltha*. In addition, the traditional belief was embedded with the captured head, as the hunters were believed to have servants once they were dead and to serve the hunter in the next world. Within the community, the warriors who killed more opponents were believed to be the most respected among their fellow men who elevated their status. Therefore, warfare was meant not just of violence; it was a cultural practice with ceremony, spiritually related, and social dimensions that built relationships and reinforced beliefs about life, death, and afterlife among the Lai people.⁷⁰

In 1854, the neighbouring regions were under British control, where the Lais conducted several raids, as reported by Mackenzie, who noted that

⁶⁸ Political Department, Carton Box-5, Mizoram State Archive, 3.

⁶⁹ Sangkima, *Essay on the History of Mizos* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publication, 2003), 65.

⁷⁰ Shaw Williams, *Notes on the Thadou Kukis* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1992), 79.

“During the last seventeen years raids in which 107 had been slain, fifteen wounded, and 186 carried captive. The whole of these forays were believed to be the work of shendus or tribes from the south”.⁷¹

Village Chief, along with elders and warriors, would come to meet regularly to fix particular dates for their raids or military engagements. The same war council of tribal warfare under the leadership of the Chief had the right to declare war, decide on the strategic conduct of the conflict, and choose opposing villages. At nightfall, young men would light a big fire on the village street and dance; this dance is called the 'Saar laam', moving around the fire.⁷²

Within Lai culture, along with Zo ethnic tribes, it was more focused on gaining heads and economic revenues. This method was primitive compared to more civilised people. Being a race where martial prowess was highly respected, they fought countless wars amongst themselves and other tribes, capturing enemies and returning with plunder. In the Pre-colonial period, villages lacked proper roads, with only footpaths known as 'Tum' connecting them. This limited access made it difficult for neighbouring tribes to approach their villages. They viewed strangers as enemies leading to conflicts and constant wars. Lais strategically selects new village locations to make access difficult for others.⁷³

Strategic Location of village

Lai communities strategically built their villages on the elevated hillside; thus, they had a good vantage point to see any approaching enemies. Because they had the custom of moving the village at intervals, the choice of a site had to consider many factors. First, there should be easily accessible water sources. In addition, the major concern in the planning of these settlements is effective defence against enemies and the assessment of atmospheric and environmental suitability.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, 338.

⁷² Interview with Vanlian, on 14 May 2016, Halkha (Chin Hills, Burma).

⁷³ Interview with Vanhmingthanga, on 25 June 2016, Lungzarhtum.

⁷⁴ Interview with Thanhrranga, on 8 June 2016, Lungzarhtum.

Kulhbing

A *Kulhbing* is the stockade found in every village centre during pre-colonial times, supposedly originating from the Chin Hills of Burma and then the Lushai Hills. At the centre of the village, strong wooden walls named '*Kulhbing*' were built as a place of refuge in the case of an attack. The stockade consisted of tree trunks and saplings arranged in several rows with defensive loopholes; it was surrounded by a trench filled with bamboo stakes and a draw bridge. When surprise attacks occur, people would quickly take refuge within *Kulhbing*. In the meantime, besides hostile human nature, the Lais would build village fences or fortified wild animals as protective measures during the pre-colonial period. This wooden fence around the village was known as 'Khuakulh' and was quite popular in the initial days.

Types of Warfare

The traditional type of warfare among Zo ethnic tribes is known as heroic warfare. Various reasons for the conflict were marked by battles between the leaders of rival clans and tribes. It can also be highlighted that the primary aspect of this warfare involved individual chiefs from opposing sides.⁷⁵ This practice was quite similar to that of Lai ancestors during the early stages of warfare.

Ralpi or Combat war

The *Ralpi* was a tribal warfare method for same-clan members from different areas. The parties agreed to avoid secret ambushes. Their aim was to capture rivals as slaves, although captivity ended with ransom payments.⁷⁶ Captives married from captor villages, with ransom money going to the captors, could fix amounts independently. The chiefs and their families were protected from capture through mutual understanding between the clans.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Lalchhuanawma, The early Military encounter with the British: Warfare techniques, adaptation and strategies, (Hyderabad: Unpublished PhD thesis, 2014), 125.

⁷⁶ NE Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2006), 28.

⁷⁷ Interview with Vanlian, on 14 may 2016, Halkha (Chin Hills, Burma).

Rawlral or Guerilla warfare

'*Rawlral*' was a dangerous type of warfare that involved surprise attacks similar to guerrilla warfare. Once a systematic plan and observation were carried out, warriors would attack the adversaries' villages when the opponent was less aware of the danger. Armed warriors would ambush unprepared households by passing their way. They attacked villagers at nightfall, coming to the Lo, making sudden attacks, and moving quickly to other locations.

Sometimes, they laid ambush in the thick jungle of the approaching enemy, and instantly fired and disappeared.⁷⁸ They attacked the enemy during difficult situations, such as river crossings or areas affected by natural calamities. Offensive weapons included stone booty traps, firearms, spears, bamboo spikes, pellet bows, bows and arrows, and Dao, with booty traps being the most damaging to approaching enemies. The weapons were limited to power and shots, using homemade powder that ignited slowly but powerfully, with an angular metal shot forced from flintlock muskets.⁷⁹

In those periods, the invaders or fighters would go so far as to kill the children and return with the heads of their foes. Traditional raid was typically conducted where the targets was easily reachable. However, conflicts between villages or tribes were generally avoided during the rainy season.

Rammu

This was another tactic or method by which a man or a group of men set out to kill and cut the heads of enemies from a particular village. An adventurous warrior may also take this advantage and lie in an ambush, and whoever came within their hideout would be attacked. They usually spend one day to even a week, according to the availability of their foe. The main aim of this type of tactic was to get the enemy's head so that they would be acknowledged and noticed by society. Essentially, it was for individual fame and valour. However, among the Lais, no war was waged

⁷⁸ TH Lewin, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2004), 164.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Notes on the Thado-Kukis*, 80.

without good reason, and no person was annihilated without war declaring unless they were at war with the larger community.

The village that was affected usually suffered severe annihilation. The attackers would usually burn the entire village, and its inhabitants would run for safety in nearby jungles. Before setting the fire, the warriors first looked at each house for any valuable or household items, especially those made from brass or iron. Apart from these valuables, they also look for cotton-made cloths, especially quills and *Pawnpui*. Items such as hairpin, beads, bangles, or any items that were usually looking for by young warriors to carry home so that they would proudly present to their girlfriends.

Operation of warfare

The Chiefs and his warriors were always in the lead, followed by the households of the village carrying gongs and drums, with which they made a loud and prolonged. On this occasion, however, the unarmed villages returned after seeing off the warriors, and the warriors were ready to attack the enemy villages.⁸⁰

After travelling far and when the enemy village was approaching, few warriors were sent to obtain prior information about one of the villages. It was to have full knowledge of the area in which they would attack. The second batch of warriors was sent to investigate the actual position of the stockades or village fences. Once those were done, they set an accurate time and place to strike or make an assault against their adversary. They carefully compare opponents in terms of weapons and men's force to defeat them. They managed to determine where strength was super abundant and where it was deficient.⁸¹ In making a tactical disposition, the most preferable method was to strike at night when the enemies were in a state of relief or after the ceremonial function in which all the village men were drunk. However, let the methods be regulated under an infinite variety of circumstances. Therefore, in warfare, the best way is to avoid what is strong and strike at what is weak.

⁸⁰ NE Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2006) 209.

⁸¹ T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South Eastern India*, 139.

The party marched towards the village through a gual path. The warriors destroyed the village fence and entered it, with the commander instructing each man to take the position surrounding the houses. Once they set up a specific position, they began firing shots at their houses.⁸² The village was filled with cries of women and children and sounds of firearms. After the attack, the village was filled with blood, dead bodies, and injured men. Survivors fled, whereas the others were captured. The party began its return journey before sunrise, taking heads, captives, and war spoils. If the heads were numerous, they peeled the skin, which was considered equivalent to taking the heads. On their way home, if the village was far, they would rest overnight at a suitable place.

A successful party usually entered the village early in the morning. During the day or after sunset, it was a taboo for the war party to enter the village. Before reaching the village, the party fired several rounds of volleys to announce its arrival. Once the households of the village heard the sound of fire arms, all came to meet the war party beating drums and gongs with plenty of rice beer. The warrior who brought the highest number of heads of enemy was honoured by giving a special cup of rice beer. After consuming rice beer, they entered the village with a triumphant cheer and shout. The heads of the enemy were taken to the village, placed on the ground, and immediately followed by a grand ceremony.⁸³

Traditional weaponry, Firearms and Gun powder

The traditional weaponry employed in the chin hills was mainly concentrated in the bows, arrows, spears, and short das. In the early periods, each man or warrior carried out offensive or defense in war by sticking to minimal equipment. Despite the shortage of arms and being the only weapons available, Lais carried out various raids and expeditions to neighbouring territories. Later, guns were procured and owned mainly by the chiefs within the village. Therefore, Guns were regarded as the most valuable possession among the chin hills. Every Chin man dream was to own a gun to portray his wealthiest nature among his fellow men.

⁸² T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South Eastern India*, 139.

⁸³ Zohra, *The Maras Indigenous Tradition and Folk Culture*, 153.

Firearms were commonly imported from Burma and Chittagong (Bangladesh) during the first half of the nineteenth century, with upper Burma annexed and border districts demilitarised. Because many Burmans would rather sell their weapons to the Chins for a small sum of money than turn them into British troops for no reason, this drove a sizable number of guns into the hills.⁸⁴ As per colonial records related to the use of firearms, the Chins were all excellent shots. A chin never failed to bring down a mythun as the first shot, while British soldiers took many shots, and even then, the animal sometimes escaped. All the chins were armed with old tower-flint locks.⁸⁵ They were fond of shooting, and large hunting parties frequently made expeditions into the uninhabited parts in search of elephants, wild bison or bison, bears, tigers, and so on.⁸⁶ Hunting played an important role in the economy of Lai as meat, in addition to their subsistence economy. Lais eat anything from rhinoceros to monkeys and from large to small animals, including all types of birds.

Chin method of making gun powder

This unique and strong chin suit significantly affects the production of gunpowder. Its roots deserve consideration; people think it came from the Chinese via the Burmans. In a typical chin home, the toilet is built right over the pigpen, which can be located under the house. To keep a thick layer of poop on the pigpen floor, the sides are raised so that rainwater does not enter and wash away the topsoil.⁸⁷

The pigs live with them and eat and excrete simultaneously. From these processes, nitrates were created and utilised for three years to produce gunpowder. Therefore, an inch of man-made sediment can accumulate. This waste was placed in a hanging basket to drain it. As it began to develop a reddish colour, it was filtered for the extraction of nitrates until clear effluent results were obtained. Then, this reddish liquid is again heated nearly to the point of dryness, and the solids are thrown away. After cooling, the liquid was strained to collect crystals of nitrate and

⁸⁴ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills Vol I*, 203.

⁸⁵ A. G.E. Newland, *The Image of War or Service on the Chin Hills* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1892), 66-68.

⁸⁶ Lalrinmawia, *Mizoram-History and Cultural Identity (1890 – 1947)*, 3.

⁸⁷ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills Vol I*, 225.

clear powder, which were then mixed with charcoal in equal parts for use in artillery.⁸⁸

The leftover liquid mixed with wood ash formed sun-dried bricks. When combined with pig manure and water, more nitrates were produced. Nitrates were not produced from incinerated or submerged waste. The Chins imported sulfur from Burma before occupation. Aunglauk beans with a high sulfur content were used for charcoal mixed with nitric acid. Chin decomposes beans into streams, producing a sulfurized hydrogen odour, as raw consumption is lethal. They extracted charcoal and sulfur from beans and made salt paper from compost. The gunpowder matches the imported sulfur's potency but ignites slower with alcohol added if too fine.

During the British expedition, they often encountered sulfur factories in villages consisting of wooden troughs or wicker baskets filled with various beans submerged in the stream. Sulfur was obtained from the decomposition of the beans, and expedition members could detect their approach using distinctive odours. Chin uses various materials as projectiles: telegraph wire segments, pebbles, or iron fragments shaped into squares adequately serve this purpose. The barrels of their firearms were considered to be the most valuable. Most other parts are self-manufactured, and the chief's firearms are typically adorned with an exquisite lacquer.⁸⁹

Subsistence economy of the Lais

The geographical positioning of the Chins in a mountainous region impeded their capacity to communicate with adjacent plains, thereby restricting their engagement with external markets. It posits that the Chin economy functions as a borderline economy characterised by the adoption of concepts such as wages, capital investment, profit, and pricing. The notion of 'impersonal/neutral trade' emerged

⁸⁸ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills Vol I*, 225.

⁸⁹ A.G.E. Newland, *The Image of War or Service on the Chin Hills* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1892), 66-68.

from brief encounters with the free market. Isolation tends to foster personalisation, and social structures play a pivotal role in the regulation of economic activities.⁹⁰

The Lais practiced what is called swiddening by anthropologists, an agriculture method known to the Burmans as *Tuan-ya* and to the Indians as *jhum*. Lehman noted that other Chin groups also practice the cultivation of permanent fields. They grow rice in banked, irrigated fields in the lowlands and at the bottom of the valleys. Such an agricultural approach is the old way for some villages of Chin from the Chittagong Hill Tracts; it is becoming more modernised among some Kuki communities in Manipur and with the plain Chin of Burma.⁹¹

Sources of Food

Lai's income comes from agriculture and three natural resources for food: fields (*Lo*), village gardens (*Indum*), and forests. Fishermen catch fish from rivers, hunters trap wild games, and gatherers collect honey and wild fruit. Staple crops include the roots, vegetables, pulses, and grains. Grains comprise jawari, rice, and maize; vegetables include pumpkins, cucumbers, marrows, gherkins, onions, chilies, brinjal, and wild spinach; pulses contain gram, beans, dal, sweet potatoes, and yams; and plant species include lilies, turmeric, and ginger.⁹²

The selection of primary crops depends on precipitation, although crop diversity helps to mitigate the risk of famine during crop failure. Common threats include rodents; flooding; phytopathological issues; and damage from birds, primates, and bears. Soil fertility is enhanced by burning fallen timber on new land and incinerating weeds and crop residues in the cultivated areas. Partial terracing using tree trunks and stone supports requires extensive labour. Without terraces, heavy rainfall would erode crops and soil.

The Chins, primarily farmers, classify their main foods into land allocation, rotation planning, spiritual guidance, crop cultivation and seasonal variations, labour supervision, agricultural equipment and methods, and contemporary trends.

⁹⁰ HNC Steventon, *Economics of Central Chin Tribes*, (Bombay: The Times of India Press Bombay, 1943), 3.

⁹¹ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 47.

⁹² Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hill Vol I*, 210.

Selection of land for cultivation

In Chin cultivation practices, one needs to understand local climatic conditions. This hilly region varies in landscape and altitude, depending on the geographical location of each village. Some areas were covered by dense jungles, whereas others were dominated by bamboo. The Chin people are particularly interested in selecting the land for cultivation. The cultivated areas extend to the village boundaries.⁹³ If soil fertility allows, they will cultivate land from mountaintops all the way down to valley bottoms. They differentiate between "Lailo" (warm land) and "Zolo" (cold land) and adjust their agricultural activities accordingly.

The territorial divisions

Lais established permanent villages with boundaries defined by natural features such as streams, mountains, and rivers. Despite having sufficient land, their agricultural practices required rotating land use after cultivation because primitive methods without fertilisers depleted the soil. Lais adopted a shifting system in two stages: enabling regional rotation of cultivation and allocating suitable land to village households.⁹⁴

Villages had their own land divided into plots called 'Lo' for agriculture. Fresh jungle areas sanctioned for cultivation were known as '*Lopil*'. The clearing of new land was called '*Lopil Nam*', with each household having designated land in the same area, and the varied sizes of household lands were termed '*Lo hmu*'.⁹⁵ Small stones mark the boundaries of *Lo* (plots), while natural features such as hills or streams define borders between larger *Lopil* divisions. *Lopil* (village plot) contains a varying number of plots that differ in fertility, size, and shape. Colonial accounts indicate that people near Kolodyne have permanent villages.⁹⁶ However, in search of better land, Lais extended its rule to various places in accordance with their indigenous requirements and because when the land or fertility of the soil was eventually reduced, it could not yield sufficient or expected produce. On some

⁹³ Stephen Nikio, *Lai Nunphung* (Chin Culture and traditions), 339.

⁹⁴ Steventon, *Economics of Central Chin Tribes*, 31.

⁹⁵ Sakta Ram Hmung, *Laimi Nuncan Khuasak Phung*, (Halkha: Chin Association for Christian Communication, 2005), 93.

⁹⁶ Political department- 54, Carton Box- 5, Mizoram State Archives, 18.

occasions, they shifted to a new site that had not been cultivated by other clans or tribes.⁹⁷

Division of Agricultural Labour

The Lai people practice communal subsistence farming shaped by regional geography and culture. Within the Chin community, farming prioritises family nutrition over commercial production, emphasising self-sufficiency. This agricultural system maintains community cohesion while shaping social organisations. Their traditional cultivation system provides an understanding of local conditions, with families focusing on pre-rain seed sowing. According to Lai tradition, seeds sown before rainfall yield better harvests, as expressed in "Leiro rawl le Rengro zu." The system includes three types of voluntary service.

1. Chawmhrawih: Invites friends to provide field services and lunches.
2. Vengrawih: Adjacent families help those unable to perform their agricultural duties.
3. Hlawhbung: Men provide reciprocal agricultural services.⁹⁸

Overall, the traditional agricultural labour system in the Chin community was characterised by a selfless nature and aided its neighbours. Moreover, subsistence orientation, reliance on traditional knowledge, and integration with cultural practices have been adopted.

Agricultural Implements

The Chin Community uses customary agricultural tools that was appropriate for its environmental conditions. Even though these implements may appear less sophisticated than those of neighbouring cultures, they are efficient and adequate for the particular farming practices of the Chin and hence effectively address their distinct problems in the terrain of the Chin Hills. The agricultural implements of this community are as follows:

⁹⁷ O.Rosanga, "Inter Sub-tribal Relations Among the Early Mizo", in *A Modern History of Mizoram* ed. by Sangkima, 46.

⁹⁸ Ram Hmung, *Laimi Nuncan Khuasak Phung*, 95.

Chopping tools: Thlawh kawi (indigenous billhook).

Axe: Hreitlung

Hoes: Tu-hmui

Farmers use chopping implements and billhooks for land preparation, with axes for denser forest areas. These tools were used for vegetation clearing. Agricultural tools show design variations: ‘*Hreitlung*’ and ‘*Tu-teng*’ have linear handles with blades, while ‘*Tu-hmui*’ has a bifurcated handle for blade rotation. Both hoe types have short handles suited for farming on inclined terrain, adapting to Chin conditions.

Chopping tools: Thlawh kawi (indigenous billhook).

Axe: Hreitlung

Hoes: Tu-hmui

They use chopping implements and billhooks for land preparation. Axes were used in dense forests. These agricultural tools vary their design: both the ‘*Hreitlung*’ and ‘*Tu-teng*’ have a linear handle with blade whereas the ‘*Tu-hmui*’ has a bifurcated handle which allows the rotation of the blade. Both have short handles and how they adapt to farming on inclined terrain; clearly, it is an adaptation to conditions found in the Chin region.⁹⁹

Storage of crops.

The Granaries were storage facilities made of strip bamboo in a circular design inside houses used to store harvested crops for families; they have been essential throughout Chin history. The grains were manually transported to villages as head loads, which are tiresome. Maize is strung up to the rafters of the inner and outer rooms, where bunches of millet that overflow from the granary are sometimes seen. One way to check village prosperity after harvest is to look at house rafters; empty rafters indicate poor yield.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Steventon, *Economics of Central Chin Tribes*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 42.

Granaries have historically played a pivotal role in food security among the Chin people. These storage facilities, built from strip bamboo within residential structures, store harvested cereals, primarily maize. The practice of suspending maize from the granary capacity of residential rafters while its absence indicates agricultural distress. The transport of harvested grains to settlements is accomplished through head loading, highlighting the labour-intensive nature of traditional Chin agricultural practices.¹⁰¹

Trade

The Lai people's trade system constitutes a sophisticated network of economic activities shaped by the region's distinctive geography, diverse cultural influences, and historical context. This system is predicated on regional markets, established communication channels, and codified regulations governing transactions. The maintenance of peace is crucial for trade, underscoring the interconnection between economic activities and social harmony within Lai's society. This trade system not only bolsters the economy, but also reinforces the societal and cultural resilience of the Lai people.

In the pre-colonial period, Lai did not have currency and depended heavily on the barter system of trade with the neighbouring tribes of Burma and India.¹⁰² The precious items acquired through the barter system were converted into valuable products. The most important traditional import from Burma was iron, the blacksmith forge or reforge into steel tools for war, farming, and general use. The advancement of the traditional concept of art and skills helps them to produce the most valuable items, such as spears, das, axe-heads, hoes, knives, hairpins, or flintlock guns within the hilly areas, which were regarded as heritable goods known as Hlawn(female) and Ro(male).¹⁰³ These valuable heritable items were customarily circulated among the few wealthy families in connection with regional marriage exchange. Blacksmiths were also found throughout the hills.

¹⁰¹ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hill Vol I*, 213.

¹⁰² Chester U. Strait THD, *The Chin people: A selective history and anthropology of the chin people*, (United state of America, 2014), 159.

¹⁰³ Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society*, 166.

The Lai people, inhabiting hilly regions, faced a significant scarcity of salt production, with only sporadic deposits available locally. This deficiency necessitated a heavy reliance on neighbouring lowland areas in both India and Burma for salt procurement. The initial trade mechanism was characterised by a barter system, which primarily exchanged bee-wax for salt. In the absence of readily available salts, Laos developed alternative methods, such as utilising water leached through ash as a substitute. This salt trade served as a catalyst for broader economic interactions, facilitating the influx of various luxury items into the hill regions. These imported goods included: Livestock, particularly buffalo, musical instruments like gongs, metal ware, including brass and iron pots, decorative items such as beads and diverse ornaments crafted from brass and white metal, textiles and related materials, including silk thread and coloured cotton yarn, traditional garments, notably yaw plaids. In addition, rice has become a crucial import commodity during periods of food scarcity.¹⁰⁴

This pattern of trade illustrates the complex economic interdependencies between the hill-dwelling Lai communities and their lowland neighbours. It demonstrates how basic necessities such as salt catalysed a more extensive network of trade, introducing a variety of goods that influenced the material culture and economic landscape of Lai society. The trade system not only addressed immediate resource needs but also facilitated cultural exchange and economic diversification within the Lai community.

Trade in ornaments

Lais jewellery uses a two-way sourcing approach in which raw metals are imported and recycled materials come from gongs and brass pots. This shows how new metalwork techniques mix outside to help with locally reused metal items. The people of Hakha do not believe in superstitions about the lac collection. However, some people do not bring raw lac to their places because of the previous death of animals; hence, they fear it. Anyone who breaks this rule is punished by the elders of the village; this usually involves a fine in terms of livestock, which means to calm down the spirit of the village. There is no such cultural restriction on processed lac,

¹⁰⁴ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hill Vol I*, 214.

as evidenced by its use in knife handmaking by Vanhla villagers, who were blacksmiths.

Lac harvesting used to be completely taboo, but since people realised its commercial value, there was some relaxation of these cultural restrictions. It sells for one rupee per lac locally, whatever price Burma Lac fetches externally, and most of the Lac trade is with Daidin villagers from Gangaw who come once a year to buy it.

In the field of textile art, the production of stitched quilts important items needs the use of brought-in silk. The colouring methods were learned from Burmans, who used lac to make a bright red colour, along with plant-based dyes obtained nearby. When silk thread is used, it is bought in bundles from Burma and then coloured to the desired shade. Uncooked cotton is grown, spun into thread, and coloured; this work is mostly done by women. This need for good materials from outside places shows how much value is placed on skill in Hakha Chin's cultural making.

Pum-trek (Chin beads), pots, gongs, and cymbals are extremely culturally significant because they have been imported for many generations among the Chin people. Beads available from the Gangaw of Pakokku district come in ten varieties with black backgrounds and white stripes in round, flat, and cylindrical shapes.¹⁰⁵ Their prices were between 8 and 100 rupees; however, heirloom pieces were considered priceless. Important collections are maintained by Lianmo of Sangte, the Sangpi family, and Chief Liandun of the Thlantlang tribe. It is not known where these beads originated from the Chin community. This creates very strong taboos on their disposal because it is believed that such an action would bring misfortune upon a family death and infertility.¹⁰⁶

This demonstrates the complex interactions between material culture, social stratification, and beliefs in Chin society, with regard to heirlooms as important components for sustaining cultural continuity and social structure. Economically, the Lai people are very enterprising. They collected and sold cork husks to Burma,

¹⁰⁵ Chester U. Strait THD, *The Chin people: A selective history and anthropology of the chin people*, 160.

¹⁰⁶ W.R. Head, *Hand Book on the Haka Chin Customs* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government printing, 1917). 48.

where cheroot wrapping was performed. Three kyats were going for beeswax in the hills in 1958 and 10 kyats in Mandalay. Thus, there was a large price difference between the local and urban markets. In addition, they traded stick lac and other forest products with Burma. However, with the colonial administration, new economic dynamics emerged. Relations and public infrastructure, such as roads in the Chin Hills and other Burmese lands, brought small amounts of money into the local economy.¹⁰⁷ This change greatly altered the economic scene of the place, adding money transactions next to the old barter system.

Wealth in motion: Circulation of goods and ideas through Chin trade routes

The Lai people's trade with neighbouring plains was conducted through limited channels, with Kalemio and Gangaw serving as primary procurement centres. Notably, hilly tribes lacked systematic trade regulations. Within the Halkha jurisdiction, Khuapi village and Senthang region were reputed as the most proficient traders. Lai villagers often undertook direct expeditions to Burmese plains for essential purchase. Concurrently, small-scale dealers near border areas facilitated the transportation of modest quantities of goods to hills. The precise mechanisms of goods circulation within hills during earlier periods remain unclear. Powerful interior groups, including Tlaisun, Halkha, and Thlantlang, frequently organised expeditions on the plains for both raiding and trading purposes. It is improbable that entrepot villages at the plains' borders possessed sufficient independent means to acquire substantial quantities of costly civilised goods that circulated throughout the hills, even if interior villagers were to subsequently reimburse these purchases.

Traditionally, neither individuals nor single villages accumulated sufficient capital to engage in large-scale trade with Burma. This economic structure reflects the decentralised nature of trade and resource distribution within the Lai community, highlighting the complex interplay between geography, social organisation, and economic practices in this highland region.

The northern extremity of the Chin Hills engaged in trade primarily with Kalemio and Khampat, with Tiddim Village situated in close proximity to

¹⁰⁷ Chester U. Strait THD, *The Chin people: A Selective History and Anthropology of the Chin People*, 157.

Kalemyo's market town. Concurrently, Falam village utilised a track ascending from the Myittha Valley and maintained direct routes to the Lushai territory. Halkha's significant prominence is attributable to its strategic location at the intersection of routes from both eastern and western directions. It capitalised on trade from Gangaw and Daidin as well as commerce flowing southward through Falam from the Myittha Valley. The Thlantlang sub-area maintains connections with the South Lushai Hills. The Lautu subarea exhibited close ties with the Mara-dominated area, characterised by shared linguistic, cultural, and trade affiliations. This connection also served as a route to the southern Lushai Hills. Zotung had the most direct access to Burmese plains via daidin.¹⁰⁸

This geographical distribution of trade routes and market access illustrates the complex economic network of the Chin Hills, highlighting the strategic importance of certain villages and subareas in facilitating regional commerce and cultural exchanges. The varied trade connections reflect the diverse economic orientations of different Chin subgroups shaped by their geographical positions and historical relationships with neighbouring regions.

Conclusion

Lai society in the Chin Hills exemplifies the adaptation of human communities to challenging mountainous environments. They developed sophisticated political structures and innovative subsistence strategies. Their political system is characterised by hereditary chieftaincy, sanctioned by the Khua-hrum deity, which establishes a social hierarchy comprising nobles, commoners, and slaves. This framework allows village autonomy while maintaining allegiance to regional chiefs. Dominant clans such as Zathang and Chinzah expanded their territories through conquest and strategic alliances.

The study of warfare and raids among Lai communities uncovers a multifaceted social, cultural, and political institution that transcends mere acts of violence. Conflicts between villages were deeply embedded in the sociopolitical structure of Lai society, playing numerous roles that significantly influenced

¹⁰⁸ Chester U. Strait THD, *The Chin People: A Selective History and Anthropology of the Chin People*, 165.

community growth and cultural identity. In the Lai society, warfare is a complex system of power dynamics and resource management. The competitive environment fostered by martial confrontations established community hierarchies, facilitated resource redistribution, and delineated territorial limits. This analysis reveals not random acts of violence but a deliberate strategy aimed at community survival and progress within challenging environmental and social settings.

The root causes of warfare, such as inherited blood feuds, territorial disputes, and economic incentives, highlight the rational basis for this practice. Communities have made strategic decisions about when and how to conduct raids, utilising advanced intelligence gathering, tactical planning, and environmental considerations to enhance their chances of success. This strategic aspect emphasises that Lai warfare was not merely reactive, but was intentional and purposeful.

A particularly important aspect was the cultural dimension of warfare, as seen in practices such as head hunting. The collection of enemy heads met ceremonial needs, reflected spiritual beliefs about the afterlife, and showcased martial skills. This practice wove warfare into the broader cosmological framework of the Lai people, linking military actions to their views of life, death, and social status. Meticulously organised ceremonies following successful raids further integrated warfare into the community's ritual life.

Defensive innovations, such as strategically placing villages on elevated ground and developing sophisticated stockade systems, demonstrate the technological adaptations that arose in response to ongoing conflicts. The various methods of warfare - *Ralpi* (combat war), *Rawlral* (guerrilla warfare), and *Rammu* (individual head-hunting expeditions)—portray the tactical sophistication and situational flexibility that characterise Lai martial practices.

The interaction between indigenous warfare traditions and British colonial powers represents a pivotal historical juncture. Lai communities' cross-border raids challenged imperial authority and autonomy. Colonial pacification efforts sought to transform indigenous military traditions to align them with imperial governance. Warfare among Lai communities integrated military strategies, cultural practices,

social organisations, and spiritual beliefs. These practices were rational adaptations to environmental challenges and social realities. Analysing pre-colonial Lai warfare provides insights into indigenous governance systems and cultural values that shaped community development. It illuminates how martial traditions served as arenas of resistance and adaptation during colonial encounters, thus enhancing the understanding of indigenous responses to imperial expansion in northeastern India.

The Lai people also demonstrated adept land management practices. They employ terms such as "Lailo" (warm land) and "Zolo" (cold land) to strategically select and rotate crops, thereby ensuring sustainable resource utilisation. Their agricultural practices are organised by territorial divisions, family labour groups, and cooperative efforts, reflecting strong community cohesion and collaboration.

These political and economic systems contribute to the resilience of Lai's society. They effectively manage resources in challenging environments while preserving the social order and cultural heritage. Although British colonial rule disrupted certain practices and modernisation presents new challenges, Lai's adaptive strategies remain relevant, particularly in the context of global environmental issues. Lai's experience illustrates how traditional knowledge enables communities to thrive by fostering an understanding of their environment and establishing robust social systems. As these communities encounter new challenges, the rich history of their political, social, and ecological systems offers valuable insights. These lessons are crucial for cultural preservation and the development of sustainable practices in other mountainous regions that face similar challenges.

The study of warfare and raids among Lai communities uncovers a multifaceted social, cultural, and political institution that transcends mere acts of violence. Conflicts between villages were deeply embedded in the sociopolitical structure of Lai society, playing numerous roles that significantly influenced community growth and cultural identity. In the Lai society, warfare is a complex system of power dynamics and resource management. The competitive environment fostered by martial confrontations established community hierarchies, facilitated resource redistribution, and delineated territorial limits. This analysis reveals not random acts

of violence but a deliberate strategy aimed at community survival and progress within challenging environmental and social settings.

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CHAPTER - III

COLONIAL SURVEY, MAPPING AND ROAD CONSTRUCTION

In 1885, following the British annexation of Upper Burma, the primary objective was to establish comprehensive governance and administration by eliminating 'dacoits' within the controlled region. Numerous Burman nationalists and insurgents opposing British colonial expansion fled and concealed themselves in the jungles, including some who sought refuge in Chin Hills.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, British authorities aimed to explore these 'unknown' interior hill terrains and neutralise potential threats to the greatest extent possible. Initially, the Chief Commissioner of Burma opposed the reconnaissance policy through the Chin Hills. He advocated establishing a rapport with the chiefs of this uncharted territory, proposing to higher authorities the initiation of communication and confidence building with the Chin Hills. Once an agreement was reached, the Chins would deny asylum to any 'dacoits' seeking refuge in the Chin Hills when pursued by the proposed Yaw country operations.

It is noteworthy that British imperialists conducted extensive surveys in Upper Burma with a particular focus on the Upper Burma survey, including the Chin region. Additionally, the survey of the Chin Hills can be examined from the perspective of Chittagong Column expansion. The Indo-Burma border region features several triangulation meridian project meeting points, such as 1) the eastern frontier series, 2) the east Calcutta series, 3) the Brahmaputra series, and 4) the later Manipur series.

Building Rapport with the Chiefs of Chin Hills: Reconnaissance Insights

On 2 December 1887 the Chief Commissioner of Burma authorised an initiative to study and engage with hill tribes. Captain Raikes was appointed as a first-class magistrate, a role later equivalent to Deputy Commissioner, with responsibilities to negotiate with the Northern Chin Hills, whose boundaries were not precisely defined, and to serve as a Civil Officer with survey columns in the territory north of Gangaw

¹⁰⁹ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 168, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

(Yaw Country).¹¹⁰ Concurrently, Captain Eyre was designated as a civil officer with troops in the territory south of Gangaw in the southern region of the Chin Hills, in the same order as the Chief Commissioner of Burma.

The directive explicitly stated that when the survey columns convened at Gangaw, any policy questions regarding the Chins or related military operations would be resolved by the opinion of Captain Raikes, as the senior officer.¹¹¹ Captain Raikes initiated communication with the chiefs of the Northern Chin Hills and established the groundwork for the surveying party to explore the Chin Hills through Chittagong. However, in accordance with the request of the Chief Commissioner of Burma, a decision was made to suspend the Chin Hills survey to prevent hostility.

On 14 December 1887 Raikes arrived in Kalemmyo and dispatched emissaries to the Sizang tribes, extending an invitation to their chiefs for a meeting in Kalemmyo.¹¹² On 26 December 1887, four chiefs of Sizang—Tun Suan, Hau Suan, Do San, and Thiansang—convened with Raikes at a Kyaung (monastery). During this meeting, Raikes communicated to the chiefs that, in 1886, the territories of the King of Burma had been transferred to British control, and the British government recognised Sawbua Maung Pa Gyi as the ruler of the Kale state.¹¹³ Furthermore, Raikes cautioned that any raids or activities within the Kale Valley must cease and any future raids by the tribes would be regarded as acts of hostility against the government. Consequently, the chiefs were held accountable to surrender any offenders to the Deputy Commissioner.¹¹⁴

Captain Raikes advanced from Kalemmyo to Indin and dispatched emissaries to Falam to invite Tlaisun/Falam Chiefs to a specially convened meeting at Indin.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 175, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹¹¹ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 175, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹¹² First Meeting with the chiefs of Northern Circle of the Chin Hills (26 December 1887): Sizang tribe dominated region

¹¹³ In Burmese, "myo" means town or city, so "Kalemmyo" means Kale Town. In summary, Kalemmyo is the proper name, while Kale is sometimes used informally.

¹¹⁴ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 182, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹¹⁵ Second Meeting with the Chiefs of Falam Circle (3 January 1888): Tlaisun chiefs dominated region

Chhawnbik, the principal Chief of Falam, descended to Sihuang at the foothill, but declined to proceed to Indin. Consequently, Captain Raikes travelled to Sihuang and convened a meeting on 3 January 1888. During this meeting, Raikes delivered a message to the Tlaisun/Falam Chief, emphasising that the expansive region of Burma was now under British control, with the English Crown recognising the Sawbua of Kale as the ruler of Kalewa. He cautioned against any incursions into Kalewa territory, warning that any such actions would prompt a British response to enter and devastate their territory. Nonetheless, a positive outcome of the meeting was the British government's encouragement for the Tlaisun tribe to continue trade between the Chin and Shan regions to the east and between the Chins and Chittagong to the west. Discussions also addressed the significance of existing indigenous trade routes traversing the Tlaisun tract. Regarding the recognition of Kale under British jurisdiction, Chhawnbik astutely acknowledged that, with Kale under British occupation, the British held the authority to appoint any individual as a leader.

A reconnaissance survey party was dispatched through the Tlaisun tract to assess and report on the trade routes leading to Chittagong. The Sizang and Sakliling tribes frequently conducted raids on the Kale Valley; however, the frequency of these raids significantly diminished, a change attributed by the British to the influence of Falam Chief Chhawnbik. In one instance, members of the Sizang tribe were interviewed in March 1887. Raikes asserted that trade would be mutually beneficial in the future, maintaining connections with Chittagong on one side and with Kale and Chindwin on the other. Moreover, he expressed a keen interest in understanding the Chin trade route and acquiring information on the optimal means of trade development.

However, Chhawnbik was reluctant to discuss the trade route, stating that although he was aware of its existence, he was personally unfamiliar with the trade activities. He informed Raikes that he needed to consult with other Chiefs and was not in a position to make a final decision regarding the trade route at that time. Conversely, he opposed any British advancement within his jurisdiction.

In January 1888, Captain Eyre, appointed to oversee the southern Chin Hills region, began his mission by arriving in Minywa. From this foothill station, he sent

Saingdu *thugyi*, a Burmese messenger, to the chief of Zokhua village, one of the prominent Lai chiefs.¹¹⁶ It is noteworthy that the Halkha circle¹¹⁷ includes influential Lai villages such as Zokhua, Halkha, and Sakta.¹¹⁸

A few days later, due to the lack of response from the Lai chiefs, Captain Eyre sent Sui Hleng to the Chin Hills to persuade the chiefs of Zokhua, Hakha, and Sakta to meet at the foothills of the Chin Hills in Minywa. Captain Eyre allowed Sui Hleng to be accompanied by two interpreters. Unfortunately, upon reaching Zokhua village, Sui Hleng was imprisoned, and the two interpreters were killed in retaliation for the murder of four Zokhua chiefs and their two followers in 1880 by Maing Kya Sin, the then *thugyi* of Gangaw.¹¹⁹ Sui Hleng later escaped, travelled to Arakan, then to Paletwa, and returned to Minywa after two days.¹²⁰ He reported to the British authorities that the villages of Zokhua, Hakha, and Sakta collaborated to resist British influence. Who was Sui Hleng? He was the brother of Min *thugyi*, originally from Zokhua village in the Chin Hills, and settled in Gangaw. He served as a guide under Captain Eyre, assisting the British colonial expedition in navigating the uncharted territories of the Chin Hills, including the routes from the Burmese plains to the Zokhua, Halkha, Sakta, and Thantlang circles.

“Sui Hleng, brother of one of the of Zokhua chiefs, came in from Gangaw and declared his ability to bring in the Zokhua, Halkha, and Sakta tribes. He asked to be allowed to take to Chins from Gangaw as interpreters and I give him leave to do so”

Captain Eyre

On 29 January 1888, the Zokhua chief sent a message indicating his unawareness that the murdered individuals were British messengers and expressed a desire to clarify the situation. Consequently, on 31 January 1888, Mang van Hmun,

¹¹⁶ Zokhua village is one of the biggest villages in the Halkha circle.

¹¹⁷ The Third Meeting with the Chiefs of Halkha Circle (January 1888): Lai Chiefs

¹¹⁸ Sakta village is in southern portion of Halkha circle.

¹¹⁹ "The *thugyi* of Gangaw" refers to the local chief or headman of Gangaw. In historical Burmese administration, a *thugyi* was a village or town leader responsible for governance, tax collection, and maintaining order within their jurisdiction. In this context, Maing Kya Sin was the leader or chief of Gangaw.

¹²⁰ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 182, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

the son of the Zokhua chief, conveyed a message expressing profound regret for the incidents and assured that the chiefs of Zokhua, Sakta, and Hakha villages would arrive in Minywa within 20 days. Captain Eyre proceeded to Minywa on 20 February 1888 to attend a meeting with the chiefs of the Lais of Hakha, Zokhua, and Sakta.¹²¹ However, he waited for several days without receiving further communication from the tribes.

Reconnaissance, Ambush, and Frontier Expansion (1888–1889): The Steward Expedition Tragedy (1888-1889)

The Chin Hills shares international borders with Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts) and India (Mizoram). In 1872, Mr. Cooke collaborated with Captain T.H. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, conducted a survey in the region. The reconnaissance team thoroughly explored the Uiphum and Saichal ranges, which were identified as the two most promising defence lines. During the survey, Captain T.H. Lewin met with the Deputy Commissioner of the Arakan Hill Tracts, who had travelled from Talukmai, to discuss the optimal method for connecting the defence line with British Burma.¹²² In 1888, the British Indian government sanctioned the establishment of an additional frontier post to support new road projects. Rhetorically, they claimed that the objective was to expand geographical knowledge and improve existing maps,¹²³ rather than acknowledging their intent of territorial expansion and occupation. As part of this initiative, small survey teams were deployed. One team was led by Lieutenant J.F. Steward of the 1st Battalion, Leinster Regiment, and another by Lieutenant J.Mc.D. Baird of the 2nd Battalion, Derbyshire Regiment. These teams conducted reconnaissance southeast of Rangamati. Lieutenant Steward, accompanied by Lance-Corporal McCormick and Private Owens from his regiment, carried out the survey with an escort of one Naick (corporal) and ten sepoy from the Border Police. The survey team was instructed to use Rangamati as their base and proceed southward along the Belaisuri Tong range,

¹²¹ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 182, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹²² Mackenzie, *The Northeast Frontier of Bengal*, 363.

¹²³ Shendu Raids on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Proposed Expedition against them, October 1888, Foreign Department-External A, No. 88, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 4.

where they were expected to meet Lieutenant Baird, who was advancing from Tlabung.¹²⁴ On 3 February 1888, just before dawn, Lieutenant Steward's survey team was ambushed by a large group led by Hausata and his brothers. The attack occurred near the Saichal Range, approximately 24 miles (or 18 miles as the crow flies) from Rangamati, and 10 miles within the British boundary. During the assault, Lieutenant Steward, two European soldiers, one Naik, five sepoy, and two servants were killed. Lieutenant Steward, along with two European soldiers and one sepoy, was decapitated, and the raiding party took their heads as trophies on their return.¹²⁵

Frontier Posts as a Strategic Surveillance Mechanism in the Tri-Frontier Zone: Lessons from the Steward Murder Case

The assassination of Lieutenant Steward and the subsequent attack on Prenkyne village marked a crucial turning point in British frontier policy regarding the hilly regions near the Lushai Hills, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and surrounding areas. These events revealed significant shortcomings in territorial surveillance and defence infrastructure, prompting a reassessment of frontier security strategies.

After the successful campaign of 1871–72, which had ushered in nearly a decade of peace in the frontier regions, administrative complacency began to set in. The newly appointed British officers in the hill tracts lacked first-hand experience of the region's volatile conditions before the expedition. This disconnects from previous military and political realities led to a critical error in 1875, when the acting Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts recommended dismantling the telegraph line connecting Rangamati and Kassalong.¹²⁶ This line had been vital for communication and surveillance, especially in supplying and maintaining remote outposts established by Colonel T.H. Lewin and Colonel Robert during earlier campaigns. Its removal left these frontier posts not only logistically unsustainable but also strategically vulnerable. This administrative oversight created a security vacuum, allowing local hill tribes to resume raiding activities. The consequences

¹²⁴ A.S. Reid, *Chin Lushai Land* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2008), 39.

¹²⁵ Shendu Raids on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Proposed Expedition against them, October 1888, Foreign Department-External A, No. 88, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹²⁶ Lushai Raids or Shendus in the Chittagong hill tracts and the dispatch of an expedition against them, March 1889, Foreign Department –External A, No. 22, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

were severe: Lieutenant Steward was killed, and Prenkyne village was plundered. These incidents underscored the urgent need to reinforce the British presence in the tri-frontier zone through a systematic deployment of surveillance and military infrastructure.

In response, Mr. Charles Lyall, Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, strongly advocated for significantly strengthening the frontier posts. He proposed deploying at least 250 regular troops to ensure the viability of the frontier defence system. These reinforcements were to be concentrated primarily in the Uiphum and Saichal Ranges, with a corresponding reinforcement of the Police force in the southern sector. Lyall emphasized the inadequacy of the existing Frontier Police force, which, although officially listed at 539 men, had an effective strength of only 450–475 due to frequent illness and recruitment shortfalls.

Lyall identified seven key posts—Tlabung, Uiphum, Saichal, Phurwah, Pyramid Hill, Politai, and Keokradong—as essential nodes in the proposed frontier defence network. These posts were envisioned not merely as static garrisons but as part of a broader surveillance infrastructure to monitor movements across the hills and deter potential incursions. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal endorsed Lyall's recommendations and communicated the urgency of the situation to the Government of India. Recognizing the gravity of the security lapse, the central government sanctioned the immediate deployment of 250 troops from the 9th Native Infantry. This force was tasked with re-establishing British control over the vulnerable frontier belt, ensuring logistical support to remote posts, and preventing further breaches. Thus, the murder of Lieutenant Steward catalysed a decisive shift in colonial policy toward the militarization and professionalization of frontier surveillance. The re-establishment of well-connected and strategically located frontier posts marked a new phase in British efforts to secure their administrative and territorial presence in the complex and often hostile terrain of the hill tracts.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Lushais. Raids by –or shendus in the Chittagong hill tracts and the despatch of an expedition against them, March 1889, Foreign Department –External A, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Knowing the Unknown Territory: The Punitive Expedition in the Southern Lushai Hills (1888–1889)

The British punitive expedition into the southern Lushai Hills during 1888–1889 represents a significant episode in colonial history, wherein military action was closely linked with the imperial ambition to map and comprehend uncharted territories. Following the ambush and killing of Lieutenant J.F. Steward and his survey party, what initially appeared as a tragedy evolved into an opportunity for the British to convert "unknown" frontier regions into "governable" colonial territories. Rather than deterring British interests, Steward's death prompted a more systematic approach to intelligence gathering.¹²⁸

The Chittagong Frontier Post's military base was prepared for a punitive expedition. A clearly defined frontier had been established, featuring a well-constructed hill road extending from Tlabung along the Uiphum range, traversing Saichal, and leading to Ruma. Additional intersecting roads connected Saichal to Furwa and Rangamati, as well as Saichal to Ruma via Pyramid Hill and Polytai, thereby enhancing communication and mitigating potential disturbances.¹²⁹ Concurrently, the Government of India was heavily engaged in ongoing military expeditions, including those in Hazara and Sikkim, along with potential operations in Burma. These commitments provided substantial justification for delaying further expeditions against the Lais. Notably, on 3 February 1888, Lieutenant Steward was killed by the Sendus/Lais, necessitating careful deliberation.

Given the multitude of ongoing military operations, the advisability of initiating another campaign at this juncture was questionable. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, Mr. Lyall, the Chittagong Commissioner, remained resolute in his determination to implement punitive measures against the Lai tribes at the earliest opportunity. He asserted that it was almost certain that the hostile trans-frontier tribes, emboldened by their success, would undertake further raids.

¹²⁸ Shendu Raids on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Proposed Expedition against them, October 1888, Foreign Department-External A, No. 88, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹²⁹ Lushais. Raids by –or shendus in the Chittagong hill tracts and the despatch of an expedition against them, March 1889, Foreign Department –External A, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

He further wrote, *"Our inactivity will be misunderstood by the trans-frontier tribes who are now friendly, and any action in future [will be] certain to be more difficult on this account. The tribes within the frontier will also be again restricted in their jhooming grounds, as they are at present, owing to fear of raids, and woodcutters will fear to go up the streams near the frontier, causing serious loss of forest revenue."*

Sir Stuart Bayley deemed it necessary to apprise the Government of India those local officials and planters had strongly underscored the imminent threat perceived at the frontier.¹³⁰ Significant communication occurred between Dr. Lyall, Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, and Mr. Buckle, Commissioner of the Arakan Division. Furthermore, Ramiou Roaza, who possessed extensive knowledge of the southern frontier, was interviewed. However, the acquisition of accurate information was impeded by variations in pronunciation. The primary aim was to gather comprehensive intelligence on the Lai villages implicated in the attack on Lieutenant Steward's survey party. C.S. Murray, District Superintendent of Police in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, collected crucial intelligence from diverse sources: local bazaar gossip, reports from Dobashi Paji Ham, and information from Saipuia's messengers. This intelligence network, albeit varying in reliability, provided essential insights into the location, defences, and political alliances of the Lai villages involved in the attack. Collaboration with local chiefs proved invaluable, particularly with Saipuia of Kawmzawl. His counsel on expedition timing and warnings regarding enemy fortifications significantly informed British strategy. The formal expedition, initiated in March 1889 under Colonels Tregear and Woodthorpe, pursued four objectives: punishing the Chinzah brothers responsible for Steward's death, halting tribal raids into British territories, establishing a road into Lai-dominated regions, and constructing a garrisoned outpost. Despite challenging terrain and initial navigation difficulties, the expedition succeeded in reaching key villages. A symbolic victory was achieved with the recovery of Lieutenant Steward's gun from Hausata's ceremonial grave, offering rare cultural insights into Lai elite

¹³⁰ Lushais. Raids by –or shendus in the Chittagong hill tracts and the despatch of an expedition against them, March 1889, Foreign Department –External A, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

customs. The campaign concluded with the destruction of villages belonging to Hausata and Zahuata, demonstrating British military prowess while opening the southern Lushai Hills to sustained colonial administration.¹³¹

With increasing repetition and intensive exploration, greater emphasis was placed on surveillance and mapping. It is documented that the Government of India issued directives on 19 December 1888 for a punitive expedition against Hausata and his brothers. Under the leadership of Colonel F.V.W. Tregear of the 9th Bengal Infantry, with Mr. Lyall serving as Civil Political Officer and Messrs. G.A.S. Bedford and C.S. Murray as Assistant Political Officers, Tlabung was designated as the operational base. Advanced parties were dispatched to select camps and provide cover for the working parties on the road. The intelligence department had already acquired the necessary information about Hausata's village prior to the issuance of the orders. The military expedition during the cold season of 1888–1889 was accompanied by a survey detachment led by Lieutenant W.H. Pollen, R.E., with Mr. A.J. James, Surveyor (4th grade), and Sub-Surveyor Ikbaludin. The detachment arrived in Chittagong on 12 January 1889 and reached Demagiri on 19 January 1889. The remainder of the month was devoted to conducting observations to extend the triangulation from the Sirtag and Uiphum Hill stations. It was determined that Lieutenant Pollen would concentrate on triangulation, while Mr. James and the sub-surveyor would undertake the topographical survey and a plane-table traverse of the road under construction between Demagiri and Lunglei.¹³²

Tlabung to Lunglei: Road Construction

Captain Shakespeare was initially directed to assume charge of aligning the road towards Kawmzawl village (Saipuia, in between Tlabung and Lunglei). On the evening of 14 February 1889, orders were received appointing Mr. Mills to take charge of the road to Saipuia's village. He left on the following morning (Sunday, 15 February), having had only a few hours' notice and very little time for preparation.

¹³¹ Shendu Raids on the Chittagong Hill tracts. Proposed Expedition against them, October 1888, Foreign Department- External A, No. 108, National Archives of India.

¹³² Instruction issued by the Chief Commissioner of Burma to Major Raikes in connection with the conduct of Political Affairs, October 1889, Foreign Department-External A, No. 39, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

As Mr. Mills's appointment rendered his deputation on the trans-frontier road unnecessary, he was directed to march up the road from Rangamati to Tlabung and fix the camping grounds. Mr. Mills, with Supervisor Baboo Bykuntha Nath Khan, was engaged in laying down the line and cutting a trace. Since no subordinates had then been deputed to serve under Mr. Mills, and as Lieutenant Nanton, R.E., was ill from the beginning, the entire work of supervising this large body of labour fell for some time on Lieutenant King Scote, R.E. On 19 February 1889, the road-making party completed the "sailing" which is 29 miles from the base, and on 2 March 1889 the work was completed.¹³³

Reconnaissance Survey of Kolodyne Area Before the Attack on Hausata Village

The column comprised approximately 1,500 men, including two guns from No. 2 Mountain Battery, 200 men from the Madras Pioneers, 250 men from the 2nd Bengal Infantry, 400 men from the 22nd Gurkhas, and 250 men from the 9th Bengal Infantry. This force was placed under the command of Colonel Tregear, who was tasked with punishing the raiders and establishing a post near Vandula's village. A small detachment led by Captain Shakespeare was dispatched towards the Kolodyne river to scout the approaches to the Shendu/Lai region.

A crucial aspect to note is that before the expedition against Hausata's village, the Kolodyne belt was surveyed by Captain Shakespeare (Intelligence Officer), Mr. Murray, their guides, and Lieutenant Swiney to gather geographical knowledge. This team returned on 10 March 1889, reporting that the road to the Kolodyne was suitable for mules and that Hausata's village was just a day's march further on a reasonably good road. According to their report, the Kolodyne is three days and two hours' march from the camp, with an excellent road fit for mules. Despite the limited scope of work completed, the expedition significantly enhanced the understanding of the region. One key finding was that, contrary to previous maps, no major stream or primary tributary feeds the Kolodyne river between Blue Mountain (Mal Selai Mon) and Darjow Tlang. Instead, the main watercourse lies further north between Aitur Tlang and Muallianpui Tlang. Additionally, it was

¹³³ Lushai Raids or shendus in the Chittagong hill tracts and the dispatch of an Expedition against them, March 1889, Foreign Department -External A, No 59. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

discovered that the Matt River joins the Kolodyne further south than previously recorded. Several new village sites were mapped, and the positions of others were corrected, improving the accuracy of regional cartography.¹³⁴

Attacking Hausata Village: Expedition Team Moved Forward from Lunglei

It was also reported that the Shendu evidently did not anticipate an attack. Upon receiving this information, Colonel Tregear immediately requested authorization to deploy a flying column against Hausata. Once permission was granted, a force consisting of the Bombay M.B. (Maratha Battalion), one artillery piece, Sappers and Miners (26), Native Infantry (209), and Frontier Police (40), under the command of Colonel Tregear himself, departed from Lunglei on the morning of 15 March 1889.

On 20 March 1889, the expeditionary force reached Hausata village. Upon the column's approach, the adversary vacated the village and retreated into the jungle, subsequently setting the village ablaze. After the troops completed the village's destruction and retrieved Lieutenant Steward's artillery, they returned to Zahuata village, which was similarly destroyed.¹³⁵ Thereafter, they commenced their return journey, arriving at Fort Lunglei on 25 March 1889 without further encounters with the enemy. The expeditionary force was then swiftly withdrawn. The fortification of Lunglei was finalized on 15 April 1889, after which it was transferred to the Military Police, who established a garrison comprising two companies under the command of one British officer.¹³⁶

Survey and Triangulation During the Punitive Lushai Expedition (1888–1889)

During the punitive expedition, Lieutenant Pollen successfully triangulated an area of 675 square miles, conducting observations from four stations where he established 16 tertiary points and determined four elevations. Considering the limited time available and his good health, this accomplishment was noteworthy. The total area

¹³⁴ Instruction issued by the Chief Commissioner of Burma to Major Raikes in connection with the conduct of Political Affairs, October 1889, Foreign Department-External A, No. 40, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹³⁵ Instruction issued by the Chief Commissioner of Burma to Major Raikes in connection with the conduct of Political Affairs, October 1889, Foreign Department-External A, No. 40, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹³⁶ Report by Brigadier-General Symons on the Political aspects of the operations in the Chin 1888–90, March 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 164, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

that was topographically mapped amounted to 540 square miles, with an additional 210 square miles being roughly reconnoitered from a distance.¹³⁷ The newly constructed road from Demagiri stockade to Lunglei, spanning 43 miles, was also surveyed using plane-table traverse.¹³⁸

On 20 February 1889, Lieutenant Pollen contracted malarial fever, which showed no signs of improvement. Despite receiving medical advice from several officers to retreat for rest and treatment, he opted to remain at his post. However, by 10 March 1889, his condition had deteriorated to such an extent that he was invalided and sent back to Chittagong under the care of Dr. Bell from the Indian Medical Service (IMS). Regrettably, his health declined rapidly, and he succumbed to the illness on 26 March 1889. In a dispatch regarding the expedition, the Officer Commanding the Lushai Expeditionary Force paid tribute to him and another officer who died shortly thereafter, stating: *"In the death of these very promising young officers, the service has lost two hard-working, energetic, and zealous soldiers, both of whom had made themselves great favourites with the force."*¹³⁹

Following Lieutenant Pollen's demise, the leadership of the survey detachment was assumed by Mr. James, who also suffered from severe fever and eye infections. This condition prevented him from accompanying the troops as they advanced from Lunglei to Hausata's village. Furthermore, the sub-surveyor's expertise was not fully utilised, resulting in missed opportunities for gathering valuable geographical information.¹⁴⁰

The expedition exemplified the concept of "knowledge through violence," an epistemological process where military confrontation facilitated data collection that

¹³⁷ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1890), 70.

¹³⁸ Maps of the reconnaissance of road between Demagiri stockade and Hausata village, MISC (Chin Lushais), Military No 352-58, 1889

¹³⁹ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 70.

¹⁴⁰ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 71.

would have been unattainable through peaceful means. The act of traversing hostile territories, observing defensive structures, and engaging with local populations under duress served as a mechanism for inscribing colonial authority onto the landscape. British officials acquired extensive firsthand knowledge regarding the geography of the Kolodyne River valley, the political organization of the Lai tribes, inter-village alliances, agricultural cycles, and military capabilities—information that subsequently informed infrastructure development and the delineation of administrative boundaries. The punitive expedition of 1888–1889 thus represents a pivotal moment in the colonization of the southern Lushai Hills. Although initiated by violence, it became the mechanism through which the British transformed an unfamiliar frontier into a documented, mapped, and governed territory. Through military action, the British not only avenged Steward's death but also laid the foundation for enduring colonial control over this southern imperial frontier, illustrating how knowledge acquisition and territorial control could advance simultaneously through punitive action.

A Strange Parallel Punitive Expedition in Northern Chin Hills (1888-89): Reconnaissance and Survey

The Kale Valley experienced recurrent incursions by the frontier Chin tribes, prompting the government to sanction a modified-scale expedition aimed at subduing the Sizang tribes of the Northern Chin Hills. The construction and utilization of roads were pivotal in fulfilling the expedition's objectives. Consequently, in November 1888, Captain Raikes and his assistant, Mr. Hall, were commissioned to gather intelligence on the routes and settlements of the Northern Chins. The sole available route was the Chin path, which interconnected the Chin villages. The selected route for the column's advance from Kambale adhered to the Chin path, descending from the summit of the Letha Range to the Segyi stream. The column's objective was to reach the principal capital, Khuasat, of the Sizang village. On 23 January 1889, Sir George White and General Faunce conducted a reconnaissance mission to the summit of the Letha Range, attaining an altitude of 8,200 feet above sea level. The advance force steadily ascended the hills, encountering persistent resistance from the

Northern Chins, who engaged in ambushes both day and night, albeit with limited success.¹⁴¹

The following telegram from Sir George White to the Chief Commissioner, dated 28 January, 1889, describes one of the skirmishes:

*"Enemy yesterday attacked our working-party on road above this, and held our covering-party, 40 British and 100 Gurkhas, from 9 till 2, when I arrived and ordered their positions to be charged. We carried all, driving them entirely away, getting off ourselves wonderfully cheaply only 1 Norfolk dangerously wounded. Enemy in considerable numbers, using many rifles and plenty of ammunition. They fired at least **1,000 rounds**, standing resolutely until actually charged, even trying to outflank us. Their loss probably about eight or ten, but they were carried down the Khuds at once. Most difficult enemy to see or hit I (first) ever fought."*¹⁴²

Under the command of Lieutenant Wright of the Royal Engineers, the Madras Sappers and Miners, assisted by transport coolies from Manipur, constructed a road (mule track) as they climbed, building rough stockades at intervals of five miles. The Chins took advantage of every suitable position to ambush the troops. As the troops advanced towards the main village, they reached Khuasat on 4 February 1889, where the Chins offered slight resistance before retreating to the jungle after setting the village ablaze. Step by step, the advance was successful, and by 5 March 1889, all Sizang villages had been wiped out. The site of the village of Toklaing was chosen as the headquarters of the Chin expeditionary force, renamed "Fort White," and a post was constructed there using materials from the village.¹⁴³

THE CHIN-LUSHAI EXPEDITION (15 NOVEMBER 1889 – 30 APRIL 1890)

The Chin-Lushai Expedition, conducted from 15 November 1889 to 30 April 1890, was initiated following a decision by the Governor-General in Council on 5 September 1889. The military operations were organized into three distinct columns:

¹⁴¹ Croswaite, *The pacification of Burma*, 303-304.

¹⁴² Croswaite, *The pacification of Burma*, 303-304.

¹⁴³ Croswaite, *The pacification of Burma*, 303-304.

the Chittagong Column, the Northern Column, and the Southern Column of the Chin Hills. The Northern Column, operating from Fort White, was tasked with engaging the Sizang, Sakhiling, and Kamhau tribes. The Southern Column, using Kan as its base, was to advance along the roads via Zokhua to Hakha. The Chittagong Column was to concentrate at Lunglei as its base and proceed towards Hakha, constructing roads and meeting the Southern Column upon arrival at Hakha. Subsequently, the Southern Column would advance northwards against the Tlaisun tribes (Falam circle). Brigadier-General W.P. Symon was vested with ultimate control and authority over the expedition, both politically and militarily.¹⁴⁴

Due to unusually late and heavy rainfall and the resulting conditions of the terrain, a postponement of the Chin-Lushai Expedition from the Burma side became necessary. Consequently, the General Officer Commanding the Burma district proposed that the Fort White Column commence on 14 November 1889 and the Kan Column on 16 December 1889, a plan which received approval from the Quartermaster-General of India, Shimla.¹⁴⁵

Brigadier-Generals W.P. Symons and V.W. Treager delineated the operations of the Burma and Chittagong columns of the Chin-Lushai expeditionary force. The primary objectives of the expedition were to impose punitive measures on tribes that had committed depredations within British territory and refused to make amends or negotiate; subjugate neutral tribes to incorporate them within the British sphere of influence; explore the then-unknown region between Burma and Chittagong; and establish military posts where necessary to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British authority.

Following several months of punitive operations in the southern Lushai Hills, the Chin-Lushai Expedition was officially announced on 15 November 1889. Two columns were formed for this military expedition to the Chin and Lushai Hills. It is noteworthy that these military expedition forces were accompanied by survey

¹⁴⁴ Instruction issued by the Chief Commissioner of Burma to Major Raikes in connection with the conduct of Political Affairs, October 1889, Foreign Department-External A, No. 57, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁴⁵ Report by Brigadier-General Symons on the Political aspects of the operations in the Chin 1888-90, March 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

detachments. The Burma column, under Brigadier-General Symons, C.B., which assembled at Kan in the Myittha valley to advance into the Chin Hills, was accompanied by a survey party under Lieutenant T. F. B. Renny-Tailyour, R.E., and the Chittagong column, under Brigadier-General Tregear, which proceeded into the Lushai country from Chittagong, was accompanied by a survey party under Lieutenant W. J. Bythell, R.E. These survey detachments capitalized on every opportunity to extend geographical knowledge, resulting in the acquisition of the geography of approximately 9,000 square miles of territory, of which about 5,000 square miles were previously unknown.¹⁴⁶ Lieutenants Renny-Tailyour and Bythell, along with the surveyors of both detachments, deserve commendation for their energy and ability, which led to the successful completion of their endeavours, despite severe attacks of fever and the privations and exposure inherent in campaigning in the Lushai and Chin Hills.¹⁴⁷ The operations conducted by the parties attached to the respective columns will be described separately.

Game Around: British Imperialist Survey and Mapping in Upper Burma

Understanding the cartographic evolution in Upper Burma from 1885 onwards is essential for contextualizing British colonial engagements in neighbouring territories like the Chin Hills. The occupation of Upper Burma initiated extensive mapping operations led by the British Survey No. 21 Party. This survey unit was reassigned to Upper Burma and formalized as a regular field survey party under Major J.R. Hobday, B.S.C., Deputy Superintendent. The party included Captain H.M. Jackson, Lieutenant T.F.B. Renny-Tailyour, and surveyors A.G. Wyatt, F. Kitchen, J.M. Kennedy, R.A. Gibson, and G.H. Powell, along with sub-surveyors Sher Shah, Bapu Jadu, and others.

Survey No. 21 Party supported military expeditions and mapped the Southern and Northern Shan States. Captain Jackson conducted a major survey from Fort Stedman through the Balu Chaung Valley to Pekon, crossing the Pon and Tein rivers

¹⁴⁶ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1891), 79.

¹⁴⁷ From Brigadier General V.W. Treager, Commanding Chittagong Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition to the Adjutant general in India, Army headquarters, Shimla, Date 31 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 163, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

to Maukme and the Salween river, and proceeding north to Thibaw. His work mapped approximately 4,500 square miles on a ¼ inch scale. In the Northern Shan States, another 3,500 square miles were surveyed by a sub-surveyor accompanying a military column, while additional reconnaissance was undertaken by military officers. These efforts collectively produced a comprehensive map of the Cis-Salween Shan State.

In addition to the Shan States, surveyors joined expeditions into the Yaw country and Mogaung, further expanding British cartographic knowledge. The Yaw region, which bordered the Chin Hills, was of strategic interest. Four columns, operating from the Chindwin, Pakokku, and Minbu districts, advanced into the Yaw area with the objective of converging at Gangaw.

The northern column from Kalewa followed the Myittha Valley, accompanied by Sub-Surveyor Bapu Jadu. He mapped river courses but was unable to survey the western hills due to conflict in the region. After reaching Kan and returning to Kalembo, Jadu joined Major McGregor's column advancing toward Manipur. He subsequently surveyed the Kubo Valley and continued through Kindaton, Alon, Yeu, Shwebo, and Kyaukmyaung, covering a total of 2,600 square miles.

The central column from Myaing included Mr. Kennedy, who followed the Kyaw River Valley to Saga before redirecting to Pouk. He crossed the Paundaung Range into the Myittha Valley and joined another column at Gangaw. Despite suffering from illness, Kennedy completed the return journey via Leho and mapped 2,606 square miles in the Pakokku district.¹⁴⁸

The southern column from Salen was initially to include Mr. Wyatt. However, Wyatt proceeded independently to Gangaw and returned via Laungshwe while reconnoitering uncharted areas. In addition to this expedition, he extended triangulation work from Pagan to Minbu, and later to Thayetmyo. This linked his work with the Great Trigonometric Survey and added another 1,146 square miles to

¹⁴⁸ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lxiii.

the surveyed area. These coordinated operations significantly expanded British geographic knowledge in Upper Burma and adjacent regions, directly supporting military pacification efforts and laying the groundwork for administrative consolidation. In the late 1880s, subsequent to the Anglo-Burmese War of 1885, British imperialists were intent on expanding their cartographic knowledge of Upper Burma, particularly the 'unknown territory' of the Chin Hills. Furthermore, they perceived a void upon identifying an unoccupied region within the cartographic and imperialist sphere of the Indian subcontinent and British Burma. This perception ultimately led to the initiation of the military campaign known as the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-1890.¹⁴⁹

THE SURVEY OPERATION OF THE CHITTAGONG COLUMN IN THE LUSHAI HILLS

In late November 1889, a survey team under the leadership of Lieutenant W.J. Bythell, R.E. (Assistant Superintendent, 2nd Grade), embarked from Calcutta onboard the I.M.S. Dalhousie to undertake topographic mapping in the Lushai Hills. This mission was intended to support a military expedition, with the team—comprising surveyor Mr. W. Stotesbury (3rd Grade) and sub-surveyors Ikbaluddin and Jamaluddin—aiming to facilitate colonial administration and military operations. After two days, by the evening of 22 November, they arrived at the port of Chittagong, where Brigadier-General Tregear, who commanded the military expedition, issued verbal orders for Bythell to proceed immediately to Lunglei, a strategically significant outpost in the Lushai Hills. From Chittagong, the survey team, in coordination with the military contingent, commenced their upriver journey on 24 November. Accompanied by 400 men of the 22nd Gurkhas under Major Begbie, they travelled on rafts towed by a small steamer. Upon reaching Rangamati, the team transitioned to small dugout canoes to navigate the waterways to Peshki-Serra. To bypass rapids, instruments and supplies were subsequently loaded onto bullock carts for transport to Burkhul. Resuming their river journey in dugout

¹⁴⁹ Information of the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 168, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

canoes, the team arrived at Demagiri by the morning of 29 November, prepared to undertake their surveying tasks in the challenging terrain of the Lushai Hills.¹⁵⁰

Mr. Stotesbury conducted a plane-table survey at Demagiri, mapping the station and river at a scale of 12 inches per mile. The expedition experienced delays due to a shortage of rations, which postponed departure until the morning of 4 December 1889 for Lunglei. Initially, there were plans to clear stations at Siralay and Uiphum; however, time constraints necessitated the abandonment of this plan. On 4 December 1889, Lieutenant W.J. Bythell assumed command of 40 Punjabi coolies from Captain Montagu's group. These coolies proved to be highly inefficient for the task.

“I may mention here that these are about the very worst class of coolies that we could have had for our work. To begin with, they (Punjabi coolies) are all tall men and only carry loads (not 40lb.) on their heads, and they seem to be able to carry them in no other way. The consequence is that when going along a half-cleared Kuki path the loads catch in every overhanging branch, bamboo, or stalk of grass, and their rate of progress is painfully slow. They are weakly men, constantly getting sick, insubordinate, and altogether gave far more trouble than they were worth.

It was only when marching down country, on our return from Lunglei to Demagiri, that they seemed to wake up at all, doubtless, due to the fact that their noses were pointed towards home. I would suggest that in further work in such country none but Khalasia coolies be employed: they are slightly more expensive, but they carry double the load and ran keep up better and go faster than the Punjabi. They are also very useful in jungle-clearing work, for which the Punjabi coolie is practically useless,

¹⁵⁰ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, (Calcutta: Officer of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1891), 80.

and by carrying their loads on the back by a broad band over the head, they can go through any half-cleared path.”¹⁵¹

Lieutenant W.J. Bythell

Following a delay at Demagiri due to a shortage of provisions, Bythell's survey detachment eventually commenced their journey with 12 mules and additional laborers, supplementing the original 40 coolies. Despite the slow progress caused by the mules, they arrived in Lunglei on the morning of 9 December 1889. There, Bythell encountered Major Leach, Captain Mullaly, and Lieutenant Kingscote, R.E., who were initiating the clearing for the 'Haka road' towards Theiriat.¹⁵²

The substantive survey operation in the southern Lushai Hills commenced on 10 December 1889, with the identification of two survey points or stations, specifically Kawmzawl village (also referred to as Saipuia's village) and Lunglei, previously marked by the late Lieutenant Pollen. Despite the area being densely overgrown with grass, surveyor Bythell successfully located the tree observed by Lieutenant Pollen during the earlier expedition. After an extensive search, he discovered a fragment of the stone marking Pollen's station, which still bore the circle and dot, although the station had been dismantled and the signpost removed. Lieutenant Bythell dedicated several days to conducting observations from these two points. In early January 1890, he departed Lunglei, camping at various locations along and near the new road under construction to Haka. He remained engaged in mapping the surrounding terrain and extending the triangulation until 13 January.

Mr. Stotesbury, another surveyor, positioned the theodolite at a new station, closely resembling that of the late Lieutenant Pollen.¹⁵³ The triangulation framework

¹⁵¹ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 80.

¹⁵² From Brigadier General V.W. Treager, Commanding Chittagong Column, to The Adjutant General in India, Army Head Quarters, Simla, Date 31 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department-External A, No. 163, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁵³ From a triangulation and survey perspective, Mr. Stotesbury established a new survey station at a location that closely matched the position of the late Lieutenant Pollen's original station. The new station was strategically placed to maintain continuity in the triangulation network, ensuring consistency in angular measurements and minimizing discrepancies in geodetic calculations. By setting up the theodolite at nearly the same coordinates, Stotesbury aimed to preserve the integrity of

was established using the primary baselines Kausatong-Lunglei¹⁵⁴ and Uiphum No. 4-Lunglei.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, a second station, Darbili No. 2 H.S., was connected with Kausatong, Lunglei, and Uiphum No. 4. Several stations located west of the 1871-72 triangulation were observed from Lunglei, Kawmzawl, Lungsing (on the return march), and Moisum, though there were no opportunities to visit them. From 10 to 14 December 1889, Mr. Stotesbury and Bythell were engaged in observation and operations from Kawmzawl and Lunglei hill station, where they discovered the original cairn (signpost) and mark. During this time, Bythell received valuable assistance from Mr. C.S. Murray, the Political Officer, who provided names of peaks, villages, and other geographical details.

On 15 December 1889, Bythell suddenly experienced a severe febrile episode that lasted for eight days. Fortunately, he recovered quickly and did not suffer a recurrence. The following day, December 24, General Tregear and his staff arrived in Lunglei, where they celebrated Christmas in a traditional manner, with twenty-one people dining at an improvised bamboo table within the police stockade. The days that followed were marked by rain and mist. Lieutenant Bythell took part in a reconnaissance mission to Rotlang village (known as Lalthuama's village), after which he assigned the triangulation tasks to Mr. Stotesbury. He then focused solely on plane-tableing and gathering information about village names and stream courses. Subsequently, another reconnaissance mission to Muallianpui village (then known as Darbili's village) allowed Lieutenant Bythell to sketch the surrounding terrain of the Lushai Hills (near the Lunglei and Burma border area) and set up several stations in advance for Mr. Stotesbury, who was concentrating on triangulation. On December

the existing survey framework, allowing for accurate comparisons and extensions of previous observations.

¹⁵⁴ In the context of triangulation, these locations (Kausa, Tong, and Lungleh) likely served as key reference points for establishing a network of measured angles and distances.

¹⁵⁵ The triangulation framework was established using the primary baselines Kausa-Tong-Lungleh and Uiphum No. 4-Lungleh, which served as foundational reference lines for geodetic measurements. These baselines provided a precise starting point for angular observations, ensuring accurate position determination of additional survey stations. By forming a well-defined network of interconnected points, the triangulation system improved spatial accuracy, minimized errors, and facilitated reliable mapping of the region.

29, 1889, Mr. Stotesbury fell ill with fever and ague, which incapacitated him until January 20, 1890, rendering him unfit for work during this period.¹⁵⁶

In addition to the principal surveyors, supplementary sub-surveyors participated in reconnaissance missions in the northern region of the Lushai Hills and the southeastern area across the Kolodyne River. Sub-Surveyor Ikbaldin began traverse survey on December 28, traveling from Lunglei to Sateek village (Lianpunga's village) and Changsil bazar. He was tasked with sketching as much of the terrain as possible and returning with the column to Calcutta. He successfully mapped a significant area of the country he traversed, filling in most of the gaps left un-surveyed during the first Lushai expedition of 1871-72. Upon completing his assignment, he returned to Lunglei on 4 January 1890, having reached a point 23 miles north along the Tlawng River. Concurrently, another sub-surveyor, Jamaluddin, was tasked on December 13 with surveying the southeastern route from Lunglei to Halkha. He had already initiated the work of compass and chain traverse along the new route from Lunglei to Halkha (Chin Hills).

Since January 1890, Bythell commenced a notable plane-tabling project in the transnational border region of the Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills. Accompanied by Sub-Surveyor Jamaluddin and 17 khalāsīs, he proceeded to Theiriat village, situated eight miles away, which served as the initial camp on the Haka Road from Lunglei. The subsequent day, Bythell ascended to the summit of Mualthuam South (Moisum) with an escort of five police officers. At this location, he identified the cairn of stones and the original station mark. Utilizing a 6-inch theodolite, he initiated plane-tabling, marking several peaks to the south and east.

The following morning, Bythell returned with a substantial quantity of gun-cotton, which was employed to efficiently clear the large trees on the slopes below, thereby opening up the entire bluff. On the evening of 3 January 1890, he returned to his camp to discover that an escort of 25 police officers—previously requested—had arrived. This reinforcement was intended to facilitate his movements beyond

¹⁵⁶ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 80.

Mualthuam South. However, 4 January was characterized by heavy rainfall, which precluded any surveying activities.

On 6 January 1890, early in the morning, Bythell ascended to Theiriat village in search of a suitable summit location for establishing a station that would connect with Mualthuam South and either Lunglei or Kawmzawl. The expedition encountered significant challenges, as the dense jungle and large trees rendered the ascent nearly impossible. Ultimately, Bythell was compelled to abandon his initial plan. Nevertheless, by 11 o'clock that morning, following extensive clearing efforts, he succeeded in establishing a station on the eastern slope below the summit. This position afforded a clear view to the east and north along the Tlawng valley. Unfortunately, by 3 p.m., the area became shrouded in clouds and mist, rendering further observations impossible and necessitating Bythell's return to camp.¹⁵⁷

The following morning, he proceeded early towards a camp situated just south of Mualthuam South. This site had previously been occupied during the 1888–89 punitive expedition against Howsata's village and was reported to have a small water supply. Upon arrival, however, he found the water to be extremely scant. Leaving a native officer to oversee the camp's establishment, Bythell continued on to Bualte village (Bolpui) with a small escort. He arrived around 1 p.m., only to discover that the summit reported to be clear was, in fact, covered in dense reeds, grass, and nettles, obstructing visibility in all directions. It required significant effort to locate the highest point amidst the thick undergrowth.¹⁵⁸

Recognizing that it would be impossible to clear the summit and conduct survey work that day, Bythell relocated to the eastern side of the hill. There, after considerable labour, his team managed to create a sufficient clearing for station fixing. However, adverse weather conditions persisted: dense fog and mist continued to obscure distant peaks, forcing him to abandon further efforts. The valleys of the Mat and Kolodyne rivers were soon similarly shrouded in mist, and Bythell was

¹⁵⁷ From Brigadier General V.W. Treager, Commanding Chittagong Column, to The Adjutant General in India, Army Head Quarters, Simla, Date 31 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department-External A, No. 163, National Archives of India, New Delhi

¹⁵⁸ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India. 115

obliged to give up the attempt. On his return, he revisited a clearing prepared the previous year for signalling the column advancing on Howsata. Despite waiting for the mist to lift, visibility did not improve, and he was compelled to return to his camp beneath Mualthuam South, arriving just after sunset.¹⁵⁹

Due to a logistical oversight in the supply of rations, Bythell found himself with provisions adequate only for the subsequent day. Undeterred in his commitment to his work, he set out early for the signal station. The day was characterized by cold yet clear conditions, which enabled him to secure essential fixings from distant peaks. However, he faced a recurrent challenge: while valleys were often clear in the early morning, peaks would soon become shrouded in mist, typically persisting until late afternoon. In response to these conditions, Bythell devised a strategic approach: he would obtain fixings and preliminary readings in the morning, leave the plane-table in situ, and return later when visibility in the valleys improved. This methodology proved crucial in acquiring detailed survey data of the region.

From Bualte village, Bythell successfully mapped several villages and collected substantial information regarding the eastern terrain. By 9 January 1890, he returned to Theiriat camp by sunset. Over the subsequent two days, he revisited stations at Theiriat and Mualthuam South, utilizing a glass to scout distant villages. He identified several previously unrecorded settlements east of Malliampui, which he later verified. His efforts also included a final attempt to remove a massive tree obstructing visibility over the Tlawng Valley from Mualthuam South. After two unsuccessful charges, a final detonation of gun-cotton succeeded in blasting a large hole through the trunk. Although the tree did not fall immediately, Bythell observed through his glass the following morning from Upper Tlawng camp that it had collapsed overnight.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 56.

¹⁶⁰ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 57.

On 11 January 1890, Lieutenant Bythell proceeded to the upper Tlawng camp, the most distant outpost along the route, situated approximately $11\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Lunglei. There, he collaborated with Captain Browne, the signaller, to clear the heliograph station. By midday, they had established a functional clearing, although visibility remained restricted due to obscured peaks. Nonetheless, Bythell successfully acquired essential survey data of the Mat river valley. He returned to Lunglei the following day and discovered Mr. Stotesbury afflicted with fever. Despite his condition, Stotesbury initially assisted Bythell in initiating the triangulation. However, his illness persisted until January 20. Upon recovery, Stotesbury assumed full responsibility for the triangulation, enabling Bythell to concentrate on the plane-table survey and accompany several reconnaissance parties. Bythell eventually extended the triangulation to Haka, where it connected with Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour's series. He also conducted detailed surveys of Fort Lunglei—mapped at a scale of 12 inches to the mile and Fort Tregear, which he charted at 100 feet to the inch.

On the same day, Bythell received orders to join a reconnaissance mission to Rotlang village (Lalthuama's village), located between the Mat and Kolodyne rivers, as part of a punitive expedition. Once his health condition became better, Stotesbury later proceeded to Teiriat camp on 22 January 1890, where he continued survey work at Mualthum South before returning to Lunglei on 26 January 1890.

Reconnaissance and Punitive Expedition of Rotlang (Lalthuama's village): 15 January 1890

The punitive expedition and reconnaissance force consisted of 50 personnel from the 22nd Gurkhas and 50 Frontier Police, led by Captain Brown, Mr. Murray (Political Officer), Captain Hall (in command of the escort), and Captain Shakespeare (Intelligence Officer). Before departing for the punitive expedition to Rotlang village, Bythell assigned all triangulation duties to Mr. Stotesbury, anticipating frequent reconnaissance activities. Bythell focused on plane-tabling, selecting and marking station points for Stotesbury's subsequent verification.

The reconnaissance party left Lunglei on 13 January 1890, reaching the upper Tlawng camp (11¾ miles) the same day. On 14 January 1890, they advanced five miles to the eastern bank of the Mat River, and by 15 January 1890, they arrived at Rotlang (84 miles from the base camp), passing through Lakir village. Lalthuama, the village chief of Rotlang, was apprehended in Lakir and taken to his settlement, where a substantial fine was imposed. A portion of the fine comprising goats, pigs, and fowls was paid immediately and distributed among the Gurkhas and accompanying personnel.¹⁶¹

On 16 January 1890, the punitive expedition force, along with Bythell's survey team, reached Lalthuama's newly established village, situated at an elevation of 3,300 feet above sea level, offering a vantage point overlooking the Kolodyne river. Bythell conducted extensive plane-tabling. According to previous survey data collected by Captain Mullaly and Hall, this point was recorded as only 780 feet above sea level. Fortunately, Bythell, working collaboratively with the team, acquired valuable geographic information regarding villages, hills, and watercourses from Murray and his interpreters. On next day, the expedition and survey party returned to the Mat river camp with their captives, whose departure was met with the loud and prolonged lamentations of all the villagers, who firmly believed he would never return. However, he was detained at Lunglei until the fine was fully paid.¹⁶² Observing the roadworks and demolition techniques employed by the expedition team, Lalthuama reportedly remarked that the (British) expedition team were "Gods, not men."¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 80-83.

¹⁶² *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lv.

¹⁶³ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889–90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India.

Account of the Northern Column Reconnaissance cum Survey, January–March 1890

On 1 January 1890, the expedition divided its forces from Lunglei. Captains Hall and Shakespeare returned directly to Lunglei, while Browne and Murray proceeded to Theiriat. Captain Mullaly advanced to a camp 17 miles from Lunglei, and Lieutenant Bythell moved to a 15-mile camp to continue survey work. Bythell returned to Lunglei on 20 January to finalize his survey records and prepare a tracing for Brigadier-General Tregear.

On 25 January, the main body of the Northern Column, led by Colonel Skinner of the 3rd Bengal Infantry, departed Lunglei. Sub-surveyor Ikbaludin, equipped with a 5-inch subtense theodolite, plane-table, six khalasis, and coolies, was tasked with conducting an extensive regional survey. His orders mandated a return to Calcutta via Changsil Bazar and Cachar, concluding this phase of Bythell's expedition.

Advances to the Front: On 26 January, Bythell left Lunglei for the front, with no intention of returning. That same day, Mr. Stotesbury returned from Mualthum South and Bualte, and after visiting Haulawng (Lalthangvunga's village) in the north, he was scheduled to proceed to the front. Bythell reached the Mat River camp, 20 miles from Lunglei, on 27 January, remaining there until 29 January. On 30 January, he advanced along the road with Major Leach and Captain Mullaly, securing a fixing that enabled him to map sections of the valley below Rotlang village.

On 31 January and 1 February, Bythell ascended a prominent conical peak, approximately five miles from the advanced camp on the Mat River, known as Bridge Camp, 22 miles from Lunglei. From this vantage point, he observed the Kolodyne River's bend around Muallianpui and surveyed the Narchong nullah (Hnahchang Lui) valley, situated between Muallianpui and Darzo Tlang (Fort Tregear).

Reconnaissance to Darzo: On 2 February, a reconnaissance party, including Captains Browne and Shakespeare, Mr. Walker from the Telegraph Department, 50

soldiers from the 22nd Gurkhas, and Bythell, departed Bridge Camp for Darzo, Darbili's village, located on a spur of Muallianpui Tlang, six miles south of Lung Leng, the region's highest peak. Darbili welcomed the party, enabling Bythell to map approximately 150 square miles of Fanai-dominated terrain from a 5,000-foot vantage point above the village.

On 3 February, the party ascended a spur of Darzo Tlang, navigating two miles of dense bamboo jungle before entering a forest of larger trees. The steep climb, starting at 750 feet at the Kolodyne crossing, reached 5,100 feet at Darbili's old village, later the site of Fort Tregear. The reconnaissance party established camp one and a half miles northwest of Darzo Tlang's highest point.

On 4 February, departing camp at 6:30 a.m., the party descended three miles to the Hnahchang Lui at 3,100 feet, then ascended back to 5,100 feet at Darbili's village. Bythell set up a station for Stotesbury. The queen's son, Lemboo, greeted them a mile from camp, offering rice-beer. The villagers, though amicable, sold fowls, eggs, and sweet potatoes at high prices, often valuing items at one rupee or preferring brass uniform buttons. The camp was established 100 feet below the village to the west, where the party remained for the day.

Friendship Ceremony and Vantura's Arrest: On 6 February, at 10 a.m., coolies were sent ahead to Hnahchang Lui while the party remained for Captain Shakespeare to conduct a friendship ceremony with the queen and her tribe. Traditionally involving the spearing of a gayal (mithun), the ceremony substituted a gunshot due to the lack of a spear, omitting the customary blood besmearing. The event drew Lushais from South Vanlalphai (chief Dopawrha), Denlung (chief Lalthuama), and Lungleng (chief Dokapa). After noon, the party left Darbili's village on friendly terms, rejoining their escort at Hnahchang Lui.

On 7 February, the party returned to their Darzo camp. Captain Browne attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish communication with Lunglei from a high point. Bythell also failed to clear an eastward path. That day, a note from Shakespeare reported that Vantura, a chief from Howsata's old village or nearby, approached with an armed retinue. Upon returning, the party found Shakespeare

conversing with Vantura, who had brought a revolver taken from Lieutenant Steward, killed near Belasuri Tong in February 1888. Vantura was arrested, and his followers were expelled by the Gurkhas. No rescue attempt occurred.¹⁶⁴

Return to Bridge Camp and Further Surveys: On 8 February, the party reached the Kolodyne River, arriving at Bridge Camp on 9 February, where Bythell met Stotesbury. On 10 February, Bythell proceeded to Rotlang, where Lalthuama, Darbili's son, was stationed, reaching the Kolodyne on 11 February. On 14 February, Stotesbury joined Bythell at the Kolodyne with Jamaluddin, who had completed a 34¼-mile road traverse from Lunglei. On 17 February, Bythell accompanied Captain Hall to search for water for an advanced camp seven miles east of the Kolodyne along the Darzo Spur, finding no viable sources. Bythell prepared to visit Purun Tlang, a 7,000-foot peak two days' march north of the Kolodyne camp, for extensive survey work starting 23 February.

On 21 February, Bythell received orders to return to Darbili's village to maintain heliograph communication with a reconnaissance party led by Captains Hall and Shakespeare, advancing eastward toward Thau to link with General Symons's force. On 23 February, Stotesbury and Thomas Henry Digges La Touche from the Geological Survey joined Bythell, who lamented the absence of a dedicated survey officer.

Operations at Darbili's Village and Cherhlun: From 24 February to 4 March, Bythell remained at Darbili's village, relaying heliograph messages from Hall's party to Fort Tregear, under construction. On 4 March, he was ordered to proceed alone to Cherhlun (Dopawrha's village) for surveying, leaving La Touche in charge at Darbili's with Stotesbury and 20 police officers.

At Cherhlun, Bythell found 200 soldiers of the 4th Gurkhas under Captain Drury and Lieutenant Grant. That evening, Major Leach and Captain Mullaly joined the survey party. Bythell was set to accompany Leach to Sangau, 9–10 miles away, the next day but was delayed after being stung by hornets. For two days, he worked

¹⁶⁴ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lvi.

near Cherhlun, visiting a solitary cone three miles southwest of the village, offering views of the Darzo River and Blue Mountain's northern spurs.¹⁶⁵

Surveys at Sangau and Kolodyne: On 8 March, Bythell and Mullaly moved camp to Sangau, where Bythell found an excellent observation point at 4,900 feet on a bare plateau, providing clear views of the Kolodyne's eastern bend, Chiriang Tlang, Thau Tlang, and Blue Mountain's southeastern spurs. On 9 March, Stotesbury returned from Darbili's to Fort Tregear to observe from a new station prepared by Leach.

On 11 March, Hall and Shakespeare returned from Halkha, proceeding to Fort Tregear the next day, describing the eastern Thau region with open grassy downs, pine trees, rhododendrons, oranges, and other fruits. On 13 March, Bythell and Leach descended to the Kolodyne to trace a road route. Heavy rainfall, lasting nearly five days, halted progress, but on 16 March, Bythell relocated the survey camp to Kolodyne No. 2. The rising river, up by six feet, prevented crossings until rafts were built.¹⁶⁶

On 21 March, Bythell cleared a ridge above the camp, identifying the junction of the Tipi/Tuipui and Kolodyne rivers. On 22 March, Stotesbury arrived, his work also delayed by rain. On 24 March, Bythell and Leach crossed the Kolodyne and Saisichhuah Rivers, tracing a ridge between the Saisichhuah and Shertok Rivers. That evening, Bythell received a telegram from Renny-Tailyour at Haka, requesting a meeting at Thau Tlang's summit on 27 March.

Missed Opportunity at Purun Tlang: In February, Bythell had planned to survey Purun Tlang, a 7,000-foot peak two days' march north of the Kolodyne camp. However, orders to return to Muallianpui village for heliograph communication with the reconnaissance party advancing toward Thau village (Chin Hills) to join the Burma Column prevented this. No survey officer accompanied the reconnaissance mission, costing Bythell a significant survey opportunity. Bythell remained at

¹⁶⁵ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lvi.

¹⁶⁶ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lvii.

Cherhlun for extensive plane-tableing until 26 March 1890, continuing his meticulous survey work across various Kolodyne camps.¹⁶⁷

Conclusion: Survey of the Chittagong Column (1889-1890)

The Chittagong Column, led by Lieutenant Bythell, conducted a comprehensive survey from 1889 to 1890, focusing on eastward triangulation to connect with the Burma Column at Haka. Despite the challenging conditions, the survey achieved significant results, mapping approximately 6,000 square miles of topography on a 4-inch scale. The triangulation effort faced difficulties due to dense jungles, hazy weather, and arduous terrain, with Thau Tlang as the only off-road station visited. Poor weather during the Thau visit prevented optimal observations, and time constraints precluded return visits.

The survey successfully connected triangulations from the Thantlang and Haka stations, fixed by Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour of the Burma Column, to the westward Chittagong Column stations. Observations were recorded from 18 stations, confirming over 50 intersecting points, with nearly 100 observed points likely to be secured. Heights were documented for nearly all points, with over 75% having double the values for accuracy. A compass and chain traverse was completed along the new road from Fort Lunglei to Haka, with posts erected every quarter mile up to mile 45, extending 10 miles beyond Fort Tregear. Detailed surveys were also conducted at Demagiri and Fort Lunglei (12 inches to the mile) and Fort Tregear (100 feet to the inch).¹⁶⁸

Bythell noted that the survey could have covered additional areas, such as Purun Tlang, and benefited from clearer weather during the General Symons' reconnaissance southwest of Haka. Despite these limitations, this mission provides valuable topographical data. Bythell expressed gratitude to Major Leach, R.E., for

¹⁶⁷ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lx.

¹⁶⁸ *General Report on the Operation of the Survey of India Department Administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H. R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India.

frequent assistance, and C.S. Murray, Political Officer, for valuable nomenclature support at Lunglei and for critical country information gathered in December 1889.

The survey team's success was bolstered by key contributors such as Mr. W. Stotesbury, Ikbaludin and Jamaluddin. Mr. W. Stotesbury, a 3rd Grade Surveyor, emerged from the records as an exemplary observer and draughtsman whose technical proficiency allowed for efficient triangulation work despite challenging field conditions. His abilities helped compensate for environmental obstacles that might have otherwise further limited the survey's accomplishments.

Sub-surveyors Ikbaludin and Jamaluddin, whose contributions might easily be overlooked in conventional imperial histories, demonstrated remarkable energy and diligence in their respective roles. Ikbaludin's participation in all reconnaissances from the main body speaks to the intensive labour required to produce seemingly objective geographic knowledge. Meanwhile, Jamaluddin's meticulous updating of the road traverse during rapid infrastructure expansion from Koladyne to Haka illustrates how cartographic practices operated in tandem with the physical colonisation of the landscape.

Beyond the survey team proper, Bythell's expressions of gratitude to Major Leach and Political Officer C.S. Murray highlighted broader knowledge networks that support colonial mapping projects. Murray's "valuable nomenclature support" at Lunglei and "critical country information" from December 1889 reveal the dependence of scientific surveying on local knowledge, even as the resulting maps transformed indigenous geographies into imperial territories amenable to administrative control.

THE SURVEY OPERATION OF THE CHIN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN COLUMNS IN THE CHIN HILLS

The Northern (Chin Hills) Column: Reconnaissance and Survey

In 1889, following punitive expeditions into the Chin Hills, the British colonial administration established two military columns in Burma (present-day Myanmar): The Northern and Southern Columns. The Northern Column was stationed at Fort White, while the Southern Column was based in Kan. The unified command of the

expedition was under General Symon, who also led the Southern Column, whereas Colonel Skene was appointed to command the Northern Column. On 15 November 1889, the Chin-Lushai Expedition commenced from Fort White under Colonel Skene's leadership, comprising 1,622 soldiers. Simultaneously, the Southern Column advanced from Kan under General Symon's command, with 1,869 men. As these expeditionary forces advanced into the interior of the Chin Hills, reinforcement units, including the 10th, 33rd, and 38th Bengal Infantry and the 2nd Madras Infantry, supported garrison and military police posts, thereby securing the entire stretch of the Kale and Yaw valleys along the communication line at the foothills.¹⁶⁹

The Northern Column consisted of 300 rifles from the 1st Battalion, Cheshire Regiment, 477 rifles from the 42nd Gurkha Light Infantry, 97 personnel from No.5 Company, Queen's Own Sappers and Miners, 460 personnel from the 10th Bengal Infantry, and 290 personnel from the 38th Bengal Infantry. In November 1890, under the command of Major Edge, the Cheshire Regiment and the 42nd Gurkha Light Infantry departed from Fort White, advancing in a north-western direction to launch an assault on the villages of the Siyin tribe (also known as Sizang), including Shuampi, Dimpi, and Dimlo. The Siyins bravely confronted their adversaries, resulting in the death of one rifleman and the wounding of two others from the 42nd Gurkhas. As the British forces retreated to their base camp at Fort White, the Siyins pursued them and inflicted a mortal wound on a sepoy of the Cheshire Regiment. The British forces, in turn, seized livestock and other property and destroyed crops. Subsequently, on 11 December 1889, Major Gordon-Cumming led a sortie from Fort White towards the eastern region dominated by the Siyins and destroyed the village of Montok. On this occasion, the Siyins, rather than engaging in direct confrontation, ambushed British forces during their return march.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Report by Brigadier-General Symons on the Political aspect of the operations in the Chin Hills during 1889-90. Operation to be undertaken in the Chin-Lushai Hills during the cold season of 1890-91, March 1891, Foreign Department-External A, No. 141, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁷⁰ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding the Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force, to the Adjutant General, Madras (through the Burma District), March 1891, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Destruction of Falam Circle, the Central Area of Chin Hills: Reconnaissance and Making Road

The British expedition to Falam in the Chin Hills, conducted from December 1889 to March 1890, exemplifies a multifaceted colonial strategy that combined military reconnaissance, infrastructure development, and coercive diplomacy to extend imperial control over the Tlaisun (Falam) and Kamhau tribes. Led by Mr. Bertram S. Carey, Political Officer for the Northern Chin Hills, and General Symon, the campaign aimed to establish British authority through road construction, the projection of military strength, and carefully orchestrated diplomatic engagements with tribal chiefs. From the outset, the expedition was framed as a necessary assertion of British dominance, with Carey receiving orders on 23 December 1889 to prepare for a strategic advance into Falam territory from Fort White. The following months involved a gradual and contested process of negotiation and enforcement, influenced by the region's challenging terrain, intricate tribal hierarchies, and variable weather conditions.¹⁷¹

By early January 1890, the construction of a 12-mile road from Fort White to the southern slopes of the Leidaw range had begun, marking both a material and symbolic incursion of colonial infrastructure into Chin territory. Carey's reconnaissance missions were pivotal to this endeavour. On 13–14 January 1890, he led an exploratory march through Singsih, Libual (Hmunpi), and Zolu, gathering intelligence on the region's geography, tribal settlement patterns, and political affiliations. These journeys also served as performative assertions of colonial sovereignty. Carey reinforced hierarchical protocols by insisting on meetings exclusively with tribal chiefs, rejecting delegations from headmen or lesser figures. He also distributed salt, money, and gifts to compliant local leaders, serving both as tokens of goodwill and as instruments of dependency and surveillance.

¹⁷¹Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Diplomatic interactions during this phase highlighted the limits of tribal cohesion and the uncertainties of British authority. While some chiefs such as those from Singsih and Sakhiling provided guides, information, and men for transport, others, like Mualbem's Do Thawng, evaded direct engagement. Carey's threats to destroy Kamhau villages unless they released slaves reveal the coercive undercurrents of British diplomacy, which oscillated between negotiation and the credible threat of violence. Delays caused by illness, monsoonal rains, and the rugged terrain further complicated operations, particularly for the Southern Column advancing from Hakha.

In March 1890, both the Northern and Southern Columns advanced towards Falam. Despite deploying around 350 troops, they faced minimal resistance, indicating the psychological impact of the British military presence. At Hairôn, the Tlaisun chief and his entourage sought to negotiate surrender terms, requesting a ₹10,000 fine to be paid at Minkin and asking the columns to halt their advance. However, Carey insisted on continuing, viewing the march as a demonstration of British resolve. The columns encountered several fortified positions and armed watchmen on their way to Tlaisun *ywama*, but actual conflict was limited. By 11 March 1890, the British reached Falam, where they were warmly received by chiefs Chhawnbik, Win Sao, and Buanman. Although these leaders were reluctant to pay the full fine or commit to an annual tribute, the sustained British presence eventually compelled their acquiescence.¹⁷²

The most significant confrontation of the campaign occurred on 12 March 1890 at Mualbem, where villagers unexpectedly opened fire on the advancing column and set fire to their own settlements. Although British casualties were minimal, the attack sparked renewed debate over the best strategy for ensuring compliance. Carey advocated for the arrest of defiant chiefs, while General Symon prioritized a diplomatic resolution. A compromise was reached: the initial fine of ₹10,000 was reduced to ₹5,000, payable partly in cash, goods, and livestock, and a

¹⁷² Telegram from General Symons to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, Camp Tashon Ywama, 14 March 1890, Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 84, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

symbolic annual tribute of ₹500 was agreed upon. The chiefs also accepted responsibility for a previous incident at Hanta and were granted access to trade in the Kale valley. A durbar on 14 March 1890 formalized the agreement, followed by a friendship ceremony, reflecting both the ceremonial aspects of colonial diplomacy and its reliance on spectacle and ritual to enforce new political arrangements.¹⁷³

This expedition underscores the complex nature of colonial frontier governance, where authority was asserted not solely through force but also through strategic diplomacy, infrastructure development, and performative rituals. Carey and Symon's success in securing Tlaisun submission with minimal bloodshed was celebrated as a triumph of colonial statecraft. However, the campaign also revealed the challenges of governing fragmented polities lacking central authority. Chiefs like Mang Lun acknowledged their limited influence over their people, while the Tlaisun leaders' refusal to establish relations with Hakha revealed intra-tribal tensions that the British both exploited and struggled to manage. Jurisdictional confusion, particularly concerning the authority to cross the Manipur River, further complicated British ambitions for coherent territorial administration. Ultimately, the expedition to Falam served as a model for future colonial engagements in other highland regions of Southeast Asia. By combining road-building with cartographic surveillance, military threats, and carefully managed diplomacy, the British transformed a rugged and autonomous periphery into a governable frontier. The campaign's legacy was twofold: it set a precedent for the pacification of hill tribes through limited violence and negotiated settlements, and it reinforced the importance of infrastructural and symbolic interventions in crafting imperial sovereignty over contested terrains. Yet, the durability of such control remained uncertain, dependent on the continued willingness of tribal elites to uphold agreements brokered under duress and in the shadow of imperial power.

¹⁷³ Telegram from General Symons to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, Camp Tashon Ywama, 14 March 1890, Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 84, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Chin Southern Column: Reconnaissance and Survey, 1889–1890

Southern Operation (expedition): Brigadier General Symon assumed command at Pakokku on 18 November 1889, field service having been ruled to commence on 15 November 1889. On account of the unusually late rains, the start for the expedition had been put off from the 1st to 23 November 1889. The Southern Column concentrated at Pakokku and spent 15 days of its march of 165 miles to reach Kan. The Southern Column strength as in the margin to advance from Kan into the Lai country.¹⁷⁴

Before going in-depth the survey part, let us discuss a little bit about the military operation who goes in parallel with survey. The Southern Column, led by Brigadier General Symon, arrived at Kan on 7 December 1889, with No. 6 Company of the Madras Sappers and Miners. Their primary task was to build a mule road through Lai territory to Zokhua and Hakha, subjugating the tribes and securing the release of captives. In coordination with the Northern Column, they aimed to advance to the Tlaisun (Falam) capital and enforce submission. They also worked with the Chittagong Column to open the Bengal-Burma road, ensuring tribal compliance. Additionally, they visited villages to halt Chin raids, recover captives, and explore the Chin Hills as time allowed. Finally, they established necessary posts to maintain control after the main force withdrew.¹⁷⁵

Principal Reconnaissance by the Southern Chin Hills Columns

The Northern and Southern Burma Columns conducted extensive reconnaissance operations, covering a total of 628 miles. These surveys produced detailed road reports and sketches, which were subsequently submitted. The principal routes surveyed were as follows:

1. Zokhua to Gangaw
2. Hakha to Tlaisun Ywama

¹⁷⁴ From Brigadier General V.W. Treager, Commanding Chittagong Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition to the Adjutant general in India, Army headquarters, Shimla, Date 31 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁷⁵ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force to the Adjutant -general, Madras (Through the Burma District) Date 1 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

3. Fort White to Tlaisun Ywama
4. Tlaisun Ywama to Sihuang
5. Sihuang to Hanta
6. Hakha west to Hmunlipi
7. Hakha west to Thau Tlang (via two routes)
8. Hakha south to Naring and Hripi
9. Hakha east to Myittha via Wunhla
10. Zokhua south to Sakta and Kapi

Routes 1, 4, 5, 9 and the Kan-Hakha route served as primary roadways linking the Burma frontier with the Tlaisun and Buangshe circles. Of particular note was the reconnaissance from Hakha to Naring and Hripi (Route 8), a ten-day expedition spanning 132 miles of rugged, mountainous terrain. This survey provided critical insights into the geography and socio-economic conditions of the southern Buangshe region. Naring, located 56 miles south of Hakha along the Boinu river, comprised approximately 300 households. The local population, unfamiliar with monetary transactions, offered supplies freely and possessed large cattle herds. The expedition extended British control over numerous villages and traced the meandering course of the Boinu river through a remote landscape, confirming its identity as the upper reaches of the Kolodyne river (also known as the Tipi river). This discovery has significantly advanced the mapping of the hydrography of the region and established vital geographical connections.¹⁷⁶

Survey Personnel of the Southern Burma Column

The Southern Lushai Column's survey operations were led by Lieutenant T.F.B. Renny-Tailyour, R.E., Officiating Deputy Superintendent (4th grade), with Sub-surveyors Bapu Jadu and Ali Nawaz Khan, supported by 15 khalasis. The survey party, part of the Burma Column of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, commenced

¹⁷⁶ From Brigadier General V.W. Treager, Commanding Chittagong Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition to the Adjutant general in India, Army headquarters, Shimla, Date 31 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

operations in Rangoon on 10 November 1889 arriving at Pakokku on 13 November 1889. All troops for the Southern Column concentrated at Pakokku before marching in detachments to Kan, the operational base, approximately 170 miles away. Carts were used as far as Tilin, after which pack animals were used because of the terrain.

Survey Operations: Pakokku to Kan

The survey party departed Pakokku on 19 November 1889 with the first troop detachment reaching Pauk on 22 November 1889. A halt was necessary until 23 November due to delays caused by flooded conditions at the Yaw River, requiring elephants to ferry equipment—a slow process. Heavy rainfall and dense jungle cover hindered triangulation and plane-tabling efforts. Renny-Tailyour attempted triangulation en route from Pauk to Kan, while Ali Nawaz Khan conducted a road traverse, and Bapu Jadu focused on plane-table mapping. The terrain was relatively flat up to Pauk but became challenging thereafter, with hill ranges and rain rendering roads nearly impassable for carts, causing delays.

The party reached Thilin on 30 November 1889 following a level road along the Maw and Myittha valleys. On the same day, while marching to Gangaw, Renny-Tailyour ascended Nattaung, a distinctively shaped hill with steep slippery rocks near the summit. Poor visibility due to cloud-covered hilltops has been a recurring issue since Pauk, with limited observations. Guides who had claimed a shorter route to Gangaw admitted no such path existed, forcing the party to retrace steps before proceeding. After an exhausting 30-mile march, they reached Gangaw around 9 PM. The guides were required to assist by carrying instruments and equipment for the remainder of the journey. The survey party arrived at Kan on 6 December 1889.¹⁷⁷

At Kan, a large clearing with paddy fields was available, but unharvested crops prevented Renny-Tailyour from measuring a long baseline, forcing reliance on a temporary small base. He conducted observations for azimuth, latitude, and other calculations, spending several days at an observation station on a cleared eastern hill. Previous triangulation fixes for Nattaung were found inaccurate, requiring Renny-

¹⁷⁷ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force to the Adjutant -general, Madras (Through the Burma District) Date 1 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Tailyour to rely on Kan's observed latitude and an assumed longitude until connections could be made with the Chittagong triangulation.

Transport and Logistics Challenges

No mule tracks existed from Kan into the Chin Hills, necessitating reliance on coolies for transport. Naga and Khalasia coolies proved exceptional, each carrying 60 pounds plus personal kit and keeping pace with troops over marches exceeding 15 miles with altitude changes up to 10,000 feet daily. In contrast, survey khalasis struggled with light loads, often less than a third of the coolies' burden, and were ill-suited for hill work. The Nagas and Khalasias also excelled in clearing hills.¹⁷⁸

With no prior transport arrangements for the survey party and a shortage of coolies, Renny-Tailyour was allocated only 10 coolies, sufficient only for baggage. Additional transport for rations was provided when available. From Kan to Hakha, the party moved in two sections: half advanced with rations, then coolies returned to transport the second half. Eight days' rations required 10 coolies' loads. No interpreter or ponies were permitted beyond Kan, and the need to construct a mule path to Hakha slowed progress. The survey party departed Kan for the front on 16 December 1889, accompanying Brigadier General Symon's armed forces reconnoitering from Kan to Laungat and Chaungkwa.

Road Construction and Initial Advance

On 9 December 1889, a workforce of 127 sappers and 103 Punjabi coolies, led by Major Henry, R.E., began constructing a road from Kan to Zokhua, aiming to reach Kabe Hill, 10 miles away, to establish a passable mule track and a mule road back to the base. Kyaukpyudaung, the first post at Kabe Hill's base, was garrisoned with 23 rifles of the 2nd Madras Infantry but was later abandoned due to water scarcity. Over the following week, troops arrived from Pakokku in detachments of 200–300 daily.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding the Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force, to the Adjutant General, Madras (through the Burma District), March 1891, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁷⁹ From D Ross. Ross. Esq., Assistant Commissioner with the Southern Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, March 1890, Progress report of

The road from Kan to Chaungkwa, reached on 20 December 1889, traversed level land before crossing the Kabk range and descending into the Laungat Chaung valley. The stream, small in the dry season, was reportedly impassable during rains. The route continued up the valley for nine miles, crossing the stream 43 times. General Symon and his escort ascended a shoulder of Taopi Hill (3,970 feet), from where Colonel King-Harman's camp at Vantlang was visible on a low western saddle. The small Chin village of Lamtuk, with seven or eight houses, was also observable from Vantlang. The distance from Chaungkwa to Vantlang was approximately six to seven miles. The road then ascended steadily to Taungtek (now Tinam), followed a ridge to the Torsong range, and descended slightly into Ruavan village.¹⁸⁰

Vantlang Village: Initial Engagement (27–28 December 1889)

On 27 December 1889, General Symon led an advance party towards Vantlang village. The following morning, their camp was attacked from the west. General Symon, accompanied by Gurkha troops, pursued the assailants but failed to apprehend them. Later that day, with three officers and 60 men, he reconnoitred the Zokhua road.¹⁸¹ Approximately two miles from camp, they spotted a group of Chins moving along a ridge intersecting their path. The Chins had constructed a stockade atop a hill, strategically positioned to dominate the road. Displaying significant numbers, they cheered and made loud noises to assert their presence.

As a small detachment of British soldiers ascended a nearby hill to the right of the stockade, the Chins opened fire. The British quickly suppressed the assault with a few volleys. Local guides estimated the Chin force at around 200 men and revealed that the Chins expected the British to retreat after the camp attack. Following the skirmish, the survey party advanced two more miles to Lowpuin Hill,

the Operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department- External A, No. 134, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁸⁰ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force to the Adjutant -general, Madras (Through the Burma District) Date 1 May 1890, Chin-Lushai Affairs, Foreign Department- External A, No. 171, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁸¹ From General Symon, Camp Yokwa to Chief Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Burma, March 1890, Progress report of the Operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department- External A, No. 130 & 131, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

from where they observed the satellite villages of Zokhua: Farawn, with approximately 20 houses, and Hongwin (Hrawngvun), with about 60 houses.¹⁸²

Ruavan Village: Occupation and Strategic Positioning

General Symon, accompanied by 100 King's Own Scottish Borderers, 100 Gurkhas, and approximately 500 Hill coolies, marched to Ruavan village, which they found deserted. Situated on the eastern slope of a steep hill, Ruavan comprised 40 well-constructed houses made of planks in the typical Chin style. Located 35 miles from Kan, Ruavan was the first village encountered en route to Hakha. The road from Ruavan to Hakha involved continuous ascents and descents, crossing a high range exceeding 7,000 feet before Hakha and another at 5,000 feet before Zokhua.

On 6 January 1890, a survey party consisting of 20 rifles from the King's Own Scottish Borderers and 20 Gurkha rifles marched towards Zokhua, reaching within 1.5 miles of the ridge beneath which Zokhua lay. Troop distribution west of Kan included 23 rifles of the 2nd Madras Infantry at Kyaukpyudaung, one British officer and 50 rifles of the 2nd Madras Infantry at Lungchawi village, 100 rifles at Taungtek (now Tinam), and at Ruavan headquarters, 100 rifles of the Borderers, 100 Gurkha rifles, the Vantlang village contingent, and the Sapper Company with 40 Gurkhas.¹⁸³

On 8 January 1890, two Zokhua representatives, sent by their chief, Yan Son, arrived at the Ruavan camp to inquire about British intentions. The British, under General Symon, insisted on communicating only with head chiefs under a white flag as a sign of peace, signaling their intent to march to Zokhua soon. The survey party occupied Ruavan on 12 January 1890, finding large houses with wooden floors and well-thatched roofs. Between Kan and Ruavan, surveyor Renny-Tailyour established observation posts at Kabt, Taungtek (now Tinam), and Torsong hills, but persistent cloud cover hindered clear observations.

¹⁸² Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 110, National Archives of India.

¹⁸³ From General Symon, Camp Rawvan to District staff officer, Burma, March 1890, Progress report of the Operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department- External A, No. 110, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

At Ruavan, Chin chiefs began acknowledging British authority, though persuading them to surrender their slaves required significant pressure. The British imposed stringent terms on Zokhua to assert dominance, including annual tribute to North Yaw, ensuring the safety of British officers, releasing Burmese captives, ceasing raids, paying a 200-rupee fine for resistance, compensating for a slain Gurkha Havildar, supporting British military objectives, and returning the head of a Punjabi laborer. In return, the British promised not to annex Zokhua, allowing local governance to persist, and guaranteed the retention of arms, protection of lives and property, compensation for accidental damages, fair wages for labor, and regulated trade with Burma. Non-compliance would result in the destruction of Zokhua villages and their lands. These terms, valid for three years upon confirmation by the Chief Commissioner, applied to the Zokhua circle, including villages like Zokhua, Rawvan, Pumlen, Tinam, Hrawvun, Malsawm, Vantlang, and Lamtuk, under Zokhua headmen's orders.¹⁸⁴

On 12 January 1890, two Chins ambushed and killed a British officer on the road between Taungtek and Ruavan. As the responsible tribe's chiefs had not submitted, the British could not demand the culprits' surrender but burned a village and imposed a fine as punishment. Zokhua's representative, Ratiaw, acknowledged British control, stating, "The country is yours, you can do as you like." The British planned to establish a military post at Zokhua while troops remained in the Hills.¹⁸⁵

Zokhua Village: Subjugation and Negotiations (18–29 January 1890)

The Burma Column Survey reached Zokhua, the capital of a large tribe, on 18 January 1890. The principal chiefs greeted the British, and on 19 January, General Symon visited the village, noting its excellent sanitation and 360–380 houses, similar to other Chin structures. Their destruction would have been a significant loss to the community. During an interview with five head chiefs, the British pressed for compliance with surrender terms. Despite the chiefs' attempts to delay, their limited

¹⁸⁴ From General Symon, Camp Rawvan to Chief Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Burma, March 1890, Progress report of the Operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department- External A, No. 111, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁸⁵ Diary of D. Ross, Esq., Assistant Commissioner with Southern Column, Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force, March 1890, Progress report of the Operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department- External A, No. 146, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

and fragmented authority among minor chiefs hindered enforcement. The British issued an ultimatum: within five days, the chiefs had to return captives and pay a 500-rupee fine in cash or cattle, or face escalating destruction—10 houses on the sixth day, 50 on the seventh, and the entire village on the eighth.¹⁸⁶

The expedition suffered from severe malarial fever, with Renny-Tailyour experiencing daily fevers from 3 to 20 January 1890. However, cases diminished after this period, likely due to higher elevations or the survival of the fittest. Meanwhile, a Hakha chief arrived at the camp, offering a pig and liquor, and pledged to guide the British to Hakha, assuring no resistance and requesting protection from death or disease. Envoys from Sakta brought a mithun but were dismissed for failing to deliver Burmese captives.

On 20 January 1890, the survey party reconnoitred six miles along the Hakha road, reaching a high range's crest, with Hakha approximately three miles away. The route involved crossing valleys and ascending to Bualtak and Mingua villages, with a final descent to a ridge obscuring Hakha. The region's tangled hills complicated road construction. When Zokhua chiefs failed to meet surrender terms, the British seized three mithuns as compensation. The Chins engaged in limited trade, supplying fowls, eggs, and vegetables to the camps.

On 25 January 1890, Zokhua's submission was finalized. The chiefs agreed to pay an annual tribute of 100 rupees or mithuns, receive British officials amicably, refrain from raids, and maintain roads and telegraph lines. The British assured no annexation and preservation of tribal organization if compliance was maintained. Zokhua chiefs influenced neighboring villages like Sakta to surrender captives and provide guides for the British advance to Gangaw. On 29 January 1890, a party with Renny-Tailyour and 95 Hill coolies reconnoitred a new road to Gangaw, finding it inferior to the Kan-Zokhua route due to water scarcity. Despite challenges, they added to the map.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 135, National Archives of India.

¹⁸⁷ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 120, National Archives of India.

Advance to Hakha via Bualtak (February 1890)

Under Captain Carnegie, with Mr. Ross and Captain Burton, 62 King's Own Scottish Borderers and 85 Gurkhas marched to Bualtak, seven miles from Zokhua, en route to Hakha. Mr. Ross communicated with Hakha chiefs, though no terms were finalized. Captain Carnegie reconnoitred ahead and built sheds for advancing troops. On 8 February 1890, a reconnaissance in force advanced from Bualtak towards Hakha, with the civil engineer tasked to estimate the distance and road conditions to Hakha city.

Reports indicated that Hakha had gathered captives for surrender and prepared a feast for the British, while the Tlaisuns urged Hakha to resist. Hakha declined Tlaisun gifts and refused to join them. The Tlaisun village of Menkin sought to join Hakha in submission. The British reached Hakha on 16 February 1890, finding a well-situated village of approximately 250 houses. The reception was friendly, with villagers trading freely. The Thlantlang head chief, present in Hakha seeking a wife, was persuaded by General Symon to submit, aiding General Treager's Chittagong Column advance. Hakha offered 1,000–2,000 armed men to fight the Tlaisuns, their enemies, alongside the British. The region's open, jungle-free landscape and pleasant climate suggested suitability for a permanent camp.¹⁸⁸

Survey Completion and Return (12–18 February 1890)

On 12 February 1890, the survey party returned to Zokhua via Kan, where Renny-Tailyour measured a baseline after the paddy harvest and revisited survey stations. Arriving at Hakha on 18 February 1890, 65 miles from Kan, the party found grassy downs contrasting with prior steep hills. The camp and future fort site, at over 6,000 feet, offered excellent western views, including Thau Tlang, a Chittagong triangulation point previously misidentified as Sangal Tlang. Renny-Tailyour connected his surveys to the Chittagong triangulation, correcting earlier measurements.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 168, National Archives of India.

¹⁸⁹ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 110, National Archives of India.

The expedition's subjugation of Hakha chiefs was notable. The Chins' curiosity about British arms and intentions was evident, and the region's strategic and climatic advantages underscored its value for colonial objectives.) Please reproduce this writeup with refine articulative manner without missing each point.¹⁹⁰

Expedition and Occupation of Falam (Tlaisun Circle), 1890

In late February 1890, British colonial forces launched a meticulously planned military expedition to secure the Tlaisun Circle, centered around Falam, the most populous and influential region among the Chin tribes in present-day Myanmar. This operation, executed under the command of Brigadier General Symon, aimed to assert British authority and ensure the submission of the Tlaisun Chiefs. The expedition, conducted between February and March 1890, combined strategic reconnaissance, coordinated troop movements, and diplomatic negotiations to achieve its objectives without significant armed conflict. This paper examines the expedition's planning, execution, and outcomes, highlighting the interplay of military strategy, local resistance, and negotiation that shaped its success.¹⁹¹

By the last week of February 1890, preparations for the expedition were well underway, driven by the strategic importance of the Tlaisun Circle. As the political and demographic heart of the Chin tribes, securing Falam was critical to establishing British dominance in the region. The operation required careful coordination due to logistical challenges, including sickness among troops and carrier coolies, which had significantly weakened the Southern Column. This necessitated the simultaneous deployment of two small columns—one from Fort White in the north and another from Hakha in the south—to mitigate the risk of resistance from the well-prepared Tlaisun defenses.

A reconnaissance mission, led by Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour and accompanied by Bapu Jadu, was conducted from Hakha to Falam on 26 February

¹⁹⁰ From General Symons, Camp Haka, to district staff officer, Burma District, March 1890, Progress reports of operations from Burma of Chin-Lushai expedition, Foreign Department-External A, No. 168, National Archives of India

¹⁹¹ Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

1890. This four-day operation provided critical intelligence on terrain and potential obstacles, enabling effective planning. Concurrently, Ali Niwaz was dispatched on 23 February to establish contact with the Chittagong Column, ensuring coordination across the expeditionary forces. These efforts underscored the British emphasis on reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering as prerequisites for the main advance.

On 8 March 1890, a force of 350 troops under Colonel Skene departed from Fort White, while the Southern Column, comprising two mountain guns and two rifle units under the expedition's narrator, set out from Hakha on 9 March. The two columns converged on 11 March 1890, arriving within one hour of each other on opposite banks of the Manipur (Nankathe) River, approximately six miles from Falam. This precise coordination, facilitated by prior reconnaissance, ensured that the British forces approached Falam with sufficient strength over 400 fighting men and two mountain battery guns in the Southern Column alone to deter resistance.¹⁹²

The Tlaisun Chiefs had prepared extensive fortifications, including stockades, breastworks, and obstructions spanning approximately nine miles, primarily to counter an advance from the north. An estimated 5,000 men, two-thirds armed with firearms and the remainder with spears, were assembled south of the Manipur River near Ywama. Despite this formidable defensive posture, no direct confrontation occurred, likely due to the overwhelming strength and mobility of the British columns.

Upon arriving at Falam on 11 March 1890, the British summoned the Tlaisun Chiefs to negotiate terms. The Chiefs, described as arriving in an inebriated state, permitted the British forces to pass through their fortifications unopposed but initially refused to accept the proposed terms, including acknowledging British supremacy through tribute payment and a fine of Rs. 10,000 imposed by the Chief Commissioner of Burma. This defiance created a tense standoff, and the Chiefs were dismissed with a warning to reconsider their position.¹⁹³

¹⁹² From Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Rangoon, to Foreign Secretary, Calcutta, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 64, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁹³ Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Over the next two days (12–13 March 1890), intense deliberations among the Chiefs culminated in the triumph of the “peace party.” On 13 March, they agreed to all British demands, including payment of the outstanding 1889 tribute. The fine was reduced to Rs. 5,000 at the Chiefs’ request, reflecting a pragmatic compromise. The Chiefs’ decision was influenced by several factors: the rapid concentration of British forces, the threat of permanent garrisons in their territory, and pressure from outlying villages fearing destruction if hostilities erupted. The British had strategically disseminated their terms in advance, amplifying local pressure for compliance.

The Chiefs later admitted that, until days before the expedition’s arrival, they had intended to resist, recognizing that allowing an armed force to enter their capital would undermine their prestige among the Chin tribes. However, doubts about their defensive capabilities and pleas from surrounding communities ultimately compelled their submission. The decision to accept the tribe’s submission at Ywama, rather than deeper in their territory, proved strategically sound, balancing military pressure with diplomatic resolution.¹⁹⁴

Reconnaissance and Survey Activities

In addition to military operations, the expedition included significant reconnaissance and survey efforts. On 13 March 1890, Renny-Tailyour, accompanied by Bapu Jadu, visited the Fort White column’s camp, a challenging journey involving a 3,500-foot descent to cross the Manipur River at a ford (elevation 1,300 feet) and an equivalent ascent. The river, with its rocky and precipitous banks, was barely passable due to rising waters, highlighting the logistical difficulties of the terrain.

On 14 March, Renny-Tailyour conducted surveying from a hill behind the Fort White camp, establishing observation stations near Falam and between Falam and Hakha. These stations facilitated triangulation with points previously fixed by the Burma survey, enhancing British cartographic knowledge of the region. Following a reconnaissance mission to Sihaung, both columns withdrew from

¹⁹⁴ Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts established in the Lushai country and in the Chin Hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. Surrender of the Tashons. Pacifications of the Northern Chin Hills, April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 81, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Tlaisun territory without incident, marking the successful conclusion of the operation.¹⁹⁵

Upon the Northern Column's return to Fort White, military operations resumed against the Sizang tribe. The Southern Column, meanwhile, continued extensive reconnaissance and exploration until the end of the season, significantly advancing British understanding of these previously uncharted regions. These efforts underscored the expedition's dual objectives of military control and territorial mapping.

The expedition to Falam in March 1890 exemplified the British colonial strategy of combining military precision, intelligence-gathering, and diplomatic negotiation to subdue resistant tribes. The coordinated advance of the Fort White and Hakha columns, supported by thorough reconnaissance, overwhelmed the Tlaisun Chiefs' defensive preparations, leading to their submission without bloodshed. The operation's success was rooted in the British ability to project strength, exploit local divisions, and leverage the threat of permanent occupation. Furthermore, the survey and exploration efforts enhanced British control over the Chin Hills, paving the way for further colonial administration. This case study illuminates the complexities of colonial expansion, where military might was tempered by strategic diplomacy to achieve lasting dominance.¹⁹⁶

Summary of the Operation in the Chin Hills.

The Burma Column's survey expedition commenced its journey on 10 November 1889, departing from Rangoon and reaching Pakokku on 13 November 1889. Pakokku served as the assembly point for the troops and survey personnel before advancing further into the unexplored regions of Burma. The expedition proceeded to Kan, arriving on 6 December 1889, marking the beginning of an extensive and meticulous survey operation.

¹⁹⁵ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lx.

¹⁹⁶ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 110, National Archives of India.

During the arduous march from Pauk to Kan, Lieutenant T.F.B. Renny-Tailyour, R.E., who was in charge of survey operations, undertook triangulation work, while Sub-surveyor Ali Nawaz Khan conducted traverse mapping and Sub-surveyor Bapu Jadu engaged in plane-tabling. However, heavy rainfall severely hampered these efforts, particularly impacting triangulation and plane-tabling. Despite these challenges, the survey team persevered in their efforts to chart the terrain.¹⁹⁷

Following a brief consolidation at Kan, the column departed on 16 December 1889, traversing the rugged Torsong Ranges before reaching Ruavan village on 12 January 1890. The march continued to Zokhua, where the team arrived on 18 January 1890. Throughout this journey, the team managed to maintain detailed surveying and triangulation, contributing significantly to regional cartography.

At Zokhua, Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour and a sub-surveyor joined a reconnaissance mission to Gangaw to explore potential new road routes, further refining existing maps. Upon their return to Zokhua via Kan, the expedition pressed forward to Hakha, where they arrived on 18 February 1890. Shortly thereafter, on 26 February 1890, Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour embarked on another reconnaissance mission to Tlaisun. This excursion allowed him to integrate new survey data with prior work conducted around Fort White the previous year, ensuring continuity in the mapping efforts.

Expanding the scope of the expedition, Sub-surveyor Bapu Jadu was tasked with accompanying a small team down the Manipur (Nankathe) River to Sihuang. Upon his return to Hakha, he was promptly reassigned to Myintha, where his surveying efforts further closed gaps in the regional maps. Meanwhile, on 23 March 1890, Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour and Sub-surveyor Ali Nawaz Khan proceeded to Thau, where they met with the survey party from the Chittagong Column. This

¹⁹⁷ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 134, National Archives of India.

rendezvous allowed for the consolidation of work conducted by both teams, streamlining the mapping of the area.¹⁹⁸

Following this crucial consolidation, Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour, accompanied by Lieutenant Bythell, returned to Hakha on 1 April 1890. There, they joined an exploring party under General Symons, heading southwest with the objective of surveying the Boinu River, an area referenced in previous operations by another column. This mission was successfully completed, and the team returned to Hakha on 15 April 1890, marking the conclusion of primary operations for the Burma Column.

As the expedition wrapped up, Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour traveled back to Mandalay via Kan and Kalewa, mapping the Myittha River from Kan to Kalemio along the way. His detailed survey work proved instrumental in refining the region's cartographic records.

The Burma Column's survey expedition achieved remarkable success in mapping and documentation:

- Approximately 3,000 square miles of previously uncharted territory were surveyed.
- Major gaps in the regional maps were systematically filled.
- Triangulation was effectively extended over the entire mapped area.
- Numerous distant peaks were recorded and fixed, contributing to future navigational accuracy.

Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour's contributions were formally recognized by both the General in command and the Government of India, acknowledging the expedition's valuable services. Through determination and perseverance, the Burma

¹⁹⁸ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lxiii.

Column's efforts significantly enhanced the understanding of Burma's topography, laying a foundation for future exploration and development in the region.¹⁹⁹

Connecting Frontiers: The 1890 Thau Tlang Expedition and the Joint Chittagong–Chin Triangulation Survey

In early 1890, British colonial authorities mounted a significant joint survey expedition to the Thau Tlang region of the Chin Hills. Undertaken by the Burma and Chittagong Columns under the command of Brigadier General Symons, the expedition exemplifies the integration of cartographic science with the military strategy that typified late 19th-century British imperial expansion. This operation, which successfully mapped approximately 3,000 square miles of previously uncharted territory, connected triangulations between the Burmese and Chittagong frontiers, confirmed the source of the Kolodyne river and consolidated British authority through both physical presence and symbolic acts. Its success reflects not only the technical capacities of British survey teams, but also their broader political function in extending colonial governance into remote frontier zones.²⁰⁰

The Thau Tlang expedition must be understood within the wider context of British efforts to extend control into hill tracts following the annexation of Upper Burma in 1885-86. In these highland regions, geographic ignorance, combined with persistent indigenous resistance, posed ongoing challenges to the assertion of imperial authority. The Chin Hills, bordering present-day India and Myanmar, were particularly difficult to penetrate because of their complex terrain and autonomous hill societies. Prior hostilities, such as the 1888 killing of Lieutenant Steward and two sepoys near the Chittagong frontier, underscored the limitations of British control and justified renewed military and surveying interventions. The 1890 expedition therefore aimed not only to generate geographic knowledge, but also to restore imperial prestige and secure the allegiance or submission of local communities.

¹⁹⁹ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India.

²⁰⁰ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 80.

The objectives of the expedition were clearly delineated and reflect the imperial confluence of scientific, strategic, and symbolic imperatives. First, the British sought to connect triangulation chains that had been advancing separately from Burma and Chittagong, with Thau Tlang's summit providing an ideal observational node. Second, the expedition aimed to survey the largely unmapped Letha Range and the surrounding Thantlang Circle, thereby filling in blank spaces on British maps. Third, the expedition aimed to confirm the course and source of the Kolodyne river—an important hydrographic objective given the river's strategic and economic significance. Additional objectives included providing logistical support to military operations in the area, particularly the garrison of the 4th Gurkhas at Hakha, and recovering the remains and equipment from the 1888 incident. These tasks reinforced the interdependence of mapmaking, military logistics, and political messaging in Britain's frontier policy.²⁰¹

Technically, the expedition relied on well-established British surveying practices such as triangulation and plane-table surveying. Survey parties established stations at prominent elevation points, clearing dense bamboo at summits such as Thau Tlang to open sight lines. Despite adverse weather, including prolonged rains in mid-March and persistent haze that hampered visibility, Lieutenants Renny-Tailyour, Bythell, and Stotesbury succeeded in linking triangulations from both colonial fronts. This connection, completed on 28 March 1890 from the summit of Thau Tlang and later verified by Thantlang and Hakha, was regarded as a major technical accomplishment and a step forward in producing a more integrated and accurate map of the region.²⁰²

The personnel involved in the survey demonstrated the hybrid structure of British expeditions in the hills: the scientific, military, and administrative domains were closely intertwined. Brigadier General Symons led the overall mission, while key surveying roles were carried out by Lieutenant Renny-Tailyour (Burma

²⁰¹ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 80.

²⁰² *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lvii.

Column), Lieutenant Bythell and Mr. Stotesbury (Chittagong Column), and Sub-Surveyor Bapu Jadu, whose "energy and zeal" were particularly noted in the official report. Supporting personnel such as Ali Nawaz contributed to both logistics and data collection, underscoring the often-overlooked role of Indian intermediaries in colonial scientific labour. Military officers, including Captains Hall, Shakespear, and Rundall, coordinated the expedition's armed contingents and were instrumental in reconciling survey activities with pacification efforts. Mr. G. Ross, acting as a Political Officer, further reflected on how knowledge production was inseparable from political control.

The progress of the expedition unfolded in several key phases. Initial contact between the two columns occurred at Thau village on 26 February 1890. Captain Rundall's reconnaissance party from the Burma side and Captain Hall's detachment from the Chittagong Column coordinated their efforts roughly 52 miles west of Hakha. Concurrently, the Burma Column extended its patrols across the Thantlang Circle, encouraging or compelling local villages to submit to British authority. On 1 March a significant symbolic act occurred when the remains of Lieutenant Steward and the two sepoy recovered and returned to Hakha. This gesture served not only to recover fallen comrades, but also to dramatise the British resolve and capacity for retribution. The apex of the cartographic mission came on 28 March with successful triangulation at the Thau Tlang summit. Environmental conditions remained difficult throughout—heavy rainfall between 13 March and 18 rendered much of the Burma Column "wet and uncomfortable", while the dense vegetation and limited visibility further delayed operations.

In April 1890, General Symons led a 130-mile expedition designed to verify hydrographic data, specifically to confirm whether the Boinu river was a major source of Kolodyne. Surveyors Bythell, Renny-Tailyour, and Ali Nawaz carried out plane-table work and triangulation under highly unfavourable conditions. Despite the difficult terrain and persistent haze, Kolodyne's upper reaches have been confirmed. Bythell returned to Lunglei on 16 April and Renny-Tailyour, concluding a supplementary survey of the Myittha river, departing for Kalewa on 20 April.

Overall, the expedition had significantly advanced geographic knowledge of the Chin Hills, facilitating future governance and infrastructural development.

The achievements of the Thau Tlang Expedition were considerable. The mapping of roughly 3,000 square miles marked a major expansion in the geographic scope of the British cartographic authority in the Chin Hills. The successful linkage of triangulation systems from Burma and Chittagong not only represented a technical triumph, but also enabled more coherent and militarily useful maps for future operations. Confirmation of the Kolodyne River's source helped resolve persistent uncertainties in regional hydrology, which was crucial for both logistical planning and colonial representations of natural order. The expedition also materially aided the assertion of imperial control, both through the formal reception of submissions and through the logistical support provided to Hakha's garrison and other outposts. Symbolic acts, such as the retrieval of remains from the 1888 incident, played a performative role in asserting colonial sovereignty and retributive justice.²⁰³

However, this expedition faced substantial difficulties. Environmental challenges were the foremost among these, as heavy rainfall, dense bamboo vegetation, and mountainous terrain made progress slowly and physically taxing. Santhali porters reportedly struggled with a difficult march to Thau, delaying the expedition's timeline. Health concerns also emerged: although the main survey team was largely spared, several khalsis suffered from fever after the Myittha valley march, reflecting the ever-present health risks associated with tropical fieldwork during the colonial period.

Theoretically, the Thau Tlang expedition illustrates several critical features of colonial map-making. First, it exemplifies the Foucauldian principle that knowledge is power: geographic knowledge enables both the logistical coordination of troops and bureaucratic administration of pacified territories. Second, it reveals the tight integration between scientific and military domains—a “scientific-military complex” in which surveyors operated not independently but as part of coordinated campaigns

²⁰³ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1889-90*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, lvii-lxiii.

of conquest and consolidation. Third, it points to the silencing of indigenous agencies: the report mentions “disruptive villages” and the securing of “submissions”, but does not elaborate on the nature of resistance or the social dynamics of local communities. Finally, the expedition underscores the environmental contingencies that shaped colonial knowledge production: dense vegetation, poor visibility, and tropical illnesses all served as material constraints on the British cartographic ambitions.

In conclusion, the Thau Tlang expedition is a paradigmatic example of how cartographic labour served broader imperial ends in late 19th-century Southeast Asia. By linking triangulations, mapping new terrain, and asserting physical presence, the British authorities advanced both scientific and political claims over the Chin Hills. The expedition not only filled blank spaces on colonial maps, but also sought to erase zones of indigenous autonomy. As such, it offers a vivid instance of how empire was built not merely by armies but by surveyors, assistants, and political officers whose lines and calculations inscribed imperial order across resistant landscapes. Future scholarship might benefit from examining indigenous accounts of this period and considering how local geographies were transformed, both materially and symbolically, through such expeditions.

SURVEYS AND MAPPING IN THE INDO-MYANMAR BORDER AREA SINCE 1891 TO 1947

Punitive Military Expedition at Baungshe, Thantlang Circle (October 1890–July 1891):

Following the Chin Lushai Expedition, Survey Party No. 11 embarked on its mission to map Upper Burma, including the challenging Chin Hills terrain, on 23 October 1890 during a carefully chosen season. This survey, which lasted until 1 July 1891 was initially led by Mr. M. J. Ogle (Officiating Deputy Superintendent, 4th Grade) until 30 June 1891 when Captain T.F.B. Renny-Tailyour (R.E., Officiating Deputy Superintendent, 4th Grade) took over. The team comprised surveyors, Mr. A.J. Wilson (1st Grade), Mr. F. Kitchen (3rd Grade), P.J.W. Doran (4th Grade), and sub-

surveyors Ikbaluddin, J. Sebastian, Kudrat Ulla, Ramsabad, Sita Ram, and Nuruddin.²⁰⁴

The primary focus of the survey was the Chin Hills, particularly the Baungshe (Thlantlang Circle) region. Initially assigned to sheet no. 5 N.W. in the Shan Hills with sub-surveyor Ikbaluddin, Mr. Kitchen was redirected to join a planned military expedition to Baungshe. He travelled by steamer to Pakokku and marched to Gangaw only to discover that the expedition had been cancelled. Kitchen conducted a preliminary survey covering approximately 2,200 square miles in the Chin Hills.²⁰⁵

His work was connected to Captain Renny-Tailyour's triangulation from the 1889 to 90 Chin-Lushai expedition in the north and Mr. Kennedy's survey from the same year in the south. Although ambitious, Kitchen's survey was marred by inaccuracies due to the uncharted nature of the Baungshe region. The resulting map misplaced and misnamed several villages, reflecting the limited prior knowledge of the area. Despite these shortcomings, the survey provided a foundational understanding of the topography of the Chin Hills, contributing to British colonial mapping efforts in Upper Burma. Survey Party No. 11's work in the Chin Hills, though imperfect, laid the groundwork for future surveys in this strategically significant borderland.²⁰⁶

Survey Operations in the (Extreme) Southern Chin Hills, 1896–97

The (extreme) southern Chin Hills region was primarily inhabited by a diverse range of Chin groups, including the Buangshes, Welaung Chins, Chinboks, and Mon river communities. The lack of centralized political authority among these tribes distinguishes them from other colonial frontiers. In the British colonial endeavour to consolidate authority and expand knowledge in the Indo-Burmese frontier, this region became a critical juncture of the (extreme) southern Chin Hills, the British

²⁰⁴ Report of the operations during the open season of 1891-92 in the Southern Chin Hills, March 1891, Foreign Department- External-B, No.92, National Archives of India.

²⁰⁵ Chin-Lushai Expedition, April 1890, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 75, National Archives of India.

²⁰⁶ Diary of D.Ross, Esq., Political Officer, Chin-Lushai Expedition, From the 14 – 17 february 1890, January 1890, Foreign Departmen, National Archives of India.

went another military expedition in the Southern Chin Hills in 1896–97. Under the leadership of Lieutenant W.M. Coldstream, Officiating Deputy Superintendent, 3rd Grade, and with the assistance of Sub-Surveyor Abdul Rahim, the expedition combined precise cartographic efforts with military enforcement. Three converging columns, each consisting of approximately 100 men, were dispatched to survey uncharted territories, implement punitive measures, and gather ethnographic data. The outcomes of the expedition significantly enhanced the British geographical and administrative comprehension of the region, thereby embedding colonial authority in a previously inaccessible frontier.

The winter campaign of 1896–97 was meticulously orchestrated, with three coordinated columns converging on the Chin village of Myaing, situated on the eastern slopes of the Arakan Yomas. Each column followed a distinct route to maximize coverage. No. 1 Column, commencing from Laungshe in the Pakokku District, utilized a well-established road to Chatwe (Chinwe) in the Mon Valley, facilitating the use of pack animals for logistics and initiating its march shortly after 11 November 1896. No. 2 Column, departing from the military post of Mindat-Sakan, 30 miles north of Laungshe, navigated the high terrain of the Mount Victoria range with the dual objectives of surveying and retaliating for a prior Chin raid on the post. Led by Mr. Ross and accompanied by Lieutenant Barnard, this column commenced operations on 11 December 1896. No. 3 Column originated from Paletwa in Arakan, traversing the Arakan Hill Tracts and reaching Myaing in early January 1897, with Sub-Surveyor Abdul Rahim attached. The survey team, under Coldstream's direction, included Sub-Surveyors Abdul Rahim, Ramsabad, and Mowni Ram, supported by 30 assistants, strategically distributed across the columns to ensure comprehensive cartographic coverage, with Coldstream accompanying the Mindat-Sakan column.

Execution of Survey Operations: No. 2 Column (Mindat-Sakan to Myaing) led by Lieutenant Coldstream arrived in Pakokku on 11 November 1896 to coordinate with Mr. Ross, who intended to depart Mindat-Sakan on 1 December. The assembled contingent, consisting of 100 Sikh Military Police, 200 labourers, and the survey team, commenced their march on 11 December. Coldstream initially diverged to

Bawkung Tung and Mount Kitchen (8,000 feet) for preliminary observations, encountering adverse weather conditions. Improved weather from mid-December to mid-January 1897 facilitated extensive surveying. By 22 January, Coldstream rejoined the column at Tawim and ascended Mount Victoria (10,100 feet) on 23 January. Despite efforts by sepoys and khalasis to clear the site, poor visibility, limited observations, and cold weather at high altitudes resulted in widespread illness among personnel. A consolidated survey of the Arakan Yoma peaks was conducted after regrouping at M'leng, where the Laungshe column also arrived. On 10 January, expeditionary forces dispersed from Myaing, with various detachments, including Coldstream's team, continuing exploration and survey work in the highlands.

Subsequent Exploration (Mon river and beyond): A new phase of operations commenced on 9 February, focusing on the upper Mon River and adjacent unmapped areas. Sub-Surveyor Ramsabad was directed to join the expedition at Tilin in mid-March. Coldstream, accompanied by Captain Rigby, secured approval to survey the Buangshe country and the Myittha River drainage. The party reached Pulumtung (8,900 feet) by 17 February, establishing a temporary base at Lieutenant Fleming's camp, despite weather-related delays. Further movements included ascents of peaks such as Tai Tech Tung (8,800 feet) and Maw Bin Tung (8,990 feet), although haze obstructed northern visibility. By 10 March, the party arrived at Tilin, where members split to pursue distinct mission objectives. On 17 March, a final phase began with Mr. Duncan joining as Political Officer. The expedition mapped portions of the Maw and Myittha watersheds and visited Welaung Chin settlements, concluding operations at Pakokku via Minywa and Daidin by 9 April 1897.

No. 3 Column (Arakan Operations): Sub-Surveyor Abdul Rahim, attached to the Arakan column under Mr. Greenstreet, departed from Akyab in November 1896. Upon reaching Myaing by 1 December, the column conducted a reconnaissance around Chin villages west of the Yoma Range. After rendezvousing with other columns on 3 January, the unit returned via the Lemru Guard. Rahim then independently surveyed the Kyauk Pine Daung range, Kaladan River, and Pi Chaung tributary, mapping 4,608 square miles by 10 April 1897, which contributed significantly to the expedition's cartographic output.

The expedition yielded a detailed quarter-inch scale map covering 8,170 square miles, with 2,000 square miles triangulated. Key geographical features, including Mount Victoria and the Arakan Yoma highlands, were meticulously charted, alongside the sources of the Mon, Myittha, Maw, Maung, and Thet rivers. Despite logistical challenges and rugged terrain, sub-surveyors' efforts substantially expanded British geographical knowledge, providing a robust foundation for colonial administration in the region.

The 1896–97 survey expedition into the Southern Chin Hills was a landmark effort to extend colonial authority through military penetration, cartographic precision, and ethnographic documentation. By mapping a previously inaccessible region and embedding colonial knowledge systems, the operation exemplified imperial knowledge production and control in Indo-Burmese highlands. The coordinated efforts of multiple columns, the resilience of the survey party, and the integration of environmental and social data established this expedition as a model for colonial map-making and administration on the frontier.

IMPERIAL CARTOGRAPHY IN THE CHIN-LUSHAI HILLS: SURVEY OPERATIONS AND SPATIAL CONTROL, 1890-1947

Many people mistakenly believe that maps only show fixed borders of countries. However, it's important to recognize that the science and techniques of map-making have changed a lot over time. These developments haven't always been able to accurately reflect the lands ruled by different kingdoms in the past or even modern nations today. The mapping journey in the Chin and Lushai Hills began with the Lushai Expedition of 1870-71 and followed by the Chin-Lushai Expedition (1890-91), and it has demonstrated the British imperialist's desire in occupying and governing this territorial space with the support of cartographic representation. This was just the start—afterwards, mapping techniques became more advanced, leading to the creation of more accurate maps. To understand how the boundaries of the Chin Hills and Mizoram came to be, it is a must to look at how mapping evolved from the 1870s onward. Historical records from the Survey of India, including various reports and field documents, show the progression from simple surveys to more complex systems that used precise measurements. These records highlight how important

maps were for colonial governance, helping control territories, extract resources, and manage areas that were once independent. This section is dealing with how mapping methods changed over time, the roles played by both British and Indian surveyors, and the unique difficulties posed by the region's landscape and political circumstances. It is found that mapping these border areas reflected wider tensions in colonial knowledge, where the desire for scientific accuracy often clashed with military goals and administrative needs. The shift of the Chin-Lushai Hills from a disputed frontier to a clearly defined area illustrates the strong link between map-making and colonial power. Situated at the borderlands of British India and Burma, these highland regions resisted imperial incorporation until the late nineteenth century. The cartographic project that unfolded between 1890 and 1947 accompanied—and indeed facilitated—the processes of pacification, boundary-making, and resource identification that defined colonial statecraft in marginal territories. Here the study specifically examines the historical development of technical practices, institutional frameworks, and spatial epistemologies that influenced mapping operations in this particular frontier zone.

Periodization of Cartographic Development

The delineation of the Chin-Lushai frontier can be comprehended through four distinct phases, each defined by particular technical capabilities, institutional objectives, and political contexts:

1. Initial Reconnaissance and Military-Driven Surveys (1890-1900)

The initial systematic surveys were conducted concurrently with military expeditions aimed at quelling indigenous resistance and establishing British dominion. During this era, cartographic practices were primarily tactical, focusing on the creation of route maps and sketch plans to facilitate troop movements and identify strategic locations. Survey personnel typically consisted of military officers with limited technical training, supplemented by guides from local communities.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Progress report of the operation from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 110, National Archives of India

The methodological approach during this initial phase prioritized speed over precision. Surveyors employed techniques such as compass traverses, plane table sketches, and pacing, which could be executed swiftly in hostile territories. Preliminary triangulation efforts by detachments from the Great Trigonometrical Survey established rudimentary control points, but coverage remained fragmentary and unevenly distributed.

The 1889-1890 post-punitive expedition against Chin communities exemplifies this early approach. Officers from the Survey of India, attached to military columns, produced rough maps documenting routes, elevations, and potential sites for outposts. Similarly, the Chin-Lushai Expeditionary Force (1890-1892) generated strategic maps that informed subsequent pacification efforts. A significant transition began in 1895-1896 when Captain T.F.B. Renny-Tailyour led No. 11 Party in a more systematic mapping of the Chin Hills. This team, including Lieutenant W.M. Coldstream and native surveyors Mahmud Hosein and Abdul Hakim, conducted 1-inch topographical surveys covering 1,355 square miles and triangulation across 1,830 square miles. Their output—26 heliogravure plates containing maps and ethnographic imagery—represented an important shift from what might be termed "imperial frontier intelligence" toward a more comprehensive "colonial territorial science."²⁰⁸

2. Systematic Topographical Surveys and Boundary Demarcation (1900-1927)

During the second phase, British authority became more firmly established, and surveying practices evolved to become more systematic. These survey operations increasingly prioritized administrative objectives over purely military ones, with a particular focus on boundary demarcation and topographical documentation. This transition signified a broader shift in imperial governance from conquest to routine administration, necessitating more precise spatial knowledge to facilitate revenue collection, resource extraction, and jurisdictional clarity.

Boundary Commissions and Administrative Demarcation

²⁰⁸ Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land*, 95.

The 1907-1908 boundary survey of the Lushai Hills, Chin Hills, and Arakan Hill Tracts, conducted by Pertab Singh and H.P.D. Morton (No. 26 Party), represents a pivotal moment in this shift. Their work, covering 1,194 square miles at half-inch scale, prioritized the clarification of administrative divisions between Assam and Burma. The General Report of 1907-08 reveals the meticulous nature of this undertaking, with survey teams physically marking boundaries using natural features where possible (watersheds, rivers) and artificial markers (cairns, inscribed stones) where necessary. The report specifically notes the participation of local administrative officers alongside survey personnel, indicating the increasingly bureaucratic nature of these operations.²⁰⁹

This boundary work addressed longstanding jurisdictional ambiguities that had complicated both colonial governance and inter-communal relations. The demarcation process frequently involved negotiations with local leaders, though archival records suggest these consultations served more to inform than to genuinely incorporate indigenous spatial understandings. The resulting boundaries often bisected traditionally unified ethnic territories, creating administrative divisions that would later harden into post-colonial national borders.

Subsequent boundary operations further refined these demarcations. In 1921-1922, Bansi Ram conducted additional surveys along the Lushai Hills-Burma boundary under the auspices of the Eastern Circle and Assam Survey Department. His work addressed persistent ambiguities in earlier demarcations, particularly in densely forested watersheds where previous surveys had relied on approximation rather than direct observation. The increasing involvement of Indian surveyors like Bansi Ram in these technically demanding and politically sensitive operations reflects the gradual professionalization and Indianization of the colonial survey establishment.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1907-08*, prepared under the direction of Colonel H.R. Thuillier, R.E., Surveyor General of India, 42.

²¹⁰ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1921-22*, prepared under the direction of Colonel C.H.D. Ryder, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., R.E., Surveyor General of India, 49.

Methodological Standardization and Technical Innovation

Methodologically, this period witnessed significant standardization of survey techniques. Triangulation procedures now adhere to established protocols, with meticulous attention given to error correction and verification. Survey of India records document the systematic use of 5-inch theodolites for primary triangulation, smaller micrometers for secondary networks, and Gunter's chains for baseline measurements. These instruments offered substantially improved precision over the exploratory tools employed during the initial reconnaissance phase.

The integration of triangulation networks with the Great Trigonometrical Survey framework represented a crucial development. By tying local control points to this larger geodetic system, surveyors established a unified spatial reference system that enabled consistent mapping across administrative divisions. This integration facilitated both the comparison of spatial data from different regions and the production of cartographic materials at standardized scales.

Field practices evolved to accommodate the challenging terrain while maintaining technical rigor. Survey parties developed specialized techniques for clearing observation lines in dense forest, including selective cutting of bamboo and temporary observation platforms constructed in tall trees. The General Report of 1908-09 describes how No. 20 and No. 26 Parties conducting topographical surveys in Cachar, Sylhet, and the Lushai Hills were forced to recompute triangulation data from the previous season, indicating both the technical challenges and the commitment to accuracy. These reports note that dense bamboo forests and steep slopes limited surveyor output to approximately seven square miles per month, significantly below averages achieved in more accessible regions.

Technological Advancements: The Chittagong Principal Triangulation Series

The initiation of the Chittagong Principal Triangulation Series by No. 15 Party in 1914-1915 marked a significant technological advancement. This ambitious project aimed to establish a high-precision geodetic framework extending from the Bay of Bengal into the hill regions, connecting previously isolated survey networks. The General Report of 1914-15 details how this operation covered 11.5 miles across the

Chittagong Hill Tracts, South Lushai Hills, and Chin Hills, establishing 10 new primary stations with unprecedented positional accuracy.²¹¹

The technical specifications for this work were exacting. Base measurements employed standardized invar tapes for thermal stability, while observations utilized high-precision theodolites capable of reading to fractions of seconds. Rigorous protocols addressed atmospheric refraction, earth curvature, and instrument error, reflecting the increasingly scientific approach to territorial knowledge production. The triangulation data underwent multiple computational verifications, with final results communicated to the computing office in Dehra Dun for incorporation into the subcontinent-wide geodetic network.

This operation transformed the spatial epistemology of the region, creating a unified reference system that facilitated the integration of previously disconnected mappings. By linking the hill regions to the broader imperial spatial framework, the Chittagong Series enabled consistent measurement, comparison, and representation across diverse territories, exemplifying how geodetic science served administrative integration.

Forest Surveys and Resource Mapping

Alongside general mapping efforts, specialized forest surveys became increasingly important during the second half of the first decade of the 20th century. As the colonial government tightened its grip on the hills, there was a greater focus on systematically assessing and managing forest resources. Survey teams began to include forestry officers who identified and classified different types of trees and evaluated their potential for use.

The surveys conducted by No. 20 Party in the Lushai Hills during 1908-1909 paid close attention to forest resources, making detailed notes about the types of vegetation and the value of timber. These evaluations helped establish reserved forests, which limited access for local people while allowing the colonial authorities

²¹¹ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1908-09*, prepared under the direction of Colonel F.B. Longe, R.E., A.D.C. Surveyor General of India, 60.

to extract resources. This creation of forest reserves marked a significant change in land management, introducing new property rules that favoured commercial timber production over traditional rights used by local communities.²¹²

The forest surveys used specific mapping techniques that categorized vegetation according to colonial forestry standards instead of local classifications. Reports from these surveys show how local ecological knowledge was often replaced with standardized scientific terms, turning diverse forest ecosystems into resources that fit within the colonial economic system.

By 1927, the mapping of the Chin-Lushai Hills had progressed significantly from the basic sketches of earlier surveys. The region now had a structured system of triangulation points, boundary lines, and detailed topographical maps at uniform scales. This spatial framework supported various aspects of colonial governance:

- Administrative control through clear jurisdictional boundaries
- Revenue assessment based on topographical documentation
- Resource identification and classification
- Military and police deployment planning
- Infrastructure development, particularly track construction

The maps produced during this period moved beyond simple positional information to incorporate increasingly detailed representations of elevation, vegetation, settlement patterns, and land use. These detailed maps brought together different kinds of knowledge about the land, changing local landscapes into standardized images that could be easily understood by the colonial administration.²¹³

The period concluded with the region firmly incorporated into broader spatial knowledge networks, its previously autonomous territories rendered into measurable, comparable units within the calculative frameworks of colonial governance. This

²¹²*General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1908-09*, prepared under the direction of Colonel F.B. Longe, R.E., A.D.C. Surveyor General of India, 59.

²¹³*General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1928-1929*, Published by order of Brigadier R.H. Thomas, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 68.

cartographic integration facilitated administrative control while simultaneously erasing alternative spatial epistemologies embedded in indigenous practices and knowledge systems.

3. Advanced Geodetic Integration and Multi-Scale Surveys (1928-1936)

The period between 1928 and 1936 represents the zenith of colonial cartographic activity in the Chin-Lushai region. During these years, survey operations expanded in both scope and technical sophistication, producing unprecedented spatial documentation across multiple scales. This era witnessed the most comprehensive mapping efforts ever undertaken in these frontier highlands, transforming previously sketchy representations into precisely measured and classified territories.

Chin Hills Triangulation: Precision in Difficult Terrain

From 1928 to 1929, the No. 15 Party worked on the Chittagong Series triangulation, stretching from the coastal areas of Chittagong all the way to Falam in the Chin Hills. This survey achieved incredible precision, with average errors of only 0.6 arcseconds, which is quite impressive given the challenging landscape. According to the General Report for 1928-29, survey teams set up key stations on mountain summits over 8,000 feet high in the Chin Hills. This involved considerable planning and specialized equipment. The report highlights important triangulation points established at areas like Sangau (7,218 feet), Fungkah Tlang (6,500 feet), and Lentlang (5,890 feet). These points were crucial for the mapping efforts that came afterward.²¹⁴

The sawtooth ridges in the northern Chin Hills created unique challenges for visibility during surveys. To address this, survey teams often cleared multiple potential observation sites and built scaffolding on tree-covered peaks to get their instruments above the forest. At the Tlangpi station, for example, they constructed a 45-foot observation platform, which took local workers twelve days to complete. These efforts turned some of the highest local landmarks - often spiritually

²¹⁴General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1928-1929, Published by order of Brigadier R.H. Thomas, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 14.

significant to the communities-into essential points for the colonial mapping initiative.

The focus of this triangulation was on a vital north-south route cutting through the central Chin Hills, connecting Fort White (Kennedy Peak) with Falam and Haka—administrative centres established after military campaigns. This triangulation backbone not only helped with later mapping efforts but also reinforced the colonial authority imposed on local territories.

Lushai Hills Integration: Connecting Different Administrative Areas

Around the same time, Surveyor S.C. Chatterjee from No. 12 Party was busy working on triangulation across the Lushai Hills, Cachar, Manipur, and eastern Chin Hills during 1929-1930. This work was essential in linking the previously separated survey grids of Assam and Burma, creating a single spatial map that crossed political lines.²¹⁵ The General Report for 1930-31 applauded Chatterjee's success in connecting the rugged Lushai-Chin watershed, extending from Aizawl to the Tidim area in the northern Chin Hills.²¹⁶

This connection was especially significant in the Lushai Hills, where earlier mapping efforts had been less organized compared to nearby regions. Chatterjee's team identified key control points on major peaks, including Phawngpui (Blue Mountain, 7,100 feet), Sailam (5,923 feet), and Reiek Tlang (4,635 feet), all of which are important landmarks in Mizo culture. The survey party paid particular attention to the strategic Cachar-Lushai-Manipur intersection, establishing precise positional data for the administrative headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei, as well as key missionary stations and military outposts throughout the region.

The General Report notes specific difficulties encountered in the Lushai Hills, where the shifting cultivation practices (jhum) created a constantly changing landscape that complicated survey efforts. The report observes: "Dense secondary

²¹⁵ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1929-30*, Published by order of Brigadier R.H. Thomas, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 70.

²¹⁶ *General Report on the Operations of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1931-1932*, Published by order of Brigadier R.H. Thomas, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 66.

bamboo growth following jhum abandonment poses exceptional difficulties for observation lines, necessitating extensive clearance operations coordinated with local headmen (*Lals*) whose cooperation remains essential for successful triangulation in these districts." This observation reveals the ongoing dependence of scientific survey operations on local knowledge and authority structures, even as the resulting maps served to consolidate colonial administrative control.

Multi-Scale Mapping and Regional Integration

This period witnessed significant diversification in mapping scales and purposes, responding to the varied administrative and military requirements of colonial governance. The systematic production of maps at one-inch, half-inch, and quarter-inch scales satisfied distinct needs, from detailed local planning to regional strategic overview. The introduction of specialized four-inch surveys in selected areas represented a new level of cartographic detail previously reserved for urban centres and cantonment areas.

The 1934-1935 operations by No. 10 and No. 12 Parties exemplify this comprehensive approach. The General Report of 1935 provides detailed statistics on their achievements:

No. 10 Party:

- Triangulation: 6,116 square miles across the southern Chin Hills (Paletwa, Kanpetlet sectors), western Lushai Hills, and northern Arakan
- Quarter-inch surveys: 8,241 square miles covering the strategic corridor between the Kaladan and Manipur valleys
- One-inch surveys: 1,985 square miles focusing on administrative centers and potential road alignments.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ *General Report of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during 1931-1932*, Published by order of Brigadier R.H. Thomas, D.S.O., & Surveyor General of India, 70.

No. 12 Party:

- Half-inch surveys: 5,879 square miles encompassing the central Lushai Hills (Aizawl-Serchhip sector), northeastern Chin Hills (Falam-Tidim corridor), southern Manipur, and northern Chittagong Hill Tracts
- Triangulation: 3,746 square miles establishing secondary and tertiary control networks
- Traversing: 378 square miles providing detailed positional data in areas where triangulation proved impractical.

These operations concentrated particularly on zones of administrative importance and potential economic development. The efforts of survey parties in the Lushai hills gave central administrative corridor between Aizawl and Lunglei top priority, where colonial presence was most prominent. The report specifically mentions about the Champhai valley's agricultural potential and strategic location as well as its thorough mapping close to the Myanmar border. On the other side of the Kolodyne river, the efforts in the Chin hills concentrated on the administrative centres at Falam, Haka, and Tiddim as well as the military outpost at Fort White (Kennedy Peak) and the newly developing road system linking these towns.²¹⁸

Technical Creativity and Advanced Mapping

A very pertinent scientific and technical upgradation during this period altered the existing methodology of survey and this evolution have seen predominantly in work produced by No.12 Party in 1936 as surveyors started to negotiate the difficulties of the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills environment using several data sources.

Comprehensive Local Surveys: Surveyors covered over 2,600 square miles at a scale of four inches to a mile (1:15,840), according the 1936 General Report. Their main areas of concentration were military sites, vital administrative areas, and development-oriented areas. The Lushai Hills' surveys focused on Aizawl and its neighbouring areas, so producing comprehensive records of where people lived, the arrangement of agricultural fields, and the sites of water sources. Falam and Hakha

²¹⁸ *General Report of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India, 1933, Published by order of Brigadier H.J. Couchman, D.S.O., M.C., Surveyor General of India, 54.*

in the Chin Hills also engaged in similar extensive mapping, so that in future it could help in planning and administration of this zone.

Early Aerial Survey Attempts: While aerial photography was not widely used due to logistical issues, the 1936 report mentions some experimental uses of aerial survey data in the western Lushai Hills. These efforts were made possible by occasional flights from the Royal Air Force based in Calcutta. Although they faced challenges in the mountainous terrain especially with few emergency landing options, these initial attempts were a step toward more advanced survey techniques that would come later.

Combining Different Approaches: Survey teams got creative by merging various methods to tackle local challenges. In areas with dense vegetation, they supplemented traditional triangulation techniques with traverse lines and altitude measurements. The report highlights how, in the bamboo-rich valleys of the western Chin Hills, surveyors used a combination of elevated “ray-trace” methods and barometric measurements to achieve reasonable accuracy, even when visibility was low.²¹⁹

Resource Documentation Systems: The maps created during this period increasingly featured specialized notes on natural resources and agricultural potential. The 1936 surveys in the Lushai Hills established a systematic classification for jhum cultivation areas, types of forests, and how bamboo species were distributed. This information played a crucial role in shaping future forestry projects and agricultural initiatives.

Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous Cooperation

The reports from this period reveal increasing integration of indigenous ecological knowledge into survey operations, though always filtered through colonial scientific frameworks and objectives. The General Report of 1936 explicitly acknowledges dependence on local expertise:

²¹⁹*General Report of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during, 1936*, Published by order of Brigadier H.J. Couchman, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 51.

"Operations in the densest bamboo forests of the western Lushai tracts would prove entirely impracticable without the guidance of local huntsmen familiar with concealed ridge approaches and natural viewpoints. Survey parties have found particular value in consulting village elders regarding seasonal visibility conditions and optimal routing between stations. The traditional ecological knowledge of these hill peoples, accumulated through generations of shifting cultivation and hunting, provides invaluable assistance to scientific operations, compensating somewhat for the difficulties imposed by terrain and vegetation."²²⁰

This acknowledgment of indigenous expertise was accompanied by systematic recruitment of local labour, organized through established political hierarchies. In the Lushai Hills, village headmen (*Lals*) mobilized porters and camp workers, while in the Chin Hills, survey parties negotiated labour arrangements through village councils (*khua-bawi*). These arrangements simultaneously incorporated local communities into wage labour systems while reinforcing colonial authority structures.

Outcomes and Territorial Transformation

By 1936, the extensive survey operations had profoundly transformed the spatial representation of the Chin-Lushai highlands. Areas previously regarded as marginal and vaguely defined frontier zones were now depicted as precisely measured, classified, and integrated territories within imperial knowledge systems. The resultant maps served multiple, overlapping functions:

Administrative Control: Detailed maps facilitated increasingly regularized governance through the clear delineation of jurisdictional boundaries, settlement locations, and communication routes. The precise positioning of administrative headquarters (Aizawl, Lunglei, Falam, Haka) within unified coordinate systems enabled more systematic record-keeping and territorial management.

²²⁰ *General Report of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during, 1936*, Published by order of Brigadier H.J. Couchman, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 51.

Resource Exploitation: Specialized notations regarding forest resources, agricultural potential, and mineral indications supported colonial economic objectives. The mapping of bamboo distributions in the Lushai Hills directly informed forestry operations supplying the paper mills of Assam, while soil and slope classifications guided agricultural development initiatives.

Military Planning: Detailed topographical information supported ongoing pacification efforts and contingency planning for frontier defence. The precise documentation of ridgelines, passes, and water sources facilitated troop movements and outpost placement, particularly in the strategically sensitive northern sectors adjoining the princely state of Manipur.

Infrastructure Development: Survey data directly informed the planning of rudimentary road networks, particularly the strategic routes connecting administrative centres: Aizawl-Lunglei in the Lushai Hills and Falam-Haka-Tiddim in the Chin Hills. The General Report of 1935 specifically mentions the preparation of special maps for proposed road alignments in both regions.²²¹

Scientific Documentation: Beyond their immediate usefulness, these surveys advanced a more general scientific knowledge of hitherto unexplored areas by providing data on elevation, drainage patterns, vegetation distribution, and settlement form that guided imperial scientific output.

The geodetic integration attained during this time was quite significant for border canvas. These activities enabled the exact demarcation of internal frontiers that would later harden into international boundaries following decolonisation by means of unified coordinate systems across administrative lines. The triangulation networks spanning the Lushai-Chin-Manipur junction essentially corrected spatial relationships that still shape modern territorial arrangements between India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

²²¹ *General Report of the Survey of India Department administered under the Government of India during, 1935*, Published by order of Brigadier H.J. Couchman, D.S.O., Surveyor General of India, 70.

4. Diminished Activity and Wartime Applications (1937-1947)

Separating Burma from British India, according to the Government of Burma Act (1935), which once once-unified administrative structure and most importantly, during the World War II (Burma Campaign) diverted cartographic resources towards quick military uses. Colonial officials during this time mostly made use of already-existing maps instead of commissioning thorough new studies. Produced in previous decades, the accumulated spatial knowledge proved to be quite valuable for both regular administration and military operations, so proving the ongoing strategic importance of the colonial cartographic project.

Conclusion:

The mapping efforts in the Chin-Lushai Hills from 1890 to 1947 provide an important example of how cartography interacted with colonial powers. These efforts evolved from simple route sketches to sophisticated geodetic networks, which transformed indigenous lands into areas that could be easily understood and managed within the colonial system. This mapping initiative highlights the complicated nature of colonial knowledge, as it was both scientific and strategic, as well as technical and political. The focus on achieving precise measurements and accurate topography met immediate administrative needs, while also contributing to broader imperial perspectives that made different regions comparable and easier to control. The maps created during this time had a lasting impact, extending beyond the colonial period to shape the post-colonial understanding of land and boundaries. The current territorial arrangements among India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh still reflect the survey choices made during that key period, demonstrating the lasting influence of colonial mapping on today's political geography.

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CHAPTER - IV

DISARMAMENT/LICENSING OF GUNS AS A SURVEILLANCE TOOL

Towards the end of the 19 centuries, the British government set in motion an extensive disarmament campaign in the Chin and Lushai Hills. This action aimed to prevent the rise of customary intertribal and clan warfare, raiding, hostage-taking, and tribute collection from lesser chiefs. The colonial government's primary concern was to subdue the restive mountains of Chin-Lushai region so that there was ease in administrative uniformity over the Indo-Burma border colonial peripheries. The Principal goal of these strategies was to compel Lais and other neighbouring tribes to surrender their Cherished guns. At the same time, the British placed harsh control over the issuing of gun licences which were strictly adhered to and enforced during the colonial years.²²² This combination of policies – disarmament combined with regulated ownership of arms at the tighter end – formed the main approach of the British to dominate and pacify control over these frontier areas.

The Chin people viewed the colonial incursion into mountainous areas as an infringement of their rights and ethnicity. This perception sparked several uprisings against the British, the most prominent being the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. In attempting to bring order to the Chin Territories, the British progressively worked to exterminate local tribal influence through the headman's rule. These leaders are identified by the different lines of armaments they possess which provide available captive populations to rule over, satellite villages to rule over, and other items of warfare that they gather.²²³

The Chin people's attachment to guns, with firearms and other weapons, highly coveted within their society, made them fight death to protect what they had. Owning a firearm significantly increases an individual's Chin social status. At the same time, squabbles between neighbouring villages to the south and east were

²²² From HN Tuck Esq, Political officer, Chin Hills to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Falam, 3rd January 1897, Foreign Department-External A, No. 33, The National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²²³ Note on Brigadier-General A.P. Palmer, Commanding Burma District on Chin Hills policy, 16th August 1892, Foreign Department-Secret E, No. 83 of 1893, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

common. These conflicts were generally marked as successful rights until they were thwarted by government military forces.²²⁴ In addition, food procurement, self-defense, and pillaging were secondary functions served by Chin firearms. All of these were powerful indicators of the important role guns played in Chin culture.

The Shifting Landscape of British Imperial Rule: Upper Burma's Integration

The annexation of Upper Burma in 1885 resulted in further contact with the Chins over the course of the Myittha and Chinwind rivers. Before colonial penetration, the Chins were in perpetual enmity with the Burmese, who happened to regularly raid Burmese plains in winter months, and in retaliation, the Burmese occasionally sent abortive expeditions into the hills.²²⁵ The pacification of Upper Burma led to refraining from impending Chin's raid and taking captives and slaves within the newly administered tract.²²⁶

The primary objective of the British administration was to restrain imminent incursions by the Chin and Lushai tribes into the Chittagong, Arrakan, Assam Frontier, and Upper Burma regions, which had recently come under British jurisdiction. These areas are vulnerable to raids from their volatile neighbouring communities. Following the annexation of Upper Burma, British forces systematically surveyed and pacified newly acquired territories by crushing local insurrections. Subsequently, attention shifted to the western peripheries of the former Burmese kingdom, encompassing the Kabaw Valley, Kale Valley, and Yaw country. In the ensuing administrative reorganisation, the Kabaw Valley and Kale State were incorporated into the Upper Chindwin District. The Yaw tract, initially assigned to Pagan, was later reassigned to Pakokku District. This strategic realignment of borders and administrative units reflects the British Empire's efforts to consolidate its

²²⁴ Report of the administration of the Chin Hills from 1st June 1892 to 31st May 1893, Foreign Department- External A, No. 82 of September 1893, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²²⁵ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, by Division of the Chief of the Staff Army Head Quarter, India, 1st ed., vol. V (Simla, India: Government Monotype Press, 1907), 323.

²²⁶ A.S Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land Including a Description of the Various Expeditions Into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1893), 60.

control over these frontier regions and establish a buffer against potential tribal incursions.²²⁷

The Kabaw, Kale, and Yaw Regions: Strategic Gateways to the Chin Hills

The British occupied the Shan-inhabited Kabaw Valley in 1886, advancing away from Manipur. Administration of the valley was entrusted to Tamons, who functioned similarly to the Burmese *Thugyis*. Concurrently, the Kale Valley was under the governance of a Sawbwa, although the state was effectively incapacitated by an ongoing civil conflict between two claimants to the Sawbwaship, Maung Yit and his nephew Maung Pa Gyi. On arrival in 1886, the British encountered the elder Sawbwa in power. However, his corrupt governance necessitated his removal, leading to the appointment of his nephew on 1 January 1887. The Kale state was in a state of severe instability and perpetually embroiled in conflict. Exploiting this tumultuous situation, the Sizang Chins descended from the hills, perpetrating a series of brutal raids that resulted in the partial depopulation of the valley.²²⁸

The British incursion into the Yaw country commenced in late 1887, with the primary objectives of eradicating dacoity, facilitating civil officers' familiarisation with and administration in the region, and establishing contact with trans-border tribal leaders.²²⁹ During this period, the Yaw country harboured an individual who had assumed the title Shwe Gyo Byu Mintha. This pretender successfully instigated an insurrection in October 1887 along the peripheries of the Chindwin, Myingyan, and Pagan Districts. Subsequent military operations resulted in the deaths of Captain Beville, Assistant Commissioner and Major Kennedy. Following his defeat, the self-proclaimed prince sought refuge in the Yaw country.

The British forces systematically dismantled various dacoit factions in the region.²³⁰ Faced with this advancing colonial presence, the Shwe Gyo Byu prince

²²⁷ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, 324.

²²⁸ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, 323-324.

²²⁹ Memorandum by Captain G.S. Eyre, Deputy Commissioner, Pagan, on the Yaw country, -Dated the 16th April 1888, File No. 187, Information about the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²³⁰ Report on Cold-weather Operations in Yaw and on Western-Frontier, 1887 to 1888, File No. 180, Information about the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

ultimately retreated to the Chin Hills, evading capture and further military engagement.²³¹

British Frontier Policy and Diplomatic Engagement with Chin Chieftains

The British administration introduced a series of measures that were seen as oppressive and exploitative, such as the imposition of taxes, forced labour, and the confiscation of land. At the initial stage, the Chins did not entertain the British to enter hilly areas to explore and establish trade routes within their sphere of influence. The first event was followed by negotiations related to the exploration of hill tracts, which none of the various tribes accepted.²³² The Chief Commissioner orders that Captain Raikes exercise the powers of the 1st class magistrate and conduct all negotiations with the Chins and act as civil officers with Columns in the territory North of Gangaw and Captain Eyre dealing with all Chins south of Gangaw.²³³ Consequently, during negotiations with Captain Raikes, Chhawnbik of Falam Chief cleverly asked for time to discuss the matter with other members of the Tlaisun Democratic Council and other Chiefs.

Once the proceeding ended, Major Macgregor then led the Gurkha Army fired and independent shots to remind Chhawnbik and his colleagues of the consequences they did not submit which sooner escalated in inducing Chin resistance than the officers expected.²³⁴ During negotiations with the Zokhua and Hakha villages of the Southern Chins, led by Captain Eyre, the proceedings concluded abruptly and with severe consequences. Three individuals dispatched to the hills to summon the chiefs were detained by the Zokhua; two were subsequently killed,

²³¹ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, 324.

²³² Telegram from the Officiating Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma to the Commissioner, Central Division, Upper Burma, 5th December 1887, File No. 175, Information about the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²³³ Telegram from the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, to the Commissioner, Central Division, Upper Burma, File No. 177, Information about the Yaw country and the Chins, June 1888, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²³⁴ Lian H Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma*, 90.

while the third individual, named Suihleng, managed to escape. Suihleng navigated his way to the Arakan Hill tracts and eventually returned to Captain Eyre at Pagan.²³⁵

Military Operation in Northern Chin Hills 1888-89

In 1888, despite receiving threats and warnings from the Government of Burma, Northern Chins persisted in its raids and devastation of the Kale and Kabaw states, leading to a deterioration rather than an improvement in the situation. As the Chins disregarded the advice and warnings of British officials, the British Government dispatched an expedition to northern Chin Hills in 1889. The objectives were to penalise the raiders for their previous atrocities, recover the Shan captives, and ensure future compliance with the expected conduct.²³⁶

In default of the acceptance of the above terms, General Faunce was instructed to destroy the villages of the tribes and by a rigorous blockade to prevent food supplies from reaching the hills.²³⁷ The main intention was to march first against the head village of the Sizang tribes and from there to deal the surrounding village of the tribe into submission.²³⁸ As the Chins were aware of the road being constructed towards the Hills, the Sizang then sent a delegation to the British to demand their immediate withdrawal and stop road construction. The orders declined which then led to the protection of the boundary, providing all available arms, including knives, spears, bows, arrows, and guns. All males of Sizang marched down towards the Kale plains for the fight.²³⁹

On 7 December 1889, the Sizang commenced the fighting by mortally wounding Lieutenant Palmer, Royal engineer of madras sapper, who was shot through the stomach and died the next day.²⁴⁰ Haumang(khuasak), Sonawn

²³⁵ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 25.

²³⁶ From B.S. Carey, Esq., Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 22-1C., dated Camp Fort White, The 26th May 1893, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India..

²³⁷ Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), <http://www.archive.org/details/pacificationofbuOOcrostrich>, 303.

²³⁸ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 27.

²³⁹ Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and Their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh*, 1986, 116.

²⁴⁰ Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country*, 63.

(Buanman), Kimlal, and Sonlam(Thangnuai) were killed in a skirmish at Tulsak,²⁴¹ but the British were driven back to Kale, 17 Burmese employed by the British were captured and taken prisoner.

During a continuous series of ambushes, the Chin forces successfully captured four guns, four mares, and one individual, who was subsequently lost. In response, British forces retreated for a second time to Kale (Kambale). Shortly thereafter, a larger contingent advanced and constructed a stockade at Phatzang, approximately ten miles from the plains. In retaliation, a Chin force comprising 1,200 Sizang, 400 Kamhau, and 30 Sukte from Mualbem advanced towards Phatzang. At this location, the British maintained their positions for several hours, but were ultimately defeated and forced to retreat towards the plains. Notably, this encounter marked the first instance of a semi-automatic gun being utilised in northern Chin territory. General White, the commanding officer of all British forces in Burma, characterized the Phatzang or Leisan encounter as involving "*the most difficult enemy to see or hit I ever fought.*" Consequently, the northern base was named Fort White.²⁴²

Accompanied by Sir George White and Major Raikes, on 4 February 1889 the village of Khuasat was occupied by resistance. The Chins burned the village before their arrival. The Chins attacked the camp nightly from higher ground. In several villages, troops faced opposition. They contacted the political officer, but continued ambushing troops and refused to surrender the Burman captives. The advance continued until Sizang territory was overrun, and by 5 March 1889, their villages were under British influence;²⁴³ despite the British occupation of Sizang villages, the inhabitants did not capitulate or relinquish their slaves as demanded by the British. They actively resisted through various strategies in an attempt to reclaim the territory they possessed.

²⁴¹ Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and Their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh*, 116.

²⁴² Vumson, *Zo History: With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and Their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh*, 116.

²⁴³ Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, 305 & Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country*, 67.

Between 17-19 March 1889 Captain Bolton, with 150 soldiers from the 42 Gurkhas, led an expedition to the Chin Hills and Valleys north and west of Fort White. The operation destroyed 114 houses and 123 grain stores, and captured 13 mithuns. A Burmese female captive was recovered, along with fowls, pigs, and goats. The Chins offered minimal resistance, firing from ineffective distances before retreating with torches to the Wunkathe Valley after setting the fire to small structures. One Chin village was destroyed by the ambushing of the convoys.²⁴⁴

Half of the firearms belonging to Sizang and Kamhau were seized to hinder raider activities. Despite this, Major Raikes, the current political officer, chose not to enforce disarmament, as the local government had sanctioned this decision, believing that the condition would not be met. The 1888-89 campaign targeted only the Sizang and Sokte tribes. As a result, the adversaries were defeated and forced to retreat into the jungles; however, they remained stubborn and defiant, as before.²⁴⁵

Innovative policy and submission of Northern Chins

The military operation of 1889-1890 destroyed northern Chin villages. The Chins sought refuge in riverbeds and isolated locations, emerging to cultivate fields, ambush convoys, attack sentries, and commit homicides. Troops occupied one large post, conducting operations with the Coolie corps to destroy the Chin settlements. During the day, the Chins ambushed columns harassed troops at night by firing in camps and attacking sentries; they never defended positions, and troops could never surprise them, inflicting minimal casualties while being unable to prevent soil cultivation.

Under the guidance of an experienced officer, the late Colonel Skene, who commanded the Northern Chin Hills, Mr. Carey initiated diplomatic endeavours that were ultimately accepted, leading to constructive discussions. Consequently, rebellious tribes were peacefully transformed into allies such as the Sakhiling clan,

²⁴⁴ Telegram, From the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Rangoon, to Foreign Secretary, Simla, December 1889, Foreign Department- External A, No. 209, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁴⁵ From B.S. Carey, Esq., Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma,-No. 22-1C., dated Camp Fort White, The 26th May 1893, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

who were encouraged to reconstruct their large villages and establish permanent communities. Other clans, initially reticent, were subsequently approached, and by observing the peace enjoyed by the Sakhiling clan, they also expressed a desire for peaceful coexistence. The campaign's objectives were to promote and endorse harmonious settlements, ensure the liberation of slaves, build trust, provide equitable treatment, discourage violent tendencies, and prevent tribes from launching brutal raids on Burmese plains.²⁴⁶

Several conditions were imposed on Sakhiling to facilitate effective governance. These stipulations included the prohibition of all activities associated with slavery, such as ownership, capture, trade, and harbouring enslaved individuals. Sakhiling was instructed to refrain from hostile actions against government forces, including firing upon or otherwise disrupting them. Additionally, the provision of sanctuaries to individuals who were or might have become adversaries of the government was expressly forbidden. All demands for financial restitution from individuals in the Kale state, particularly those who remained indebted to the liberation of former captives, were to be suspended. Finally, Sakhiling was obligated to support the government by providing relevant and timely information.²⁴⁷

The agreement with Sakhiling was deemed satisfactory with a clear understanding that breaching obligations may result in demolition. Officials will facilitate the Sakhiling trade; however, travellers to Kale Valley must have documentation, and purchases will be scrutinised during transit. The commercial activities were supervised. After the 1889-90 expedition, two Sizang clans freed their slaves and communicated with other clan headmen, negotiating slave surrender before allowing for village reconstruction.

According to Captain Rundall, he upheld the current policy, and during the 1890 rainy season, the remaining Sizang surrendered to him and settled without

²⁴⁶ From B.S. Carey, Esq., Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma,-No. 22-1C., dated Camp Fort White, The 26th May 1893, File No. 334, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²⁴⁷ Diary of the Political Officer, Northern Chin Hills, From the 29th January to the 15th February 1890, June 1890, Foreign Department- External A, No.31, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

conflict. The report he submitted to the chief secretary on 7 May 1890 just before his departure from the Chin Hills, reads as follows:

*“The Sizangs have surrendered, but they are not afraid of us, and this is due to the fact that we only travel by paths, that we do not know the country as we should, that we never night march, and that we move about in large columns hampered by coolies and never surprise the Chins.”*²⁴⁸

Southern Column's Advance from Kan to Hakha via Zokhua: Initial Contact with the Lai People.

On 28 December 1889 the Southern Column moved from Kan to the Chin Hills to survey the area. As they advanced, they faced a gunfire from the west of the Tuangtek Camp. Fortifications were being built atop the hill, overlooking the road, with many adversaries present. General Symon led 60 men and three officers up the hill to confront them. Lai men shouted and began shooting, but their fires were suppressed by volleys. The enemy was soon retreated. The guides indicated that the Chins expected force to leave during the attack.²⁴⁹

As previously recorded, the Lai people occasionally launched attacks to fend off the British advances. A significant event occurred on 7 January 1890 when three Lai individuals fired on a British group that was safeguarding road construction workers heading to Zokhua. After this brief confrontation, the Lai attackers quickly withdrew into the thick jungle.²⁵⁰ This event clearly exemplified the Lai people's resistance to British encroachment into their hill territories, highlighting the tensions inherent in this period of colonial expansion.

²⁴⁸From B.S. Carey, Esq., Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma,-No. 22-1C., dated Camp Fort White, The 26th May 1893, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²⁴⁹ Progress Report of the Operations from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 135, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁰“Progress report of the operations from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition”, March 1890, Foreign Department- External A, No 145, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Southern Column's Campaign: The Capitulation of Zokhua and Its Environment

Employing various means and tactics, the Zokhua and satellite villages invite the Thlantlang circle and Tlangrua to resist and drive troops out of their territory.²⁵¹ However, upon receiving information about another column advancing from the west (the Lushai Hills), the plan was suspended. Initially perceived as a "great battle and defeat", 500 armed individuals were mobilised to confront the British, with only 100 men attacking the camp on 28 December 1889 as reported by two minor village agents. Paradoxically, as the aforementioned proposal failed, the three Zokhua chiefs submitted their surrender to Rawvan Camp.

The following terms were implemented. First, British supremacy was recognised through the annual tribute and reception of British officers with assurance of safety. Second, the imposition of a fine to resist the British. Third, all Burmese captives were restored. Fourth is the cessation of raids in the British territories. Fifth, the provision of assistance. Sixth, there was no damage to roads or telegraph wires. Seventh, the surrender of a Cooly leader. If the terms are met, the British will not annex the country and maintain its existing administration. Additionally, retention of arms, no harm to life or property, fair compensation for labour and supplies, and permission to trade with Burma.²⁵²

Both parties consented to terms stipulating that any breach would result in the destruction of the villages. A three-year agreement sanctioned by the chief commissioner prohibited annexation and interference with the village administration. It was mutually agreed that any firing upon troops would lead to burning of the nearest village. These terms encompassed the Zokhua circle, which includes Zokhua (370), Rawvan (45), Tinam (70), Rongwin (50), Faron (12), Kawa (12), and Lamtok (20), amounting to a total of 579 houses.²⁵³ Subsequently, the chiefs of Zokhua

²⁵¹ Po hein (the interpreter) heard from the Pomlan headman that the Zokhua first heard the British advance they sent to Thlantlang and Tlangrua to assist.

²⁵² From General Symons, Kan, Camp Rawvan, to Chief Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Burma, Dated the 9th January 1890, File No. 111, Progress reports of operations from Burma of Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department, External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵³ Diary of D. Ross, Esq., Assistant Commissioner with Southern Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition, from 9th to 10th January 1890, File No. 147, Progress report of operations from Burma of the Chin-

requested reaffirmation of a friendship oath between the two parties. All conditions were meticulously reviewed and mutually agreed upon. Rituals were then conducted involving the sacrifice and division of pigs and fowls.²⁵⁴

Scorched of Lamtok Village

The colonisers established regulations for indigenous villages to facilitate exploration and exert control over them. They also endeavoured to assert their superiority over the local population. However, the Lais did not perceive themselves as inferior or inclined to submit to other tribes. The British incursion into the region provoked anger and discontent among locals. The Lais were strategically positioned and encountered three British officials: Lieutenants Pratt and Foster, and Dr. Bourke. These officials conducted patrols near Rawvan. Approximately one mile from Taungtek and three individuals from Sakta village fired upon them, resulting in Lieutenant Foster being struck in the head and subsequently succumbing to his injuries.²⁵⁵

In accordance with the stipulated terms and conditions, Colonel King-Harman received instructions from the general to advance to Lamtok and demolish the village, resulting in the burning of 17 houses, as it was closest to the location where the shots were fired. The news of Lieutenant Foster's death cast a profound sense of despondency on all involved individuals. The British engaged in preliminary discussions with the headman of Tinam, who confirmed that three men from Sakta village traversed near his village prior to the incident.²⁵⁶

Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁴ Telegram, No. 858, dated the 11th February 1890, From General Symons, Camp Yokwa, to Chief Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Burma, File No. 160, Progress reports of operations from Burma of Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department, External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁵ Telegram, No 734, From General Symons, Camp Rawvan to Chief Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Burma, 15th January 1890, File No. 116, Progress report of the operations from Burma of the Chin-Lushai Expedition, March 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁶ Diary of D. Ross, Esq., Assistant Commissioner with the Southern Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition, from the 11th to the 16th January 1890, File No. 265, Chin-lushai Expedition. Progress on the Burma side, March 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Two minor Sakta Chiefs, Siam Bik and Van Dun, sought to surrender on behalf of their villages. As community leaders, they received surrender terms that were similar to those given to Zokhua. They expressed regret for three Sakta men firing upon Foster, citing uncertainty about visitors' intentions. Upon accepting terms prohibiting harm to people or property, they assured no further shooting from Sakta or neighbouring villages. They were warned that any form of shooting would result in the destruction of Sakta. The chiefs were to spread these terms, and their headmen had to proceed to Zokhua with all Burmese captives. Non-compliance would result in the Zokhua forces destroying Sakta.²⁵⁷

Halkha and Falam circle submission and Convergence of North and South Columns in Falam.

After the submission of Zokhua, the southern column proceeded towards Hakha and was well received in a friendly manner by Hakha chiefs on 13 February 1890 and accordingly obtained full submission. The combined march towards Falam was initiated on 11 March 1890 when the Fort white column under Colonel Skene and the Hakha Column under Brigadier General Symon reached the opposite bank of the Manipur River. Many armed men watched both columns as they advanced, and innumerable stockades, breastworks, and obstructions extending over nine miles of the country were intended against the column advancing from the north.²⁵⁸ There was no collision, and 5000 men were estimated to be present, of which two-thirds were armed with guns and the rest were armed with spears. Although it permitted the column to approach its capital, Falam declined to acknowledge British supremacy. Later, after prolonged negotiations on 14 March 1889 tribute due was paid which was reduced to Rs. 5000.²⁵⁹ The inhabitants residing along the trajectory of potential

²⁵⁷ Diary of the Assistant Commissioner with the Southern Column, Chin-Lushai Expedition, From the 16th to the 19th January 1890, File No. 266, Chin-lushai Expedition. Progress on the Burma side, March 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁸ Telegram from General Symons to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 1138, Dated Camp Tashon Ywama, the 12th march 1890, File No. 82, Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts to be established in the Lushai country and in the Chin hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. surrender of the Tashons. Pacification of the Northern Chins, April 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵⁹ From Brigadier General W.P. Symons, Commanding the Chin-Lushai Expeditionary force to The Adjutant-General, Madras (through the Burma District). File No. 170, Chin-Lushai Affairs, March 1891, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi. & Telegram from

conflict endeavoured to prevent the destruction of their village by employing their utmost persuasion with the chiefs, urging them to accept the British terms. The Tlaisun chiefs admitted that they had initially intended to resist; however, doubts regarding their ability to successfully oppose the British coupled with the pleas from the peripheral villages to avert devastation ultimately subdued their pride, compelling them to concede defeat. Nonetheless, this concession was merely temporary surrender.²⁶⁰

Northern Chin Perspectives: The Sizang Response

Mr. Carey thought that Sizang would back down after Tlaisun surrendered. This belief was based on information given to him by the Sakhiling Chief, who was closely related to Sizang. The chief also mentioned earlier that Sizang's attitude would depend on what Tlaisun decides to do. However, these expectations were disappointing. He found that Sizang was redoubling his efforts, especially in the area of disrupting telegraphic communication. This was due to the chronic lack of metal resources that Chins historically suffered from. The telegraphic wires put up by the British were to the Chin people a completely unanticipated treasure trove of raw material. They started using this metal for many things, including the construction of agricultural tools (such as the heads of hoes), women's jewellery, and even for ammunition to be used in hunting and fighting.

Termination of the Chin-Lushai Expedition (1890): Subjugation of revolt Villages and initiation of Disarmament measures among the Chins

The Chin-Lushai campaign concluded in May 1890. All military forces were pulled back, except for the garrison stationed at Fort White and Hakha, along with three stockades in the vicinity of Hakha, which were permanently established. The temporary submissions in the south encompassed Zokhua, Falam, Hakha, and the Thlantlang circle as well as the independent villages of Wunhla, Rumtlau, Naring,

General Symons to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 1145, Dated Camp Tashon Ywama, the 14th March 1890, File No. 84, Chin-Lushai Expedition. Posts to be established in the Lushai country and in the Chin hills on the withdrawal of the Troops. surrender of the Tashons. Pacification of the Northern Chins, April 1890, Foreign Department- External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁶⁰ Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: The Cresset press, 1962), 397.

and Hripi.²⁶¹ The operation led to the liberation of 77 hostages and the imposition of fines for previous wrongdoings, along with the establishment of an annual tribute. Meanwhile, in the northern region, four clans from the Sizang tribe and five villages from the Sokte tribe were submitted temporarily. The Chin Hills were divided into two districts: the Northern Chin Hills, with its administrative centre at Fort White under Mr. Carey's supervision, and the Southern Hills, which included the Tlaisun tribe, Halkha, and independent villages, managed by Mr. Ross with headquarters at Halkha.²⁶²

D. Ross, serving as the political officer in the Chin Hills, encountered considerable challenges in his endeavour to quantify firearm ownership across various Chin villages. This undertaking was particularly arduous because to the Chins' profound suspicion of British intentions concerning armament. The Chins' apprehension was rooted in their awareness of British actions in Upper Burma, where disarmament of the populace had been enforced following annexation. Consequently, the Chins harboured concerns that a similar outcome might be imposed on them.

The significance of firearms, particularly antiquated flint-lock muskets, in Chin society cannot be overstated. These weapons served a dual purpose: providing defense against external threats and offering a means to subjugate weaker neighbouring villages. Thus, the possession of firearms in sufficient quantities is intrinsically linked to the village's security and power dynamics within the region. Ross posited that any attempt at comprehensive disarmament would likely face unanimous and vigorous resistance from the Chin population. He acknowledged the impossibility of enforcing universal disarmament in the region. However, Ross did not entirely dismiss the utility of targeted disarmament, suggesting that the

²⁶¹ Diary of the political officer, Chin-lushai Expeditionary Force, Burma Column, From the 5th to the 14th April 1890, File No. 70, Chin-Lushai Expedition. Progress of the operations on the Chin Frontier, July 1890, Foreign Department-External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁶² Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 43.

confiscation of firearms could serve as an effective punitive measure against specific villages, when necessary.²⁶³

Punitive Military operation 1890-91: Sakta Chief refused Surrender captives.

General Symon requested that the Chief of Sakta relinquish their captives as a demonstration of complete submission. However, the Chief declined, resulting in no change in their relations. Consequently, British authorities planned a punitive expedition in Sakta. During this period, Sakta Chiefs expressed their desire for peace. Nevertheless, warriors, motivated by messengers from Zokhua and Halkha Khawthar, attempted to assassinate political officers. Subsequently, the Madras guard station at Chaungkhua was attacked and the telegraph wire was severed. This escalation led to open hostilities and multiple assaults on Kan-Halkha Road.²⁶⁴

On 12 December 1890 a small group led by Lieutenant Ducat, consisting of 40 armed men, was sent to fix the telegraph line near Chuangkhua to restore the communication and supply routes. During their return on 21 December 1890 the group was attacked, resulting in the fatal shooting of Mr. Wetherrell, just three miles from Zokhua. A few days later, on 24 December 1890 Duffader was killed and three mules were injured. On 30 December 1890 a Gurkha was shot and on 31 December 1890 two Burmans lost their lives in Tuangtek.²⁶⁵

The Expedition against Sakta commenced on the 1 January 1891 accompanied by Mr. D. Ross, Political officer, Hakha, and Lieutenant B.A. James, Royal Engineer, Sakta column of 135 rifles commanded by Carnegy, 2-4 gurkhas and later was joined by Hakha Chief named Lweshan.²⁶⁶ Cognisant of the column's advance towards Sakta village, numerous stockades were observed in the track, apparently to diminish the strength of the approaching forces. Exploiting dense jungles with thick grass characteristic of the tract, Lais initiated a fire from a small

²⁶³ Diary of D. Ross, Esq., Political Officer, Chin hills, from the 30th June to the 27th July 1890, File No. 254, Chin-Lushai Expedition, September 1890, Foreign Department-External A, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁶⁴ Chin-Lushai affairs, March 1891, Foreign Department-External A, No. 60, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁶⁵ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 48.

²⁶⁶ From Captain PM Carnegy, 2-4th Gurkha Regiment, commanding at Hakha to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Myinguan, Hakha, Chin hills, 7th January 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 96, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

ravine approximately two miles from the village, severely wounding the flankers. Subsequently, a continuous skirmish ensued along the route, before reaching the main village. With myriad fortifications, Sakta men, more accustomed to terrain with dense jungles, executed ambushes from various points, subjecting the troops to heavy fire.

During this period, two members of the advanced guard were simultaneously fatally shot by Lais and concealed in the bushes below the ridge. Upon reaching the village at 2 P.M., a brief halt was made outside, and the troops proceeded to the entrance and fired upon it. To their astonishment, they encountered a strong stockade entrance to the courtyard of a house surrounded by high cactus hedges with numerous volleys fired against advancing troops. At this time, Lieutenant Grant and James reconfirmed potential flanking routes. Suddenly, a shot was fired from another stockade entrance to a courtyard, approximately 20 yards away, which penetrated James's head and caused immediate demise.²⁶⁷

As the strength of the Sakta men was uncertain and considering that the troops were not sufficiently robust to enter the village and administer severe punitive measures such as house burning, this course of action was abandoned because of concerns that it might result in intensified attacks by the Lais on extended lines of communication. After careful consideration, Mr. Ross dispatched the Hakha Chief to the village to negotiate with the Sakta Chiefs, who initially expressed eagerness to submit and subsequently agreed to the following terms: a fine of Rs 200 in kind, two serviceable firearms, one gong, and brass salvers, with the latter remitted within five days. They also consented to the annual tributes of the two mithuns.²⁶⁸

From a military perspective, the expedition was unsuccessful. It was hypothesised that Mr. Ross may have provided Captain Carnegy with accurate information regarding the anticipated strength of the opposition, but the officer may have overestimated the capabilities of his troops. Furthermore, assuming that Mr.

²⁶⁷ From Captain PM Carnegy, 2-4th Gurkha Regiment, commanding at Hakha to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Myinguan, Hakha, Chin hills, 7th January 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 96, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁶⁸ From Captain PM Carnegy, 2-4th Gurkha Regiment, commanding at Hakha to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Myinguan, Hakha, Chin hills, 7th January 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 96, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Ross's information was deficient, it remains unclear how such information was obtained, and why the expedition was deemed urgent. A retreat and leaving Sakta Village in a state of triumph would have been detrimental to Hills' future administration.²⁶⁹

Advance on Thau Village: Thlantlang's Resistance to Lieutenant Macotta's Column

On 29 March, a column comprising three British officers, 100 Garhwalis, and two guns under Lieutenant Mocatta and Lieutenant Macnabb as a political officer, departed for Thau village near the boundary of the Lushai hills. The objective of the expedition was to convene the Thlantlang Chiefs and compel them to abstain from raids and meet messengers conveying information from the superintendent of the South Lushai Hills. As the column advanced towards the Thlantlang circle, all the Chiefs were inebriated, rendering negotiations impossible, and some Hakha men were left to observe them. This behaviour demonstrates that the chiefs exhibited little fear or respect for colonial authority. On 31 March 1890 information was received from Hmunlipi village that Thlantlang intended to attack the Column between Hakha and Thlantlang. Consequently, 130 rifles were arranged to reinforce Mocatta's column. However, Colonel Mainwairing occupied Tlantlang village without opposition as a countermeasure to deter the Lais from attacking Mocatta's Column, and Tlantlang village stated that they had recalled their fighting men.²⁷⁰

The Lais, however, attempted to inflict significant damage and succeeded in executing an ambush by establishing a strategic position at Lawva (stream), while the column halted breakfast. Lieutenant Macnabb, the political officer, recounted the incident as follows:

“caught up a column which had stopped to breakfast at the lawvar stream near munligi. I had not been there five minutes

²⁶⁹From Military Department: Proceedings of the Political Officer with the force operating against Sakta in the Chin Hills. September 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No. 95, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁷⁰Telegram No.190, From General Officer Commanding Burma to Foreign Secretary, Simla. Rangoon, 4th April 1890, Foreign Department-External A, No. 32, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

before the chins opened fire on us all round; within the first ten minutes, 12 men were wounded. Chins continued to fire on us all day and we had to fight our way to a ridge near Thlualam, some six miles on, burning two of our dead on the way and carrying our wounded; the next morning, burning a man who died in the night, we forced our way to the Thlualam hill where we halted to burn two more men who had died in their stretchers; we then forced our way, being fired at off and on the whole way to Thlantlang, where we found colonel mainwairing and force who, being warned by the hakas I had left at Thlantlang, came out to our relief. Our loss is lieutenant Forbes severely wounded, five dead, ten men who had to be carried, besides some slightly wounded; the whole of Thlantlang tribe was engaged in this attack, some of them were killed, but I cannot state numbers, I estimate some 700 men were present.”²⁷¹

On 2 April 1890 Mocatta's small unit faced significant assault from the Tlantlangs while returning from Tamo. The following day, they suffered five deaths and 12 injuries. Among the deceased were one naik, three sepoy, and one follower. The injured included Lieutenant Forbes, a native officer with severe leg injuries, a non-commissioned officer, three sepoy with serious wounds, and six others with minor injuries. The group struggled to reach Thlantlang Village the day before. Lieutenant O'Leary played a crucial role by imposing a fine of Rs 5000 or the equivalent of 50 guns and 50 cattle on the Tlantlangs, to be paid within five days to avoid further military action. The column could not destroy the village because it harboured friendly Halkhas, which would have resulted in their destruction.²⁷²

During the expedition, the objective was to ascertain the number of firearms in various Lai Villages. However, this task is not currently feasible. This particular

²⁷¹Telegram No. 45, From the Chief Secretary, Rangoon to the Foreign Secretary, Simla, 5th April 1891, Foreign Department-External A, No. 34, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁷²Telegram No. 233, From General Officer Commanding Burma, to Foreign Secretary, Simla, 5th April 1891, Foreign Department- External A, No 33, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

subject elicits distrust towards the British among the Lais. They were informed about the British conquest for Upper Burma and the subsequent disarmament of its inhabitants, leading to the apprehension that a similar fate may befall them. It is challenging to understand the significance of Lais because of their antiquated flintlock firearms. The possession of these weapons in sufficient quantities provides them with protection against external threats, and enables them to subjugate weaker villages. In reality, enforcing universal disarmament is impractical. Consequently, imposing a fine for a specified number of firearms in a village might be considered advantageous as a punitive measure.²⁷³

Southern Chin Hills: Subjugation of Lai Tribes

The open season of 1891-92 in the Southern Chin Hills aimed to subjugate and establish control. The primary focus areas included the region south of Halkha, which had not been explored in the previous expedition. The Lais inhabits the southernmost part of the Hakha jurisdiction, which is bounded by Burma in the east, Chinme country in the south, and Kolodyne in the west. Although this expedition was not punitive, it was hostile. The objective was to suppress any opposition encountered swiftly, establish colonial influence, gather information, designate chiefs, and determine tributes, without resorting to force.²⁷⁴ The column commenced its journey from Minywa on 25 December 1891 and arrived at Tonwa Village after three days. Several village representatives convened and affirmed their allegiance and established terms and conditions pertaining to taxation and administration. The column reached Surkhua on 28 December 1891 and on the same day Lotaw and nearby villages capitulated on the commanding officer. Upon establishing a post at Surkhua, commanding officers and assistants resolved to advance directly to Lungo Village, which was deemed the most significant and influential. Initially, an interpreter was dispatched to persuade the chief to surrender, and Lotaw Village, which was centrally located and convenient for command, became the new site for the post, which was relocated from Surkhua. After several days, on 8 January 1892

²⁷³ Diaries of the Mr Ross, Political Officer in the Chin Hills, from the 17 June to the 27 July 1890, Foreign Department- External B, No 183-186, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁷⁴ Part 1 Buangshe column: Report on the operations during the open season of 1891-92 in the southern Chin Hills, 9th May 1892, Foreign Department-Secret E, No, 92, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Lungo Village peacefully surrendered to the British. The troops remained there for four additional days, during which time all surrounding villages submitted to the British authority.²⁷⁵ Arrangements were made for the Lotaw post to be maintained until the end of March 1892, and on 29 January 1892 Mr. Tuck assumed the role of an assistant political officer and organised marches with 70 escorts to surrounding villages to collect tributes and issue preliminary Sanads to the Chiefs.²⁷⁶

Surkhua refused to supply coolies

As per the agreement, the colonial administration agreed not to interfere with local governance; however, it retained the authority to extensively recruit or acquire labourers as needed from the Chiefs. In one instance, Munkon of Surkhua Chief was reluctant to provide the requested labourers and demonstrated insubordinate behaviour. Consequently, the British issued a warrant with 70 rifles for the arrest of the chief under the command of Mr. Tuck, accompanied by Lieutenant Passingham. The absence of Surkhua Chiefs resulted in troops occupying his residence.

Upon becoming aware of British intentions, several Lai individuals, armed with firearms, assembled in support of the chief. The troops were soon surrounded by armed individuals throwing stones and aiming for weapons at the sepoys. Mr. Tuck attempted to disperse armed men repeatedly through both interpreters and friendly Lai intermediaries. However, armed individuals were not inclined to withdraw, leading to escalation and gunfire. This altercation culminated in a total loss of 35 lives, 20 wounded individuals, and devastation of their village. Additionally, ten firearms were confiscated, and subsequently, the chief capitulated on Tuck's demands.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Part 1 Buangshe column: Report on the operations during the open season of 1891-92 in the southern Chin Hills, 9th May 1892, Foreign Department-Secret E, No, 92, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁷⁶ Part 1 Buangshe column: Report on the operations during the open season of 1891-92 in the southern Chin Hills, 9th May 1892, Foreign Department-Secret E, No, 92, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁷⁷ From Lieutenant D.J.C. Macnabb, Political officer, Chin Hills to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, No. 23-28, 9th May 1892, Foreign Department-Secret E, No, 92, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Punishment of Thlantlang and satellite villages

Following the Colonial penetration of the Chin Hills, the practice of paying fines for firearms was initially unfamiliar. Instead, fines were typically remitted in the form of valuable commodities, such as livestock or agricultural produce, and through the provision of extensive labour services. However, in the case of the Thlantlang region, which had committed the heinous act of ambushing Mocatta's small column in the Lawva stream, firearms were confiscated as part of the penalties for past offences and deemed to pose a potential threat to future administration. Therefore, the column arrived at Hmunlipi on 8 March 1892 and the punitive expedition involved imposing fines and destroying one house for each firearm. British authorities employed a tactic known as village burning to compel the Chin people to submit to colonial rule and to relinquish firearms.

The objectives of this column were fully achieved without a significant loss of life, with only one Chin individual fatally wounded by an ambush party deployed at Hriangkhan. The villages were subjected to punitive measures and the quantities of firearms requisitioned and acquired from each village are as follows: -

Table 1: Firearms Confiscated from Chin villages, 1891-92

	Demanded	Paid	
	Guns	Guns	
Thlantlang	20	20	17 houses were destroyed. 15 had not counted but kept 1 house destroyed. 15 houses were destroyed.
Tlangrue	10	10	
Hriangkhan	40	23	
Tunzan	40	36	
Thau	30	30	
Hmunlipi	15	5	
Khualam	10	10	
Ruakhua	5	5	
Shophum	3	3	
TOTAL	173	142	

Source: Report on the operation of the southern Chin Hills during the open season of 1891-92, February 1893 Foreign Department-Secret E, No. 92. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

The expedition visited 21 villages, where tributes were imposed at Rs 1 per house and collected in both cash and kind from all settlements. All Lai chiefs were interviewed, and the selected individuals were granted Sanads. Consequently, the

entire Thlantlang tribe was completely subjugated and controlled. Considerable efforts have been made to apprehend rebel Lalluai, who orchestrated the previous year's uprising, albeit without success. The Chins were instructed to dismantle their residence (one of the significant dwellings in the hills) and transport materials outside the village where they were subsequently incinerated.²⁷⁸

Lai people frequently acquired and surrendered their firearms when confronted with the threat of village destruction. However, in instances of resistance, the entire community was obliterated. This strategy faced widespread condemnation because of its severity and the profound consequences it inflicted on the Lai population. Many were compelled to abandon their dwellings and endure significant hardship and deprivation.

The subjugation of Falam in 1891

Establishing paramount authority in the Chin Hills necessitated control of the Tlaisun tribes and their Zahau tributaries. Although Tlaisun did not display overt hostility, presumptive measures were deemed necessary to forestall potential resistance and avoid military intervention. Intelligence gathered by the political officer at Fort White indicated that the Falam chiefs had attempted to orchestrate a general uprising by collaborating with the Halkhas and Sizang but failed to secure their allegiance.

Subsequently, the Tlaisun leadership abandoned the notion of resistance. This decision was influenced by the persuasive efforts of interpreters and spies who had arranged a meeting with the Falam Chiefs near Minkin. These intermediaries emphasised the futility of opposing the substantial force mobilised against them. Consequently, Tlaisun submitted a statement pledging non-resistance and assuring the troops that they would encounter no opposition.

The Falam Chiefs were initially informed of their intentions to occupy their villages, to which they expressed strong objections. As a precautionary measure, the principal chiefs were retained as safeguards while the troops advanced to the village with full military precautions. However, no resistance was encountered and the

²⁷⁸ Report on the operation of the southern chin hills during the open season of 1891-92, February 1893, Foreign Department-Secret E, No. 92, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

village was peacefully occupied. The objectives of the column were subsequently achieved: a post was established, all tributary tribes of Tlaisun were visited, and their submissions were secured.²⁷⁹

Treatment of Armed Chins

Once the British established a new post in Falam and the management of the Tlaisun and Zahau tribes was brought under control, the question was related to the general treatment of armed Chins. Colonials were unaware of the number of guns possessed by the chins and escorts required by officers and individuals beyond the military post. In addition, the Chins anytime could be a barrier by ambuscading the column or military officers, as the general feeling was that the hill men, who were not under the immediate personal influence of political officers, had by no means yet realised paramount power in the Chin and Lushai lands. Therefore, the firing of armed Chin by military personnel had emerged.²⁸⁰

Despite mixed ideas between officers and the military of Chin Hills,²⁸¹ the column adopted a new policy in which small parties of Chins carrying arms were to be disarmed, and, if they ran away or resisted, may be fired on. Second, large armed parties in Chins are to be treated as enemies and dealt with by Officer Commanding at his discretion.²⁸²

The chief reason for issuing these orders was to ensure as far as possible the safety of the small escorts on the lines of communication with Falam. The issue of the treatment of arms chins created confusion among the officials, as these orders were indefinite and could heavily press friendly Chins with respect to the Halkha tribe, who were allowed to carry guns. The Hakha villages located close to the post could lead to hostility and, at the same time, surrounding villages such as Zokhua,

²⁷⁹ Telegram from General Symons to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, Camp Tlaisun, 14th march 1890, Foreign Department- Secret E, No. 84, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁸⁰ No 83. Note by Brigadier-General A.P. Palmer, commanding Burma district, on Chin Hills policy, dated Rangoon, the 16th August 1892.

²⁸¹ From BS Carey, Esq, Political Officer, Northern Chin Hill, Fort White, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of BURMA, 14th July 1892. Foreign Department- External A, No 166, The National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁸² From Lieutenant D.G.C. Macnabb, Political Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, Dated the 11th May 1892, File No. 163, Treatment of armed Chins, October 1892, Foreign Department, External A, National Archive of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India, 5.

Sakta, and Thlantlang, having blood feuds with the Halkhas and hostility against the government.

In addition to the said orders, An English officer can be trusted to be humane and discreet in carrying out such an order; however, the same discretion cannot be expected of small escorts under native commissioned officers, and Chins would be liable to be fired on unnecessarily, as more power and responsibility were in the hands of Sepoys.²⁸³

The chief commissioner extended to all the Chin Hills orders already issued with regard to the Southern Chin Hills. The Chief Commissioner concurs with the general officer commanding the Myingyan district that Chins who have received a special pass to carry arms should be provided with some kind of distinctive badge by which they can be recognised. He proposes to rule that men wearing this badge shall be exempted from the orders applicable to armed Chins generally and shall not be liable to be disarmed or fired upon unless they come within the rifle range of military posts armed with a firearm, or there is good reason to believe that they have been using or are about to use their arms for improper purposes.²⁸⁴

Failure of British policy and resistance by the Nuaingal and Sizang tribes in northern Chins.

In 1892, the Nuaingal and Sizang tribes organised a scheme to topple the government in the Chin Hills during the rainy season.²⁸⁵ The dread of complete disarmament, resulting from the British policy of fining misbehaving communities and individuals with guns, was the driving force behind insurrection. The rationale behind implementing this fining system was to progressively disarm the Chin Hills without

²⁸³ Treatment of Armed Chins, October 1892, Foreign Department- External A, No. 161-169, The National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁸⁴ From the Under Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Burma District, 10th August 1892, File No 167, Treatment of armed Chins, October 1892, Foreign Department, External A, National Archive of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

²⁸⁵ From E S Symes Esquire, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma to the Secretary to the Government of India, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

inciting a widespread uprising, which was known to occur when harsh measures were taken toward this goal.²⁸⁶

On 9 October 1892 while Myook Maung Tun Win visited the chief of Kaptial at the latter's request and was accompanied by a small escort, insurrection occurred. The contingent had just arrived in the vicinity of Pomba Village when they were ambushed by a substantial group of Chins people who initiated a gunfire at a close range. Eight of Maung Win's men were fatally wounded, and seven sustained injuries; however, the havildar managed to repel assailants until the reinforcements arrived. One double-barrel gun and ammunition, one Martini-Henry rifle and ammunition, one revolver and six rounds, eight Snider rifles, and 320 rounds fell into the hands of the Chins.²⁸⁷ This was achieved by dispatching three men to return to Fort White with intelligence, assembling the remainder of his small company, and engaging in combat to reach knolls.²⁸⁸

Immediate action was taken to initiate a military offensive and prevent the remaining tribes from mounting opposition to the British. The British officers, Mr. Carey, and Captain Caulfield took the immediate plan of segregating the rebel villages by splitting them into two sets, the "hostile" and the "friendly",²⁸⁹ and promptly engaged in dialogue with the Kamhau and Sokte tribes to reaffirm their loyalty and support. Concurrently, reinforcements comprising of 100 men under the command of Lieutenant Wardell arrived at Fort White. Subsequently, in October, Captain Presgrave arrived at his regimental headquarters to assume command of the Northern Chin Hills and relieve the Caulfield.

Chins' campaign strategy was highly sophisticated, as they recognised British superiority in armaments. The Chins employed a system of ambushade, sniping at Fort, implementing roadblocks, severing telegraph wires, and preventing frontal attacks. Extensive disruption of the column in the camp and convoy would render it

²⁸⁶ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*

²⁸⁷ Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 84.

²⁸⁸ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*.

²⁸⁹ From B.S. Carey, Esq., Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Burma, -No. 22-1C., dated Camp Fort White, The 26th May 1893, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

untenable for troops to maintain their position on the hills. The primary strategic objective of the campaign was for Nuaingal men to concentrate on Tiddim and its environs, while the Sizang were to confine themselves to the Fort White territory.

Upon the arrival of reinforcements at Fort White, various columns were mobilised with the objective of destroying villages and inflicting significant damage to crops, livestock, etc. However, Chins's knowledge of British superiority has prevented direct confrontation and resulted in limited operational success. Therefore, it was crucial to establish small outposts throughout the region. Accordingly, the columns from each outpost initiated their objectives to eliminate the Chin resistance force to prevent the reconstruction of villages from being destroyed, cutting all essential commodities, and terminating all Chins field products. In contrast, Chin would lay out any form of attack when an opportunity was offered. The subsequent account provides a concise overview of the operations conducted by the various deployed units.

In 1892, Captain Presgreave led the combined military foray of Fort White. Which into the 1st Burma Rifles and the Garhwali Rifles made column that took the abandoned Chin settlements of Dimlo and Shuampi which the Chin had before that time destroyed.²⁹⁰ While the Chins put up little to no fight at first, they did so later in the return to Fort White mount a few ambushes which saw the Subadar Major of the 1 Burma Rifles get very hurt. The British did, though, press on with their doings in that area. On the 10th of November 1892 a small party under Lieutenant Henegan took over Tannuai Village. The Chins tried to spring an ambush to take British supplies but failed. A larger force which included artilleryists reported that Captain Presgreave engaged the Pimpi rebels on the 14th of November 1892. At this time, Captain Caufield and a group of him came upon Montok which they found to be abandoned. Although the military actions were for the most part small-scale in terms of direct engagement, they did see great damage to Chin agricultural products.²⁹¹

The Brigadier-General Palmer assumed command of military operations in the Northern Chin Hills on 28 December 1892. While he generally approved of the

²⁹⁰ Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 86.

²⁹¹ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*.

existing strategy, he immediately sought to reinforce the British forces in the region, increasing their number to 2,600.²⁹² During this period, Falam Chiefs maintained a neutral stance. They refrained from actively supporting the Chin rebels but also did not offer any assistance to the British in their efforts to quell the uprising or provide valuable intelligence.

By the end of December 1892, the British had established military outposts at Phunam, Pimpi, and Montok, while garrisons at Fort White, Dimlo, and Tiddim were prepared for launch operations against the rebels. On 1 January 1893 a British force of 450 soldiers led by the General marched towards Kaptial, the epicentre of the rebellion. The crossing of the Manipur River significantly delayed its progress by nine days. However, by 14 January the British were ready to advance to Kaptial. As was customary, the rebels abandoned and set fire in the village before the British arrived. Over the following two weeks, small groups were deployed across the region, and although the enemy offered little resistance, their crops sustained significant damage. The enemy made a strong effort to defend themselves near Hele, but the British flanking forces quickly forced them to retreat, resulting in no casualties.²⁹³

At the same time, operations in the Sizang region were also successful. With the rebellion largely under control, surrender terms were offered to rebels. By the end of March, most rebel leaders had been captured or surrendered. Hostage was taken to ensure that the tribes would behave in the future, and 1,647 guns were seized.²⁹⁴ The General then returned to the plains with the most troops. During the rebellion, the British suffered 70 casualties. This included serious injuries to Lieutenant Geoghegan in the six Burma battalions and the subadar major of the one Burma rifle.

²⁹² Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 86-87.

²⁹³ *Intelligence Branch: Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*.

²⁹⁴ From E S Symes Esquire, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma to the Secretary to the Government of India, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

Military action against Sakta and comprehensive Disarmament in the Southern Chin Hills.

In Sakta village, stubbornness was manifested along the Kan-Halkha Road as they attempted to steal buffaloes which defied the uneasy calm in Chin Hills during the rainy season of 1894. They attempted to assert their challenge against the imposed colonial rule, and local chieftains made an effort to disregard the sole right for the summons and control of subjects by British authorities.²⁹⁵ Mr. Tuck, as a political officer and Major Keary in command, mounted a military expedition against Sakta. They intended to 'disarm the village' and distance it from British influence. The columns were abandoned on Halkha on 1 January 1895. As reported, the surrounding tribes were cooperative, and to improve the chances of success, the column was split into two forces: 125 rifles and two guns attacking the village directly, while 75 rifles captured the village from the rear.²⁹⁶

Sakta Village was occupied peacefully, but its residents fled to the jungle, fearing a crossfire.²⁹⁷ Five Sakta chiefs surrendered to Tuck and took custody. Twenty-five guns were used. The British government imposed strict terms on the village, including total disarmament. While the villagers were willing to pay a fine, they resisted complete disarmament. The British implemented a punitive strategy similar to that used in the Northern Chin Hills rebellion: destroying crops, burning grains, and holding the chief's hostage.²⁹⁸ Ultimately, Sakta Village surrendered 80 guns, which was the full amount demanded.²⁹⁹ The fall of Sakta instilled fear in neighbouring villages, leading to the voluntary surrendering of weapons. Carey reported that the fall of Sakta had caused widespread panic as far south as Surkhua

²⁹⁵ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 114.

²⁹⁶ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 76, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁹⁷ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 78, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁹⁸ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 80, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁹⁹ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 86, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

and west of Bawinu (Kolodyne) with villages eagerly surrendering their guns in anticipation of British demands.³⁰⁰

Zokhua's Firearm Submission: A Study in Disarmament

The surrender of Sakta village prompted the Zokhua chief to submit 33 firearms and express remorse for past wrongdoings. Although these offences were not initially considered serious enough to justify disarmament, colonial authorities used this opportunity to advance their goal of disarming the region. Zokhua was granted clemency for previous transgressions, provided that they surrendered 100 firearms.³⁰¹

Mr. Tuck believed that a gradual village-by-village disarmament strategy would lead to significant firearm surrender by the Chin people. On 17 January 1895 Mr. Carey joined Tuck and Keary at Sakta and later established a camp near Kapi Village. Tuck then began communicating with all southern villages, acknowledging the potential for unrest if disarmament was implemented too quickly. Despite their concerns, the Chins were reluctant to abandon their firearms. Tuck advocated a careful and deliberate approach to avoiding conflicts in each southern village. He predicted that disarming southern Chins might lead to the sale of firearms to villages near Halkha, which could then be transported north of the Arakan geographical boundary and to the Yawdwin Chin people, resulting in redistribution rather than the elimination of weapons.³⁰²

A Disarmed Frontier: The Halkha Region's Firearms Confiscation

To expand the disarmament efforts, the Chief Commissioner approved Mr. Carey's proposal to visit Surkhua and disarm nearby villages. Carey successfully disarmed 16 villages, leading to the complete disarmament of the Halkha jurisdiction.³⁰³ In April 1895, 895 guns were confiscated from 35 independent villages, four Halkha villages, and Zokhua tribes. The operation was conducted peacefully. The British forces effectively disarmed a significant portion of the Burma border, stretching 50 miles

³⁰⁰ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 97, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

³⁰¹ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 115.

³⁰² South Chin Hills operation, April 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 101, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

³⁰³ Operation against Thetta and in the South Chin Hills, 1894-95, March 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 128, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

wide and 80 miles long from Halkha to the Chinme country. Even the southernmost parts of Naring and its neighbouring villages were partially disarmed, with 125 guns collected. Additionally, 14 Western Halkha villages were ordered to surrender their weapons to Halkha.³⁰⁴ The disarmament process resembled a poker game, with Southern Chins attempting to deceive British forces. The Chins would claim to possess a limited number of guns, but the British would demand twice that amount, threatening the destruction of crops and villages if the demand was not met. This tactic ultimately led to surrendering of the required number of firearms.³⁰⁵

Securing the Southern Frontier: the Thlantlang Region's Arm Confiscation.

The British administration's disarmament efforts in the Chin Hills were characterised by systematic and coordinated operations across various regions. These efforts aimed to establish colonial control and reduce the potential for armed resistance among the local populations. On 7 March a military detachment comprising 100 soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Geoghegan embarked on a disarmament mission from the Halkha. Their primary objective was to confiscate firearms from Thlantlang Village. Over a 20-day period, the detachment visited 24 villages and seized 490 firearms successfully. This haul included 224 guns from Thlantlang and 84 from the western Halkha area. Notably, 226 guns were already confiscated in Thlantlang before this operation, effectively disarming the entire tribe, which consisted of 975 households. Concurrent with Lieutenant Geoghegan's mission, Mr. Tuck was assigned to collect weapons along the Lushai border, while Mr. Thurston remained stationed in Hakha to receive firearms surrendered by nearby villages. Thurston's efforts over a three-week period resulted in the collection of approximately 200 guns. By 1 April the gun register indicated that a substantial portion of Chin Hills had been successfully disarmed.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ South Chin Hills operation, April 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 101, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

³⁰⁵ South Chin Hills operation, April 1895, Foreign Department-External A, No. 101,

³⁰⁶ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills Vol I*, 116.

Table 2: The number of guns surrendered in Chin Hills

Tribes of Chin hills	Guns surrender
Tlaisun	255
Zahau	40
Hualngo	76
Halkha	605
Thlantlang	490
Zokhua	140
Independent Southern Villages	940
Sizang	433
Sokte	340
Nuaingal	553
Kamhau	307
Thado	123

Source: Bertram S. Carey and HN Tuck, *The Chin hills Vol – I*, 116.

Disarmament and Pacification in the Chin Hills: Implications for Colonial Administration

The culmination of the British colonial administration's disarmament campaign in the Chin Hills marked a significant milestone in the pacification efforts.³⁰⁷ The campaign's efficacy is evidenced by the substantial number of firearms confiscated: 2,433 in the most recent year alone, contributing to an impressive cumulative total of 6,940 weapons seized since the commencement of British occupation.³⁰⁸ This systematic disarmament initiative encompasses a wide range of tribal entities within the region. Notably, the Tlaisuns, Zahau, and Hualngo tribes were successfully disarmed, demonstrating the colonial government's ability to extend their influence to diverse ethnic groups.³⁰⁹ Furthermore, the expansion of disarmament measures to include independent southern villages without resorting to armed conflict highlights the administration's strategic approach to pacification.

³⁰⁷ *Report on the Administration of Burma during 1895-96* (Rangoon: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1896), 3.

³⁰⁸ From the Secretary to the Government of India to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, No. 1564-E._B. Simla, the 8th September, File No. 32, Report on the administration of the South Lushai Hills for 1895-96. General position in the Chin-Lushai Hills, October 1896, Foreign Department, External A, National Archives of India, Delhi.

³⁰⁹ Telegram from the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, No. 732, Dated the 15th November 1895, File No. 69-71, Chin Hills Operation during the season 1895-96, February 1896, Foreign Department, external A, National Archives of India, Delhi.

While most firearms have been confiscated, the political officer warned against complacency, as there is still a risk of future arm acquisition, especially in areas under Manipur control and in the Lushai Hills. Porous borders, particularly the South Lushai Hills, pose an ongoing challenge. Despite gun licencing and penalties for illegal possession, there was a concern that these measures might unintentionally encourage arm trafficking to the Chins. The political officer reported that peace and stability were restored in the district with improved trade and relations between the Chins and the plains-dwellers. Law enforcement was effective, and all fines were collected. Progress has also been made in resolving longstanding conflict. Political officers believe that complete disarmament will reduce the need for extensive military operations, allowing civil officials to focus on peaceful development and improve living conditions in the region. This account provides valuable insights into colonial disarmament policies, their implementation, and their potential impact on governance and society in Chin Hills.³¹⁰

Licensing of Guns: Chin and Lushai Hills

Once the Chin Hills came under British domain, the majority of the guns were disarmed in 1895.³¹¹ During the Chin-Lushai conference in Lunglei in December 1896, a discussion emerged regarding gun licencing. To manage diplomatic hill administrations effectively, the primary objective was to decrease or control the number of firearms by implementing gun licences and seizing the remaining weapons in the hills. The conference attendees reached a consensus that in the Chin Hills, there was one gun for every ten houses, totalling ten guns per village. Similarly, in the South Lushai hills, the ratio was one gun for every 15 houses, with a maximum of 25 guns per village.³¹²

³¹⁰ Report on the administration of the Chin Hills for 1895-96, October 1896, Foreign Department-External A, File No. 30, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

³¹¹ From the Secretary to the Government of India to the Chief Secretary to the government of Bengal. No. 40, Political Department 7, Carton Box 4, Mizoram State Archives.

³¹² From HN Tuck Esq, Political officer, Chin Hills to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Falam, 3rd January 1897, File No. 333-338, Report on the field operations conducted in the Chin Hills during the season 1892-93, August 1893, Foreign Department, Secret E, National Archives of India, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

Licensing of guns in the Southern Lushai hills

The regulation of firearms was a significant concern in the South Lushai Hills. R.H. Snyed Hutchinson, the regional superintendent, believed that gun licensing had been insufficiently controlled. Major Shakespeare, however, argued that the region's stability made gun ownership unnecessary, as the British were committed to maintaining peace. Despite licencing 281 guns, Major Shakespeare's figures indicated that a substantial number of firearms remained unaccounted for. Although a certain number of guns were essential for personal protection and hunting, excessive ownership poses a threat. Mr. Davis estimated that approximately 1,000 guns were still in the hands of the Lushai people in April 1893. Since then, 357 guns have been confiscated.³¹³ The report of the administration of the Chin Hills for 1895-96 was a highly satisfactory record of the maintenance of peace and order; the Chins have now been disarmed, and no extensive military operations should be again required in the district. The chief commissioner of Burma agreed to this view.³¹⁴

As of 1 April 1896, Major Shakespeare issued licences for 278 firearms within the South Lushai Hills Region. This period, spanning from 18 May 1895 to 1 April 1896 witnessed a significant number of gun licences granted. Most licenced firearms were distributed among tribal leaders.

³¹³From RH Snyed Hutchinson Superintendent South Lushai Hills to the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, Camp Demagiri the 16th July 1896, File No. 40, Copy of letter on the subject of licensing of guns in the Lushai hills, Political Department 5, Carton Box 4, Mizoram State Archives. Aizawl.

Table 3: License Firearms Issued to the Chiefs of southern Lushai Hills (1985-96)

Chiefs	Tribes	No. of houses	Guns
Lalluaia	Sailo	200	66
Saipuia	Sailo	176	36
Lalthonbunga	Sailo	100	17
Lalruma's Widow	Sailo	50	12
Mompunga	Sailo	260	20
Darbili	Fanai	60	21
Dopawrha	Fanai	120	13
Dokapa	Fanai	80	10
Patlaia	Fanai	150	11

Source: Licencing of Guns in the Lushai Hills, Political Department 5, Carton Box 4, Mizoram State Archives. Aizawl.

A large share of the 72 firearms authorised by Major Shakespeare was allocated to a few villages in the South Lushai Hills. Remarkably, nine of the 62 villages in the area held 206 of the 278 licenced guns. Hutchinson disagreed with Major Shakespeare's generous gun licencing approach, notifying the commissioner on 16 July 1896 that even cooperative tribal leaders could not ensure the loyalty of their successors. He cautioned that these licenced firearms could eventually threaten British interest. Since April, Hutchinson has been working on disarmament, seizing 71 guns and granting 32 licences. The total number of licenced firearms in this area was 310. With an estimated 5,500 households across 60 villages, the South Lushai Hills likely had approximately 900 firearms, with only one-third being licenced. It was estimated that about 600 guns were unaccounted for and dispersed throughout the hills, as only 25 villages still had licenced firearms and confiscated unlicensed weapons.³¹⁵

Secret Re-Armament in the Chin Hills.

Mr. Dundas's investigation into the illicit arms trade revealed a longstanding network of exchange between the Lushai and Chin communities, a phenomenon initially documented by Mr. Davis and Major Shakespear as early as 1892-93. The divergent policies implemented in the Chin Hills and Assam regions have inadvertently created

³¹⁵ Special report on the action taken by R. Snyed Hutchinson Esqr., Superintendent, South Lushai hills in respect to the disarmament of the South Lushai hills, File No. 40, Political Department 9, Carton Box 4, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl.

conditions conducive to illegal trade. This rigorous disarmament efforts rigorous disarmament efforts is the 1892-93 rebellion, in stark contrast to Assam's more lenient approach of issuing licences and selectively confiscating unlicensed weapons.³¹⁶

This policy disparity resulted in an increased valuation of firearms among the Chins, relative to their Lushai counterparts. Consequently, the Lushai population found an economic incentive to divest weapons by selling them to the Chins. This situation exemplifies the unintended consequences of disparate colonial policies in adjacent regions. On the Lushai hills, Major Shakespear opposed strong measures on a large scale to compel the surrender of the remaining unlicensed guns because of the danger of losing the confidence of the people's chiefs and support from the Assam administration.³¹⁷ On the other hand, the Chins extensively purchased Guns from the Lushai and Manipur, creating a threat to tranquillity and impending resistance against the Chins administration.

Cross-Border Firearm Acquisition: The Chin's Procurement Strategies from Adjacent Communities

The acquisition and trade of firearms was prevalent in the Chin Hills with neighbouring Lushai and Manipur hills. Unlicensed gun owners frequently obtained weapons from undisclosed sources without knowing the seller's identity or the adjacent villages of Lushai Hills and Manipur. These transactions were conducted with the utmost secrecy, typically involving secret negotiations in neighbouring villages. Sales were often finalised at night, either within the village or in nearby jungles. In most cases, buyers remained unaware of sellers' names. Once smuggled out of the Lushai Hills or Manipur Hills, these firearms could be sold at substantial profits ranging from 50 to 100.

³¹⁶ From Captain H.W.G. Cole, I.S.C., Offg. Superintendent of Lushai hills, to The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No. 188 G., dated Aizawl, the 15th June 1899, File No. 26, Proposals in Connection with the withdrawal of unlicensed guns in the possession of Lushais, July 1899, Foreign A, Assam Secretariat Proceedings.

³¹⁷ from W.C.M. Dundas, Esq., Assistant to the Superintendent of Lushai hills, to the Superintendent of Lushai hills, Dated Aizawl, the 14th June 1899, File No. 27, Proposals in Connection with the withdrawal of unlicensed guns in the possession of Lushais, July 1899, Foreign A, Assam Secretariat Proceedings.

Two prominent chiefs from the Tiddim subdivision provided statements on the acquisition of firearms. Manlon, the leader of the Sizang, indicated that all of his guns were obtained from specific Zahau and Hualngo villages within the Lushai region. Hauchinkhup, the chief of Kamhaus, stated that the majority of his firearms were acquired from villages in Manipur state. He provided a list of these villages along with the number of guns purchased from each village. This was not surprising, as there were no other tribes between his village and those under the Manipur's jurisdiction. Additionally, the Kamhaus obtained guns from the Lushai people, who travelled to their region and sold their weapons.

The southern region of Chin Hills, known as the Halkha subdivision, is densely populated, similar to the northern region. Evidence suggests that secret rearmament efforts are underway in this area, mirroring those observed in the south. Consequently, it is likely that southern Chins possessed several thousand firearms. Some of these weapons are believed to originate from Matu, a region located outside colonial administrative jurisdiction, effectively a no-man's land south of the Lunglei subdivision.³¹⁸

Disarmament Strategies in Lushai and Manipur Hills: Implications for Stability in the Chin Region

According to Mr. Drury's report dated 5 June 1899 and the recent uprising, the sole disarmament of the Chin Hills is insufficient to ensure lasting peace. As long as the Chin people have access to firearms, they continue to acquire firearms. The risk of further uprisings persists until the weapons supply is eliminated. Consequently, the reduction of military garrisons is unsafe. Regarding Burma, the Lieutenant-Governor believes that the supply of firearms has been cut off. The eastern frontier of the hills in Burma proper has been thoroughly disarmed, making it impossible for the Chins

³¹⁸ From – C.G. Bayne, Esq., Offg. Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, Political department, to the Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, No. 872-2C.-1, Dated Rangoon, the 27th July 1899, File No. 6, Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Foreign Department, September 1899.

to obtain weapons from this source. However, in the Lushai Hills and Manipur, there appears to be a significant presence of unlicensed firearms.³¹⁹

On 6 July 1899 the Chief Commissioner addressed the issue of disarmament in the Lushai and Manipur Hills. A policy has been established to implement a systematic system for licencing firearms and confiscating unlicensed weapons. The Chief Commissioner pledged to collaborate with the Burmese government to further disarm these tribes and prevent the illegal export of firearms from Lushai and Manipur and the crucial orders are as follows:

1. Raising the reward for information about an unlicensed gun to Rs. 50 per gun.
2. Holding inducements to influential chiefs to provide information on unlicensed guns.
3. Organisation of a special secret service for interpreters to obtain information.
4. The detention of all persons against whom there exist good grounds for suspecting illegal possession.
5. Strict observance of the rules under the Arms Act on the subject of renewals of licences and movements of licence holders.
6. The exemption of any person giving information from forced labour.
7. The realisation of fines inflicted on offences with guns, in lieu of cash, from villages suspected of possessing them.

The Chief Commissioner should delegate the specific details of this operation to local officials. The appointment of a third Assistant Superintendent, approved by the Indian government, will undoubtedly enhance their capabilities. The primary goal of this initiative was to suppress the illegal arms trade and punish responsible chiefs and villages. The column will receive assistance from the Chin authorities,

³¹⁹ From – C.G. Bayne, Esq., Offg. Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, Political department, to the Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, No. 872-2C.-1, Dated Rangoon, the 27th July 1899, File No. 6, Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Foreign Department, September 1899.

confiscating all unlicensed firearms and dispatching punitive forces if necessary, unless the weapons are surrendered immediately.³²⁰

Coordinated efforts in firearm regulation: licencing and confiscation policies in the Lushai Hills and Manipur border.

The only firearms found in the hills are old flintlock guns, many of which date back over a century. This suggests that these guns were introduced to the region less than 50 years ago through trade with the Chins from Burma. The Lushais, fearing the Chins' superior weaponry, have always been less well-armed. While the British confiscated many guns during the operation of disarmament in 1894 under Mr. Carey's command, they failed to implement a proper licencing system, allowing the Chins to replenish their stock by purchasing guns from Lushais. This process may have been facilitated by the Lushai authorities' strict licencing regulations, which may have encouraged unlicensed gun owners to sell their weapons to the Chins. These actions ultimately contributed to the conflict that led to joint military operations by the Burma and Assam governments to establish tranquillity and pacify the hilly region.³²¹

The primary reason for the disarmament order was the investigation of illegal arms trafficking across borders conducted by Mr. Dundas. This investigation confirmed these allegations, prompting the Chief Commissioner to approve of a program to combat trafficking. The program was carried out by Major Loch, the commandant of the Lushai Hill Military police, and H.W.G. Cole, acting as Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. The main objective was to suppress arm trade in the region by collaborating with the authorities of Chin Hills and Manipur. This plan involved visiting villages near the Lushai border to confiscate weapons. It also suggests minimising interference with villages closer to the Lushai headquarters, as these villages are more accustomed to British rule. The Sailianpuia group of villages,

³²⁰ From the secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, Shillong, the 8th September 1899, File No. 48, Disarmament of the tribes in the Lushai hills and in the hilly tract of the Manipur state, January 1900, Foreign Department, External A, National archives of India, New Delhi.

³²¹ From the secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, Shillong, the 30th April 1900, File No. 1, Operations undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department, External A, National archives of India, New Delhi.

known to be heavily involved in the arms trade, will be disarmed and punished. To prevent resistance, operations will be conducted with significant military force.³²²

Systematic licencing and confiscation of guns on the Lushai and Manipur Hills.

In pursuit of the program, Mr. Dundas laid out a mission to disarm Sailianpuia village with a force of 50 men and remained in the area from 15 October to 30 November 1900. Through a combination of persuasion and pressure, Mr. Dundas was able to confiscate 54 guns from the nearby villages. However, 29 of these guns were surrendered after significant pressure was applied. Mr. Dundas believed that at least 45 additional guns were hidden within villages.

The disarmament operations in the villages of Kaphleia and Zakapa were the largest in the southern subdivision. Despite initial assurances that there were no unlicensed guns in the area, British authorities estimated that the village likely possessed approximately 50 firearms after the first licencing of guns. Despite the significant pressure and induction, only one gun was rendered. Three village chiefs, Kairuma, Kaphlei, and Zakapa, were detained and sent to Aizawl. After the chiefs' situation improved, 60 men from the Chin hills' military police were temporarily assigned to the Lushai column. Intelligence reports indicated that the villagers were planning to sell 28 guns after the British authorities left the area. The chiefs had sworn an oath to avoid surrendering their weapons, even if it meant being deported. Despite these efforts, only 17 guns were surrendered within the vicinity of Kairuma and Kapheia villages.³²³

On 13 January 1900 a joint military operation was initiated to disarm the Manipur Hills adjacent to the Lushai and Chin territories. Captain Powell and Cole, commanding a contingent of 50 military police, departed for Tipaimukh, and reached their destination on 19 January 1900. They met Colonel Maxwell, who led a force

³²² From Captain H.W.G. Cole, I.S.C., Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No. 21G., Dated Aijal, the 9th April 1900, File No. 3, Operations undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department, External A, National archives of India, New Delhi.

³²³ From Captain H.W.G. Cole, I.S.C., Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No. 21G., Dated Aijal, the 9th April 1900, File No. 3, Operations undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department, External A, National archives of India, New Delhi.

comprising 75 members of the Silchar Military Police Battalion and 25 Manipur State Police Officers. The primary goal of the operation was systematic disarmament of the region. Notably, the mission achieved its objectives without resorting to punitive measures, suggesting compliance or effective negotiations with local communities.

The outcomes of these coordinated efforts across the Lushai and Manipur hills were noteworthy: 1. The villages of Sailianpuia voluntarily relinquished 55 firearms. 2. Expeditions led by Dundas, Lieutenant Moore, and Burn, accompanied by *Chaprasis* (local officials), successfully acquired 43 guns from the Kairuma and Hrangchhuana communities. 3. Border villages in Manipur surrendered 156 weapons. 4. An additional 146 firearms were handed over to *Chaprasis* in Aizawl and Lunglei.³²⁴

This multifaceted approach to disarmament, which involves various colonial officials and local auxiliaries, exemplifies the comprehensive nature of the British strategy in reducing armaments within these frontier regions. The successful collection of firearms without significant resistance indicates a complex interplay of colonial authority, local power dynamics, and possible recognition among indigenous communities in the evolving political landscape.

Extension of licensing and confiscation among the Lais and Maras of Southern Lushai hills, 1899-1900

The disarmament campaign initiated by the British colonial administration in the southern Chin Hills on November 21, 1899, specifically targeted the Lai and Mara communities. This operation was led by Lieutenant Bailey, who was accompanied by 100 riflemen and two subadars, and commenced from South Vanlaiphai. The expedition advanced towards the villages of Lungtian and Vartek, which complied under the leadership of Dokulha. Following the initial resistance, colonial officers implemented stringent measures. The Phalhrang Chiefs eventually capitulated after punitive actions were taken, while Ngunlinga of Bualpui 'Ng' surrendered thirteen

³²⁴ From Captain H.W.G. Cole, I.S.C., Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No. 21G., Dated Aijal, the 9th April 1900, File No. 3, Operations undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department, External A, National archives of India, New Delhi.

firearms. The administration subsequently issued provisional licences for one firearm in Lungtian, and four in Bualpui 'Ng'. During CB Drake-Brockman's stay in Vawmbuk from 6 December additional firearms were surrendered, with officers attributing the smooth process to the compliance of Dokulha and Ngunlinga.³²⁵

Table 4: Number of surrendered and licenced guns in the vaillages of Lai and Mara

Village	Guns surrendered	Newly licensed	Formerly licensed
Phalhrang	12		2
Saiha	14		
Fungkah & Lungtian	12	1	5
Vartek	5		1
Sangau	11		
Thingkah	1		
Serkawr	34	2	7
Tisih	17	1	
Ainak	5		
Ramri	4		
Vawmbuk	8	1	1
Bualpui Ng	14	4	
Cheural	5		
Mampui	1	1	9
Lawngtlai	10		2

Source: Operation undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department-External A, No. 1-6, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

The Column led by Lieutenant Bailey faces significant challenges and employs various strategies. Upon reaching Saiha, Bailey encountered widespread deception, prompting severe measures, including the temporary detention of the chiefs Kilkara and Hmunlinga in Aizawl. A discovered pact between local leaders to resist disarmament led to the confinement of influential chief wives to mitigate their interference. Bailey's expedition progressed through several villages, including Lawngtlai, Phaithar, Serkawr, Tishi, and Ainak, with varying degrees of success in collecting firearms. Notable outcomes include the voluntary surrender of guns by

³²⁵ Operation undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department-External A, No. 1-6, National Archives of India, New Delhi

some chiefs and the revelation of complex power dynamics, such as the vassalage of Ainak to Thlantlang.³²⁶

The campaign's strategies evolved to include unconventional approaches, exemplified by Bailey's attempt to leverage labour projects for gun procurement at the Vanlaiphai Post, although this ultimately proved unsuccessful. This account illustrates the multifaceted nature of colonial disarmament efforts, balancing coercion, negotiations, and adaptations to local power structures.³²⁷

Conclusion

The late 19th century witnessed severe and profound anguish among the hilly areas in which British colonial rulers undertook rigorous measures to disarm native groups in the frontier areas of the Chin-Lushai Hills. To introduce peace within the region, the first priority was to dismantle the so-called superior weapons known as arms. This was part of a broader plan to the region and established a trade route connecting Bengal with upper Burma. However, the initial aim of creating a trade route was extensively challenged by the severe actions taken against the local populations. This campaign, which combined military operations with administrative oversight, highlighted the complexities of managing colonial frontiers and the ongoing difficulties of controlling weapons in ethnically diverse and politically independent hill regions.

The disarmament policy implemented in the Chin-Lushai Hills not only marks a significant and comprehensive chapter in the history of colonial expansion and indigenous resistance, but also changes the traditional power and social dynamics within society. This campaign had enormously receded the position of the chief and village elders once regarded as the sole authority, and pacification had led to them becoming sub-ordinates to the British. The systematic seizure of firearms, implementation of strict licencing systems, and strategic policies served multiple purposes that transformed the social, political, and cultural landscape of the region.

³²⁶ licensing of guns in the Lushai hills, Political Department 5, Carton Box 4, Mizoram State Archives. Aizawl.

³²⁷ Operation undertaken for the disarmament of the tribes in the Chin and Lushai hills, November 1900, Foreign Department-External A, No. 1-6, National Archives of India, New Delhi

When discussing the Chin community, firearms were not only appreciated for practical purposes, but also as a mark of one's standing in society and an individual's might. Therefore, they were unwilling to relinquish their firearms even when accepting significant costs. The British altered their methods from employing brute force with military power to cunning diplomacy, softening their approach. They framed it to consider the Chin were freely relinquishing their guns, taking greater control little by little.

The different ways indigenous people responded, from working with colonisers to fighting back, show that the colonial takeover was not easy or certain. Punitive raids, destroying vegetation, and burning villages show the force behind colonial "peacekeeping", turning guns from symbols of power into problems. The firearm licencing system created lasting rules regarding legal and illegal gun ownership, affecting how the state and society interacted for many years.

As British forces advanced through the Chin Hills, the extensive confiscation of firearms significantly altered power dynamics in the region. During the 1895–96 campaign alone, 2,433 weapons were seized, resulting in a total of 6,940 since the onset of colonial rule. This systematic disarmament progressively deprived influential tribal groups including the Halkha, Thlantlang, Zokhua, Sakta, Sizang, Sakhiling, Nuaingal, Tlaisun, Zahau, and Hualngo of their capacity to resist. With each weapon confiscated, British authority was further consolidated, and communities that were once fiercely independent increasingly subdued, marking a pivotal moment in the colonial consolidation of the area.

The issuance of gun licences in the Chin-Lushai area proved an elegant scheme of colonial control which went beyond mere disarmament. After the major disarmament in 1895, most of the Chin areas were consolidated under British control; with the 1896 Lunglei conference, security regulations were aligned with practical governance. It was recognised by British authorities that total disarmament was not feasible, nor would it serve their interests better; instead, closely controlled possession of firearms through licencing served to satisfy several strategic aims.

The distinct quota system - one gun for every ten houses in the Chin Hills compared to one for every fifteen houses in the Lushai Hills - demonstrates the British administration's tailored approach to local conditions and threat assessments. This policy established a precisely balanced system wherein indigenous communities retained minimal defensive capabilities while being effectively neutralised as military threats. The numerical restrictions-ten guns maximum per Chin village and fifteen per Lushai village-significantly altered the power dynamics within these communities.

The licencing system transformed guns from symbols of traditional authority and martial skills to conditional privileges granted by colonial powers. This transformation signified not only physical disarmament but also a profound psychological and cultural shift that weakened indigenous power structures while embedding British administrative control into daily life. The meticulously planned licencing system served as a constant reminder of British sovereignty, while also creating administrative dependencies that supported broader colonial governance objectives.

Furthermore, the differential treatment between regions demonstrates the British administration's sophisticated understanding of local dynamics and its ability to adapt control mechanisms accordingly. By permitting limited firearm possession while retaining ultimate control over their distribution, British administrators positioned themselves as the ultimate arbiters of security and protection, a role that fundamentally altered traditional social contracts within these tribal societies.

This carefully balanced approach to weapons regulation in the Chin-Lushai Hills exemplifies how British colonial administration evolved beyond simple military domination to more sophisticated systems of control that superficially accommodated indigenous needs, while fundamentally restructuring power relationships to serve imperial interests.

Despite British disarmament policies, Chin communities persistently rearmed through strategic cross-border networks with the Lushai and Manipur territories, exploiting administrative inconsistencies and jurisdictional gaps. Intelligence from

local chiefs identified specific border villages as key distribution points for illicit firearms, thus revealing the limitations of colonial control mechanisms across these frontier zones. In response to this challenge, British authorities launched sophisticated coordinated operations spanning 1899-1900 that specifically targeting these porous border regions, resulting in significant weapons recovery: 54 firearms from Sailianpuia villages, 17 from Kairuma and Kapheia, 156 from Manipur border communities, and 146 from administrative hubs in Aizawl and Lunglei. This demonstrates both the scale of indigenous resistance to disarmament policies and the colonial government's determination to assert comprehensive control over arms circulation throughout the interconnected Chin-Lushai-Manipur borderlands.

The British colonial disarmament policy in the Chin-Lushai Hills is an apt illustration of how imperial powers used technological controls to manage and sustain their dominance. By systematically removing tangible means of resistance alongside the establishment of regulatory regimes, colonial authorities redefined relations of power and created new forms of subjugation. This study provides evidence of how colonial regimes built imperial governance on technological control, with its effects persisting long after the formal dissolution of the rule on state-society relations.

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CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

For a long stretch of time, the Indo-Burma border was thought of as no-man's land, home to a patchwork of ethnic groups. Before the colonial push, harsh mountains, dense jungles, and communities that kept themselves blocked most outsiders, giving rise to many unique indigenous societies. Without British oversight, villagers seldom draw tidy lines between their territories. Instead, they relied on visible markers—ridges, rivers, or streams to shape daily life and keep neighbours from crossing uninvited. The Lai people already have well-formed social and political systems among these groups. Their leadership ran in bloodlines, with the chiefs passing power within a handful of clans, much like descent groups elsewhere. Through this lens, clans split into Bawi and Chia, the first seen as noble and the second as ordinary. The actual rule usually fell to the oldest Bawi line, which still commanded respect. Society then sorted itself into Bawiphun (nobles), Michia (commoners), and Sal (slaves). This clear hierarchy lay at the heart of Lai's identity and guided decisions in village life.

Lai culture sees belief and daily life woven tightly together, so the noble line (Bawi phun) could only rise when God Khua-hrum gave permission. That heavenly approval turned what could have been a rival claim into a kind of birth right townsfolk quickly learned to accept. Aristocratic houses maintain long lists of names that link them to their first ancestor and hold private ceremonies to praise Khua-hrum. Therefore, their rule mixes politics with a sacred duty inside the father-to-father clan system. Anyone wearing the title must meet strict tests - he cannot be under Eih thiam (witchcraft), must avoid Hnam nei (evil eyes), should never trace back to slaves, and stand apart from ordinary blood (Chia hrin). These checks mark 'Bawi phun' out, as the branch Khua-hrum himself picked. Under the old system, the term Ram Uk Bawi describes a higher chief whose sway touched many hamlets through family ties, raids, or marriage deals. Within the Ram Uk Bawi network, friendships twisted and turned each time he proved stronger than allies or rivals. Every settlement chose its own head, yet that head sent tributes and taxes because promised troops and guarding never failed.

When enemies appeared, many outlying villages sought shelter from the nearest strong chief, handing over loyalty for bodyguarding. Falam and Halkha stand out as the two most powerful chiefdoms in the Chin Hills. Naturally, the two rivals met on the battlefield far more often than either cared to be admitted. Their quarrels spread across the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Arakan, Chin Hills, and Lushai Hills, a patchwork of land that later joined under the broad title Falam-Halkha realm. Numerous Lais clans are thought to have settled within this shaky border. To mark their supremacy, leaders from both camps still exacted tributes and taxes from every village within their imagined limits. The flow of offerings then made its way upward, allowing the Falam and Halkha nobles to bend the Sailo chiefs to their will. Life on the frontier, therefore, turned into a never-ending round of skirmish between hill communities. This restless energy was unusual for tribal polities woven from pride and self-protection. Even before British officers appeared, clans in northeastern India prided themselves in a long martial heritage. Cultures everywhere, from Greece to the Andes, have found reasons for picking up weapons across the ages. The Lai groups living in the Lushai and Chin hills often attacked neighbours over land, cattle, or slighted honours. In the early years, their fame travelled far, fuelled by tales of head-hunting trophies gripped tightly in warrior belts.

People in the village respected anyone who could reliably take down an enemy or fierce animal, and they proudly called the experts Mithat Sathat. Long before colonial rule, the Lai clans frequently clashed among themselves. Warfare, brutal as it was, comprised a huge chunk of how one village spoke to another. Every skirmish was tied to basics, such as food, land, and simple bragging rights. The settlement that trained the hardest and fought smartest usually walked away with the spoils and upper hand. These victories allowed them to seize grazing grounds, stock routes, and sometimes, even water sources. With each decisive blow, the power changed hands, turning once-secure borders into shaky lines. During those years, being a good fighter was not just an honour; it was the best insurance a village had against going hungry or disappearing altogether.

In Lai cultural region, village fights sparked a mix of old and new reasons. Long-standing grudges still echoed in the streets, their roots buried deep in family

memory. Tales told around evening fires kept those grudges from smouldering. Disputes over land and water piled on top, with every settlement claiming the right to boundaries and use. Money or its lack further twisted the knife. Stronger groups sometimes raided richer neighbours for crops and valuables, hoping to lift their fortunes. These historical, territorial, and economic pressures sparked open wars among Lai village. Locals saw the fighting not as madness but as one of the few answers to hard times. Within that world, taking the head served three clear goals. First, the heads featured in rituals were held when village chiefs were buried. Second, people believed that the captured skulls would serve late chiefs in the next life. Third, displaying such trophies proved a warrior's skill and raised his standing among peers. Thus, head-taking was more than slaughter; it was a woven strand of ceremonies, faith, and the social ladder. By practising it, Lais shaped their own ideas about living, dying, and what lay beyond death.

When trouble loomed, the village chief, elders, and a handful of warriors gathered to choose days for a raid or fight. They listened while the chief laid out plans, named target hamlets, and set rules for men who would go. Rumour had it the Chins picked up gunpowder-making from wandering traders—some even said that the craft came from the Chinese by the Burmans. Each Chin house sat over a pig pen, and the latrine emptied straight down, so the floor stayed thick with dung. Builders fixed tall boards around the pen to block rain, trapping the muck inside until the foetid layers were piled high. While the pigs ate and relieved themselves, heat and humidity slowly turned the droppings into crude nitrate. After three seasons, the pen was emptied, and the dung was scraped into baskets with holes that drained away muddy water, leaving bright red sludge. Cooks skimmed this reddened paste, allowed it to settle, and poured off a clear liquid full of precious crystals. Finally, they bubbled the liquid over slow heat until it was almost dry, scooped out the white grains, and tossed the last thin soup.

Once the brew cooled, the liquid was strained, yielding small glittering nitrate crystals. The powder was blended with charcoal to create simple but effective gunpowder. The Chins' method thus combined age-old know-how with impressive ingenuity. Likely shaped by Chin craft passed through Burman middlemen, their

plan leaned heavily to clever waste reuse built into the home itself. Chins built toilets directly over pens, where pigs slept under the main living space, forming an in-house drain. This setup kept things tidy and offered the warm, moist, and salty conditions needed for good nitrate growth. Raised walls stopped rain from washing in, so a thick dung mat piled up over the months. After three years of careful upkeep, the mix had changed into a natural saltpetre, the lifeblood of the gunpowder. From there, the Chins ran a neat chain of drainage, oxidation, filtering, and final crystallisation to collect usable crystals. By blending these white shards with powdered charcoal, they turned kitchen scrap into explosive goods, ready for their own muskets, or trade in wider markets.

The Traditional warfare practice was quite barbaric, and the various forms of tribal warfare were as follows:

Ralpi was a type of tribal warfare between members of the same clan from different areas. They agreed to not use secret ambushes. The goal was to capture rivals as enslaved people, but they could be freed if the ransom was paid. Captives were often married in the captor's village, and the ransom money went to the captors who set the amount. The chiefs and their families were safe from capture because of the agreements between the clans.

Rawlral was a dangerous warfare style with surprise attacks such as guerrilla warfare. Warriors attacked the enemy villages when they did not expect them. They ambushed unprepared households, attacked villagers at night, and quickly moved to other places. Sometimes, they hid in the jungle to ambush enemies, attacking during tough times such as river crossings or natural disasters. Weapons included stone traps, firearms, spears, bamboo spikes, pellet bows, bows, arrows, and dao. Traps were the most harmful. They used homemade gunpowder that burned slowly but strongly with metal shots fired from the flintlock muskets.

Another tactic was for a man or group to kill and take the heads of the enemies from a village. A brave warrior may hide and attack anyone who comes nearby. Depending on the presence of the enemy, they could stay hidden for up to a week. The goal was to take the enemy's head for personal fame and recognition. In

Lais, wars were only fought for good reasons, and no one was killed without a war declaration unless they were already in war with the larger community.

The study of warfare and raids among Lai communities uncovers a multifaceted social, cultural, and political institution that transcends mere acts of violence. Conflicts between villages were deeply embedded in the sociopolitical structure of Lai society, playing numerous roles that significantly influenced community growth and cultural identity. In the Lai society, warfare is a complex system of power dynamics and resource management. The competitive environment fostered by martial confrontations establishes community hierarchies, facilitates resource redistribution, and delineates territorial limits. This analysis reveals not random acts of violence, but a deliberate strategy aimed at community survival and progress within challenging environmental and social settings.

The root causes of warfare, such as inherited blood feuds, territorial disputes, and economic incentives, highlight the rational basis of this practice. Communities have made strategic decisions about when and how to conduct raids, utilising advanced intelligence gathering, tactical planning, and environmental considerations to enhance their chances of success. This strategic aspect emphasises that Lai warfare was not merely reactive but was intentional and purposeful.

A particularly important aspect was the cultural dimension of warfare, as seen in practices such as head hunting. The collection of enemy heads met ceremonial needs, reflected spiritual beliefs about the afterlife, and showcased martial skills. This practice wove warfare into the broader cosmological framework of the Lai people, linking military actions to their views on life, death, and social status. Meticulously organised ceremonies following successful raids further integrated warfare into the community's ritual life.

Defensive innovations such as strategically placing villages on elevated ground and developing sophisticated stockade systems demonstrate the technological adaptations that arose in response to ongoing conflicts. The various methods of warfare - *Ralpi* (combat war), *Rawlral* (guerrilla warfare), and *Rammu* (individual

head-hunting expeditions)—highlight the tactical sophistication and situational flexibility that characterise Lai martial practices.

British colonial expansion in the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills during 1888–1945 was predominantly through military operations and minor punitive expeditions. However, as the prime mover of the discussion was surveying, mapping, and public work construction, despite efforts to downplay military expedition activities, it remained prominent as surveys conducted until 1900 were closely intertwined with military operations. During these 57 years of colonialism in India, Myanmar, and the Bangladesh frontier, the colonial authority, with rigorous and systematic precision, transformed the ‘unknown’ territory, from the colonial lens perspective, into a well-defined governed space, which was further legitimised by cartographic and textual representations.

The Chin-Lushai Hills’ periodisation of cartographic development provides a framework for understanding the development of British spatial authority. Military-led surveys prioritising tactical intelligence over accuracy characterised the first phase (1890–1900). Basic mapping efforts, such as creating route maps and sketch plans to support military movements and identify significant outposts, were expeditions, such as the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889–1890 and punitive measures against the Lai and Sizang tribes. Early surveys, which were often conducted under unfavourable circumstances, used techniques such as plane-table sketches and compass traverses to demonstrate the necessity of enforcing the frontier and putting down rebellious tribes. The region’s instability and the necessity of geographical knowledge for effective military operations were brought to light by the deadly ambush of Lieutenant J. F. Steward in 1888. Despite their limitations, these efforts have provided baseline data on topography, communities, and commercial routes, laying the groundwork for a more thorough mapping in the future.

Driven by the establishment of British administrative power, the second phase (1900–1927) marked a shift to systematic topographic surveys and boundary delineations. Surveys became more precise as the area changed from a disputed frontier to an administered territory, focusing on administrative goals such as jurisdictional delineation, resource extraction, and tax generation. Pertab Singh and

H.P.D. demonstrated this transition. Morton's 1907–1908 boundary survey of the Lushai Hills, Chin Hills, and Arakan Hill Tracts used natural and artificial markers to establish the administrative boundaries. The increased involvement of Indian surveyors, such as the Bansi Ram, in the 1921–1922 surveys highlighted the professionalisation of the colonial survey apparatus and the growing reliance on local expertise. Triangulation techniques were standardised during this period by integrating local control sites into the Great Trigonometrical Survey framework, allowing for consistent mapping across administrative divisions, by classifying vegetation and identifying restricted forests, and specialised forest surveys, such as those conducted by the No. 20 Party in 1908–1909 supported colonial economic objectives while frequently undermining indigenous land rights.

With its advanced geodetic integration and multi-scale surveys, the third phase (1928–1936) embodied the pinnacle of colonial cartographic achievement in the area. Beginning in 1914–1915 and improved in 1928–1929, the Chittagong Principal Triangulation Series created a high-precision geodetic framework that connected the hill regions to the vast imperial spatial system. Surveyors like S.C. Chatterjee, who worked in the Lushai Hills between 1929 and 1930, combined disparate survey grids to create a unified spatial reference system that improved military and administrative planning. The scientific rigour of these activities was demonstrated using advanced instruments, such as 5-inch theodolites and invar tapes, as well as rigorous error correction procedures. From regional strategic planning to careful local administration, multi-scale mapping, which ranges from quarter-inch to four-inch scales, has met various needs. Operations demonstrated this meticulous approach during 1934–1935. Twelve parties surveyed thousands of square miles in the Chin and Lushai Hills, documenting administrative centres, road layouts, and resource viability. Indigenous biological knowledge is crucial for navigating the area's dense bamboo forests and difficult terrain, as noted in the 1936 General Report. However, it was constantly filtered through colonial paradigms to achieve imperial goals.

Owing to the demands of World War II and Burma's administrative separation from British India, there were fewer new survey efforts during the final

phase (1937–1947). Military operations during the Burma Campaign relied heavily on maps made in earlier decades, underscoring the colonial mapping endeavour’s enduring strategic importance. This accumulated spatial knowledge made regular administration and military logistics possible, demonstrating the long-lasting impact of earlier surveying efforts.

These cartographic endeavours have resulted in several achievements. Significant gaps in British geographic knowledge were filled by mapping about 9,000 square miles during the Chin-Lushai Expedition and subsequent surveys, which turned “unknown” regions into documented, manageable areas. Accurate mapping and infrastructure development were made possible by establishing triangulation networks such as those that connected Fort White, Falam, and Haka. Verifying hydrographic features, such as the source of the Kolodyne River during the Thau Tlang expedition, resolved long-standing uncertainties and facilitated logistics. These surveys served symbolic purposes in addition to their practical ones, upholding British rule by enforcing penalties and tributes on native tribes and retrieving remains (such as Lieutenant Steward’s in 1888). The resulting maps solidified the colonial power within the physical and social structure of the area by facilitating administrative supervision, resource extraction, military positioning, and infrastructure development.

The mapping project in the Chin-Lushai Hills demonstrates the Foucauldian idea that power comprises of knowledge. Geographic information makes borders understandable and controllable by promoting military dominance, bureaucratic governance, and logistical cooperation. A “scientific-military complex” that supported colonial development is highlighted by blending the scientific and military domains, as evidenced by surveyors’ dual roles as scientists and pacification agents. The colonial nature of these initiatives is further highlighted by the suppression of indigenous agencies through the marginalisation of local spatial knowledge and the implementation of uniform cartographic systems. Knowledge generation was impacted by environmental factors such as tropical diseases and dense vegetation, underscoring the fact that colonial mapping required negotiations with both human communities and nature.

The lasting impacts of these cartographic endeavours extend beyond the colonial era. The current territorial arrangements of Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar are based on topographical data, boundary delineations, and triangulation networks developed between 1890 and 1947. Administrative divisions in the colonial era that often separated historically cohesive ethnic areas became postcolonial national borders that shaped the region's geopolitical structure. The maps produced during this period continue to influence how people view land use, resource distribution, and infrastructure development. However, they still carry scars of colonial imposition, which destroy other spatial practices and cemented divisions that persist in modern territorial disputes.

The military and cartographic endeavours in the Chin-Lushai Hills between 1890 and 1947 serve as examples of how authority and science worked together to build an empire by mapping the uncharted British surveyors and administrators transformed a rebellious frontier into a documented, controllable area, leaving an imperial imprint on the region's physical landscape and social organisation. This history highlights the profound and enduring consequences of colonial knowledge production, in which the exercise of power was inextricably linked to the mapping process. To provide a more nuanced understanding of this crucial period in the history of the Chin-Lushai Hills, future research may examine indigenous perspectives on these changes and how local communities adapted to and resisted the imposition of colonial cartography.

Colonial expeditions were encountered and resisted on various occasions as the dwellers were not satisfied with being forcefully overrun in their territory and having their existing traditional structures and values transformed. However, in the aftermath, whoever the villages or groups were involved in the attack or against the British, they confiscated the weapons. They imposed punitive measures by burning crops and houses and leaving them empty-handed. This effectively quelled the rebellion and reinforced colonial authority in the region.

The British colonial government used a strategic plan to snatch away weapons in the Chin-Lushai Hills from 1895 to 1896. This was a part of the colonial effort to control the Indo-Burma frontier. They did this by going to each village with

the force to measure the number of guns to be surrendered. Therefore, colonial officers laid out extensive terms and conditions for the respective villages to surrender their valuable firearms. As a result, the British slowly gained control over the area and avoided retaliation from local chiefs. Despite the fighting, the British used psychological tricks and pressure. They asked for more weapons than the villagers said they had and threatened them with “consequences” if they did not comply. This method worked well, and they managed to disarm large tribal groups such as Tlaisuns, Zahau, and Hualngo without fighting. They also moved peacefully into southern villages. The disarmament was well coordinated among the different officers. Lieutenant Geoghegan worked on Thlantlang villages, Tuck collected weapons near the Lushai border, and Thurston focused on Hakha. This teamwork prevented armed groups from moving around to avoid disarmament weapons across administrative boundaries.

The colonial authorities implemented a quantitative assessment to evaluate disarmament initiatives by systematically collecting surrendered weapons. By April 1895, they had confiscated 895 firearms from 35 independent villages, four Halkha settlements, and the Zokhua tribes. During a 20-day operation led by Lieutenant Geoghegan, British forces seized 490 firearms, including 224 from Thlantlang and 84 from the Western Halkha. Over the course of a year, the administration recorded the seizure of 2,433 firearms, resulting in 6,940 weapons confiscated since the commencement of the occupation.

Regional disparities in the success of disarmament efforts were evident. Complete disarmament was accomplished in specific areas such as the Halkha and Thlantlang tribal regions. By April 1896, the administration had issued licences for 278 firearms in the South Lushai Hills, predominantly to tribal leaders. The text offers quantitative data on disarmament initiatives in colonial territories.

These records provide insight into the prevalence of firearms in the region prior to disarmament and the administration's objectives for regulated ownership. At the 1896 Chin-Lushai conference in Lunglei, specific target ratios for licensed firearms were established; In the Chin Hills, the objective was to have one gun for every ten houses, equating to ten guns per village. In South Lushai Hills, the target

was one gun for every 15 houses, with a maximum of 25 guns per village. Despite extensive confiscation efforts, colonial officials estimated that approximately 600 unlicensed guns had remained in circulation in the South Lushai Hills by 1896. With 5,500 households distributed across 60 villages in the South Lushai Hills, officials calculated that there were approximately 900 firearms in total in the region, with only one-third being properly licenced.

The licencing system transformed guns from symbols of traditional authority and martial skills to conditional privileges granted by colonial powers. This transformation signified not only physical disarmament but also a profound psychological and cultural shift that weakened indigenous power structures while embedding British administrative control into daily life. The meticulously planned licencing system served as a constant reminder of British sovereignty, while also creating administrative dependencies that supported broader colonial governance objectives.

Even after successful disarmament, colonial administrators continued to express security concerns, as officials warned against complacency due to the risks of future arm acquisition, particularly in Manipur and Lushai Hills. Despite the implementation of gun licencing regulations and penalty systems, apprehensions regarding potential arm-trafficking persisted. Notably, by 1895-96, the Chief Commissioner of Burma endorsed the perspective that “no extensive military operations should be again required in the district”, reflecting confidence in the efficacy of the disarmament efforts.

The British disarmament policy in the Chin-Lushai Hills profoundly affected colonial expansion and indigenous resistance. This initiative altered the power dynamics between colonial authorities and local communities by confiscating firearms, implementing licencing systems, and adopting strategic policies that reshaped the region's social and political landscape. For Chin, firearms symbolised status, power, and freedom, which led to strong resistance against disarmament efforts. The British transitioned from military force to diplomatic methods, creating voluntary compliance while simultaneously expanding its control.

Indigenous responses ranged from cooperation to resistance, demonstrating the complexity of colonisation. Punitive raids and village destruction revealed the force behind colonial “peacekeeping.” The firearm licensing system established enduring rules for gun ownership, shaping state-society relations.

The implementation of gun licensing in the Chin-Lushai area represented an advanced colonial control strategy that extended beyond mere disarmament. Following the substantial disarmament initiative of 1895, which brought most Chin regions under British dominion, the 1896 Lunglei conference established a comprehensive regulatory framework that balanced security requirements with practical governance. British officials recognised that complete disarmament was neither feasible nor advantageous; instead, the tightly regulated presence of firearms through licensing achieved several strategic objectives.

Despite British disarmament policies, Chin communities persistently rearranged through strategic cross-border networks with the Lushai and Manipur territories, exploiting administrative inconsistencies and jurisdictional gaps. Intelligence from local chiefs identified specific border villages as key distribution points for illicit firearms, thus revealing the limitations of colonial control mechanisms across these frontier zones. In response to this challenge, British authorities launched sophisticated coordinated operations spanning 1899-1900 that specifically targeted these porous border regions, resulting in significant weapons recovery: 54 firearms from Sailianpuia villages, 17 from Kairuma and Kapheia, 156 from Manipur border communities, and an additional 146 from administrative hubs in Aizawl and Lunglei. This demonstrates both the scale of indigenous resistance to disarmament policies and the colonial government's determination to assert comprehensive control over arms circulation throughout the interconnected Chin-Lushai-Manipur borderlands.

The British colonial disarmament policy in the Chin-Lushai Hills shows how imperial powers utilised technological control to establish and maintain dominance. By systematically removing physical means of resistance while implementing regulatory structures, colonial authorities reconfigured power relationships and created new forms of subjection. This case study illustrates how colonial regimes

deployed technological control as a cornerstone of imperial governance, with legacies that continued to shape state-society relations long after the formal end of colonial rule. The disarmament policy of the British colonial administration in the Chin-Lushai Hills represents a pivotal and comprehensive chapter in the history of colonial expansion and indigenous resistance in Southeast Asia. This campaign went far beyond mere pacification, fundamentally altering the power dynamics between the colonial authorities and local communities. The systematic confiscation of firearms, implementation of rigid licencing systems, and strategic policies served multiple objectives that reshaped the region's social, political, and cultural landscapes.

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BIO-DATA

Name : K. Lalchhuanpuia
Address : Lungzarhtum, Lawngtlai District, Mizoram-796891
Date of Birth : 10.05.1988
Email : chopyk2@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Master of Philosophy (History), Department of History & Ethnography: Mizoram University, 2017.

Master of Arts (History), Department of History & Ethnography: Mizoram University, 2015.

Bachelor of Arts (General), Government Saiha College: Mizoram University, 2013.

Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate, Government Republic Higher Secondary School: Mizoram Board of School Education, 2005.

High School Leaving Certificate, Elim Public School: Mizoram Board of School Education, 2003.

PUBLISHING HISTORY

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**LAI AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL
&
ASSOCIATION FOR LAI LANGUAGE**



Certificate of Appreciation

This is to certify that participation of Pu K. Lalchhuanpuia as a Resource Person in International Seminar on Exploring Lai Identity organised by Lai Autonomous District Council and Association for Lai Language on 3rd - 5th April 2019 at Lawngtlai is highly appreciated.

(T. ZAKUNGA)

Chief Executive Member

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Lawngtlai

(REV. E.F. SANG CEM)

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Book Review

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The Last Stand of Three Brothers: Power, Resistance, and Colonial Encounters in the Southern Lushai Hills

K. Lalchhuanpula

Research Scholar, Department of History and Ethnography
Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram 796004, India.
Email: chopyk2@gmail.com

&

Khwairakpam Premjit Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of History and Ethnography
Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram

Abstract

This article investigates the resistance efforts of the Chinzah clan of the Lai tribe, particularly Chief Dokulha and his two brothers, against British colonial expansion in the southern region of the Lushai Hills. Focusing on the interplay between indigenous spatial conceptualisations and colonial territorial ambitions, it explores how the Lai tribe navigated colonial domination through adaptive resistance strategies. Dokulha's oscillation between defiance and strategic compliance underscores the multifaceted nature of indigenous agencies, encompassing overt confrontations, narrative deception, and cultural preservation. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Foucault's power-knowledge relations, Bhabha's colonial mimicry, and Fanon's colonial trauma, this article elucidates the epistemic, cultural, and psychological dimensions of resistance. The decline of Chinzah authority, culminating in Dokulha's imprisonment at Kala Pani, highlights the complex costs of resisting colonial power, while demonstrating the resilience of indigenous governance systems through community support and strategic adaptation.

Keywords: Indigenous Resistance, Chinzah Clan, Lushai Hills, Dokulha, Power-Knowledge Relations, Colonial Mimicry

Introduction

The Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills were "unknown territories," appearing as undefined spatial voids on colonial maps, though encircled by British power. These areas represented cartographic gaps in the colonial mapping power between Burma (now Myanmar) and British India, which the British sought to fill. The British

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संपादक

सैयद नजमुल रज़ा रिज़वी

संपर्क

228-आर, पूरबी बशारतपुर
निकट एच.एन. सिंह क्रॉसिंग
गोरखपुर-273004



प्रकाशक :

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के. लाल छुआनपुइया, ख्वराई केपास प्रेमजीत सिंह

प्रस्तावना

पूरे लेख को पढ़ते समय व्युत्पत्ति संबंधी भ्रम से बचने के लिए, मैं यहां स्पष्ट कर दूं कि चिन शब्द की छत्रछाया में, कई छोटी और बड़ी जनजातियां एकत्रित हैं और ज्यादातर म्यांमार की चिन पहाड़ियों और दक्षिण एशिया की पूर्वी सीमा पर भी निवास करती हैं। हालांकि, यह ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए कि लुशाई हिल्स (मिजोरम) में 'लाइस' के नाम से मशहूर जनजाति को म्यांमार में आमतौर पर 'चिन्स' के नाम से जाना जाता है। इसलिए, इस आलेख में, हमने 'चिन' शब्द को लाई के बाद कोष्ठक में रखा है। इस आदिवासी आबादी का अधिकांश हिस्सा म्यांमार की चिन पहाड़ियों में रहता है। यहां, हम 'लाई' और 'चिन' शब्दों का परस्पर विनिमय योग्य तरीके से उपयोग करने जा रहे हैं। यह लेख इस जनजाति की सामाजिक और राजनीतिक संरचनाओं और मुखिया की संस्था की भूमिकाओं और शक्ति पर ध्यान केंद्रित करने के बजाय भू-राजनीतिक सीमाओं से परे इसके बारे में बात करता है। फिर भी, इससे पाठकों को यह समझकर एक सिंहावलोकन प्राप्त करने में मदद मिलेगी कि चिन हिल्स (म्यांमार), चीटगांव हिल ट्रेक्ट्स (बांग्लादेश), और मिजोरम का सबसे दक्षिणी भाग, मुख्य रूप से लॉन्टलाई और सियाहा जिले (भारत) मुख्य रूप से लाई (चिन) द्वारा बसे जनजाति हैं।

औपनिवेशिक मानवविज्ञान कार्यों का अध्ययन करते समय, उनके माध्यम से विभिन्न महत्वपूर्ण मूल्यवान जानकारी, मानवशास्त्रीय और ऐतिहासिक स्रोत उपलब्ध होते हैं, लेकिन साथ ही, यह कहना भी गलत नहीं होगा कि कई जटिलताएं और प्रवाह जो इन एलियंस (उपनिवेशवादियों) के लिए अजीब थे, आए। एक हजार मील दूर से, कुछ बिंदु पर गलत तरीके से प्रस्तुत किया गया क्योंकि उनमें से कई मूल निवासियों को समझने के इस क्षेत्र में पेशेवर रूप से प्रशिक्षित नहीं थे, जिनका दूसरों के साथ कम संपर्क था। तथ्य यह है कि जब उपनिवेशवादियों ने तथाकथित पश्चिमी तंत्र और संस्थाएं थोपीं, तो मूल

निवासियों को उनसे अधिक भ्रम और घुटन महसूस हुई क्योंकि यहां के मूल निवासी हमेशा उस संरचना के मूक, शक्तिहीन अंतिम रिसीवर बने रहे - एक सुन्न शरीर।

अनुसंधान पद्धति और उद्देश्य

इस अध्ययन में नियोजित स्रोतों में प्रकाशित औपनिवेशिक नृवंशविज्ञान कार्यों और सार्वजनिक और निजी भंडारों से प्राप्त अभिलेखीय स्रोतों का मिश्रण शामिल है। इन स्रोतों की उचित जांच की गई है, जिसमें मिजोरम (भारत) और चिन हिल्स (म्यांमार) जैसे क्षेत्रों में एकत्र किए गए मौखिक साक्षात्कारों को छोड़कर अंतर्दृष्टि शामिल है। इस आलेख का उद्देश्य लाई समुदाय के भीतर सामाजिक स्तर को समझना, पारंपरिक सामाजिक और राजनीतिक संरचनाओं और संस्थानों में प्रमुखों की शक्ति और भूमिका का विश्लेषण करना और पारंपरिक लाई समाज में मुखियापन और दासता प्रणाली के बीच संबंधों का पता लगाना है।

वह जनजाति जिसके अलग-अलग नाम हैं!

लाई मुख्य रूप से चिन हिल्स, लुशाई हिल्स और चटगांव हिल ट्रैक्ट्स सहित विभिन्न पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में बसे हैं। संभवतः विविध समुदायों और साझा भौगोलिक इलाकों से उनकी निकटता के कारण, उन्हें अलग-अलग नामों से जाना जाता है। बर्मी शाही वृत्तांतों में, यह उल्लेख किया गया है कि 'चिन' शब्द में चिन पहाड़ियों के भीतर बसने वाली लगभग सभी जनजातियां शामिल थीं। लाई को कई नामों से जाना जाता है- बर्मा में चिन, मिजोरम में पावी और बांग्लादेश में शेंडस। यह भी ध्यान दिया जा सकता है कि उनके प्रमुखों को बंगालियों, मणिपुरियों और बर्मी खातों द्वारा लाई प्रमुखों, शेंदु प्रमुखों, चिन प्रमुखों और पावी प्रमुखों के रूप में भी दर्ज किया गया था।³

पश्चिम की ओर कोलोडाइन नदी (उर्फ छिमतुइपुई) के पार बसे लाईस और मरास जनजातियां - लुशाई हिल्स और चटगांव हिल ट्रैक्ट्स - को टी.एच. जैसे औपनिवेशिक नृवंशविज्ञानियों द्वारा 'शेंडस' के रूप में दर्ज किया गया था। लेविन, एन.ई. पेरी, और ई.बी. एली.⁴ उन्होंने शेंदुओं को लुशाइयों से अलग जनजातियों के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित किया और नोट किया कि कैप्टन टी.एच. के अनुसार, शेंदु लोग। लेविन ने अपने बालों को माथे पर एक विशिष्ट ऊंची गाँठ में बाँधा था।⁵ चिन शब्द इस जनजाति द्वारा निवास किए गए क्षेत्रों पर ब्रिटिश राज के अतिक्रमण की शुरुआत के साथ परिचित हो गया, और 'चिन' का उपयोग करने वाले प्रमुख औपनिवेशिक अधिकारियों ने रिकॉर्ड और प्रशासनिक सुविधा के लिए चिन का उपयोग लापरवाही से करना शुरू कर दिया। 1896 में चिन हिल्स के कब्जे के बाद से, 'चिन' शब्द का उपयोग ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य के भीतर एक प्रशासनिक इकाई के रूप में किया गया है।⁶

'लाई' शब्द की उत्पत्ति और ऐतिहासिक समयरेखा में इसका उपयोग इस समुदाय द्वारा किया गया था जिसने खुद को लाई लोगों के रूप में पहचाना, कई चुनौतियों को जन्म दिया। इसके इतिहास का पता लगाना ऐतिहासिक और नृवंशविज्ञान अनुसंधान की एक सतत प्रक्रिया बनी रहेगी, लेकिन तथ्य यह है कि लाई के लोग खुद को लाई जनजाति कहने में गर्व महसूस करते हैं। एक स्थानीय लेखक रेव खुआकुंग का दावा है कि 'लाई' शब्द चीन में बसावट के समय पहले से ही मौजूद था।

'लाई' शब्द का उपयोग करते समय कुछ भ्रम हुआ, जब वे चिन हिल्स में चले गए और बस गए,

पहाड़ियों, गांवों और घाटियों को ऐसे नाम दिए गए जो वहां रहने वाले लोगों के कबीले या जनजाति के नामों से मेल खाते थे, उदाहरण के लिए, लैटलांग, लाईखुआ, और लैलुमटे।⁷ इससे साफ पता चलता है कि 'लाई' शब्द हाल ही में बनाया गया शब्द नहीं है।

लाई सामाजिक स्तरीकरण और बावी (मुखिया)

सामाजिक, राजनीतिक और प्रशासनिक प्रणालियों में नए आदेशों की छाया पड़ने से पहले, चिन समाज में विशिष्ट स्तरीकरण थे जिसमें शासक कुलों और आम लोगों के कुलों का प्रतिनिधित्व बावी और चिया नामक वर्ग विभाजनों द्वारा किया जाता था।⁸ ग्राम प्रधानों को अधीनस्थ या पराजित गांवों से श्रद्धांजलि और कर इकट्ठा करने का आनंद मिलता था, जबकि जबरन श्रम या सार्वजनिक सेवाएं समाज के निचले तबके से ली जाती थीं, और शासक कुलों को ऐसे दायित्वों से छूट दी गई थी।

पारंपरिक समय में, शासक कुलों ने बस्ती के भीतर प्रमुख के पद के लिए उत्तराधिकार की एक मजबूत व्यवस्था बनाए रखी। इस महत्वपूर्ण और शक्तिशाली पद की विरासत का प्रमाण ह्लानचिंग, ह्लानचेउ, जथांग, खेंग्लावत और चिन्जा जैसे शासक/शाही कुलों के अस्तित्व से मिलता है। 1889-90 में चिन प्रतिरोध और ब्रिटिश औपनिवेशिक ताकतों के साथ मुठभेड़ के ऐतिहासिक विवरण उन लाई (चिन) गांवों के प्रमुखों और उनके संबंधित कुलों के बारे में साक्ष्य प्रदान करते हैं। सबसे शक्तिशाली गाँव हल्ला, ह्लान्टलांग, सक्ता, जोखुआ और फलम थे।

चिन समाज में, मुखिया ने बुजुर्गों की एक परिषद नियुक्त की जो ग्राम प्रशासन और अन्य नीति निर्धारण में सहायता प्रदान करती है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि निर्णय लेने के समय, युद्ध, आंतरिक संघर्ष, दावतों आदि के समय में विभिन्न मामलों पर चर्चा करने के लिए एक मुखिया बड़ों की परिषद के साथ सभा में उपस्थित होता था। बड़ों की परिषद के अलावा, लोहार (सोसर)) कृषि कर्मियों के लिए गाँव के लोहे के औजारों की मरम्मत में लगा हुआ था। पुजारी (त्लांग बावी) गाँव के भीतर सभी यज्ञ अनुष्ठान करता है, और गाँव का वाहक⁹ (त्लांग औ) प्रत्येक घर में महत्वपूर्ण संदेश पहुँचाता है और उसे गाँव की रीढ़ माना जाता है।

प्रत्येक परिवार गाँव के लोहार को उसकी सेवाओं के लिए प्रतिवर्ष धान की एक टोकरी और शिकार या फँसाने के कारण मारे गए जानवर के पिछले पैर से भुगतान करता था। उपास (अन्य नेताओं) के समानांतर त्लांग औ (ग्राम वाहक) को खेती के लिए भूमि के एक भूखंड का चयन करने की शक्ति दी गई थी। यह प्रथा, जो हर गाँव में अलग-अलग होती है, उनके श्रम के भुगतान के रूप में मानी जाती है।¹⁰

लोक कथाओं और अन्य स्रोतों के आधार पर, कई लोग मानते हैं कि लाईस की उत्पत्ति लैलुन गुफा (फलम, चिन हिल्स, म्यांमार)¹¹ से हुई और इसकी शाखाएँ अलग-अलग दिशाओं में अलग-अलग तरंगों में फैल गईं। ह्लानचेउ शासक कबीले लैलुन से बाहर चले गए और कई गांवों की स्थापना की, अर्थात्, तलौहमुन, मंगखेन, ह्लानरावन, ह्लुनपी, लाइजो, जमुअल, लेनहाई, टिकुअल, टिपिर, रुलबू, तियाहदाई, टिल्ली, त्लान्हमुन और फार्थॉक। त्लान्हमुन, फार्थॉक (उर्फ सुंथलापुई, या फलम)। इनमें ह्लानचेउ सबसे बड़ा गाँव था। पंगखुआ, तुइथुमनार, लॉन्गत्लाई (मिजोरम), और रेंग्टलांग (बांग्लादेश) ह्लानचेउ कबीले के प्रमुखों द्वारा स्थापित और शासित गाँव थे। चिनजाह प्रमुखों ने चिन हिल्स के बीस

(20) गाँवों और मिजोरम के कई गाँवों पर शासन किया, जैसे बुंगजांग, उत्तरी वनलाईफाई, लुंगरंग, खुआंगहलम, चेरलुन, न्धरचिप, थिंगसाई, दक्षिण वनलाईफाई, संगुआ और लुंगटियन, बुआलपुरई 'एनजी', तुइपांग, कौरहय चिनजा प्रमुखों ने मिजोरम के लगभग आठ गाँवों पर शासन किया। हल्ला जथांग शासक कबीले के प्रमुख मुखियाओं में से एक थे और उन्होंने ब्रिटिश राज के आगमन से पहले चिन पहाड़ियों में गाँव स्थापित किए थे। चिन हिल्स में खेंगलोट प्रमुखों के बसने का कोई स्पष्ट उल्लेख नहीं था। हालाँकि, यह स्पष्ट है कि खेंगलावट प्रमुख, जहुआता, चिनजा प्रमुखों के साथ म्यांमार से वर्तमान मिजोरम में चले गए और वर्टेक में एक गाँव बसाया।

हल्ला, थ्लैटलांग, जोखुआ और फलम के शक्तिशाली मुखियाओं के कई गाँव आंशिक रूप से उनकी निगरानी में थे और ये बाद वाले उपग्रह गाँव इन ग्राम प्रधानों को श्रद्धांजलि देते थे। जब भी दुश्मनों के साथ मुठभेड़ के लिए बड़ी सेना की आवश्यकता होती थी, शक्तिशाली सरदार उपग्रह गाँवों को बुला सकते थे। हालाँकि लाई मुखियापन आम तौर पर फलम और कुछ चयनित गाँवों में प्रमुखों के हाथों में सत्ता की एकाग्रता के बारे में था। यह शासन के विभिन्न पहलुओं पर चर्चा करने के लिए परिवर्तित होता है। ऐसे मामले थे जहाँ लोकतांत्रिक तत्व का सार शासन और निर्णय लेने में पेश किया गया था।¹²

सामाजिक पदानुक्रम के भीतर विरासत और उत्तराधिकार की कबीले-आधारित प्रणाली के व्यापक अस्तित्व के बारे में कोई संदेह नहीं है, लेकिन एक अन्य प्रकार की मुखिया प्रणाली का प्रमाण है, जो ग्राम प्रधान के पद के कबीले-आधारित उत्तराधिकार के साथ विरोधाभासी है, यहां तक कि एक व्यक्ति भी निचले पायदान का व्यक्ति गाँव का मुखिया बन सकता है। हालाँकि, यह अवसर चिन हिल्स और लुशाई हिल्स की सरदार व्यवस्था में औपनिवेशिक हस्तक्षेप के कारण उत्पन्न हुआ।

लाई मुखिया और उनकी सत्ता

पारंपरिक लाई संस्कृति में, मुखिया राजनीतिक, धार्मिक, आर्थिक और न्यायिक क्षेत्रों में विशाल अधिकार रखने वाला सबसे शक्तिशाली व्यक्ति होता था। सर्व-शक्तिशाली और अपनी प्रजा पर अंतिम नियंत्रण रखने वाला, प्रमुख समकालीन कमांडर-इन-चीफ की तरह, संघर्ष के समय आक्रामक रूप से सामने से नेतृत्व करेगा। इसके अतिरिक्त, प्रमुख ने समुदाय के भीतर विवादों या बलात्कार और हत्या जैसी असामान्य घटनाओं से जुड़े मामलों की अध्यक्षता करते हुए न्यायाधीश के रूप में कार्य किया। विशेष रूप से, लाई प्रमुखों ने अपनी विरासत को लगभग धार्मिक सम्मान के साथ रखा, वे अक्सर विशेष कुलों या गाँवों के संस्थापकों के पूर्वज होते थे।

शक्ति, विशेषाधिकार, रैंक और वर्ग संरक्षक देवता द्वारा उन्हें दिए गए निर्देशों में से थे, जो वंश की प्रणाली में गहराई से निहित थे।¹³ मुखिया पूरे गाँव पर नियंत्रण रखता था और अपने प्रभाव क्षेत्र की हर चीज पर अधिकार रखता था। इसके अलावा, मुखियाओं को समुदाय के प्रत्येक घर से खाद्यान्न का एक निश्चित प्रतिशत प्राप्त होता था। प्रथा के अनुसार, घर का प्रत्येक शारीरिक रूप से स्वस्थ सदस्य गाँव में शांति बनाए रखने के लिए मुखिया को भुगतान के साधन के रूप में शारीरिक श्रम करके अपनी सेवाएँ प्रदान करता था।

“जनजातियाँ प्रमुखों द्वारा शासित होती थीं, जिन्हें अक्सर सलाहकार परिषदों द्वारा सहायता प्रदान की जाती

K. Lalchhuanpuia

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1861-3374>

Employment (1)

Mizoram University: Aizawl, Mizoram, IN
2018-10 to present | Scholar (History & Ethnography)
Employment
Source:K. Lalchhuanpuia

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PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

Name of the Candidate	: K. Lalchhuanpuia
Degree	: Doctor of Philosophy
Department	: History & Ethnography
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Prof. KISHOR GAIKWAD
Head
Department of History & Ethnography
Mizoram University

ABSTRACT

**BRITISH COLONIAL SURVEILLANCE IN INDO-BURMA
FRONTIER**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

K. LALCHHUANPUIA

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JUNE 2025**

BRITISH COLONIAL SURVEILLANCE IN INDO-BURMA FRONTIER

BY

K. LALCHHUANPUIA

Department of History & Ethnography

Supervisor

Dr. KHWAIRAKPAM PREMJIT SINGH

Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in History & Ethnography of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**

Introduction

The earliest mention of the Chin Hills and its people was found in the Burman inscriptions of the Pagan kingdom of the 13th century, referring to Chin highlanders as ‘allies’ or ‘comrades.’ After the centuries gap, a detailed account of Chin Hills was found in Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India (1904), where he divides it into four groups: Central Chin, Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin Hills. He explicitly mentioned the various tribes which established their settlements in specific geographical locations. The Lais, Lushais, Zahaus, and Mara tribes are the principal inhabitants of the Central Chin Hills, whereas the Zo (Yo) tribes dominated the Northern Chin Hills, and the Lais ruled the Southern Chin Hills. The Chin conglomerate tribes belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic category.

During colonial times, the main settlements of the Chin tribes were Hakha (capital city), Thantlang, Matupi, Falam, Paletwa, and Mindat in Myanmar; the Lawngtlai and Saiha districts of Mizoram in India and the Chittagong Hills tracts in Bangladesh were largely dominated by them.

As per Gordon Luce's assumptions, the Chins might have reached Hukong Valley in the three junctions of international boundaries of Tibet, China, and Burma around 400 A.D. on their way to the Chin Hills.¹ According to legendary folklore, before their settlement in the Chin Hills, their first settlement in Myanmar was at the foothill of Chindwin Valley, then shifted to various places, namely Monywa, Shwebo, Oaksa, Letsa, and Phau areas, respectively.² Later, they reached the Run River, which slowed their movement. In Simpi, the Chins perhaps launched the first village community system.³ Further and finally reached Lailun cave (6 miles from Falam) and made this region the centre of the Lai/Chin tribes’ centre of power, branching out their clan throughout the Chin Hill Ranges, reaching the Lushai Hills and Bangladesh.⁴ In the postcolonial era, ‘Chin’ became an umbrella term

¹ G.H.Luce, ‘Old Kyaukse and the Coming of Burman,’ in *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol.XLII, 89

² Luce, “Old Kyaukse”, 89.

³ Jangkhongam Dounel, *Lai Chieftainship and its Impact in Politics*, (New Delhi: Balaji Publications, 2015), 56.

⁴ Rothang, *Tuanbia*, (manuscript), 3.

representing most of the tribes that settled in the Chin Hills. All the tribes settled in the Chin Hills are commonly known as Chin.⁵ Chin somewhat became related to an administrative unit rather than based on a particular tribe.⁶

The Lushais, Kukis, or Chin (Lais) tribes have a strong imaginary/mythological space, the '*Chhinlung*' (mythological cave) on the 'lower realm' from where they emerged.⁷ Until the British intervention, even after expeditions, the Chin tribes were not only tussling with neighbouring tribes but also conducting raids in the Arakan and Ava valleys in search of food and slaves.⁸

As one of the features of the 'Treaty of Yandaboo' (1826), the British acquired Arakan province, which shares the boundary with the Chin Hills, from Myanmar ruler. Since pre-colonial times, the Chin tribes maintained some passes between Arakan and Chin Hills, and on and off, they raided the Arakan Valley and continued the process after the British occupation of Arakan Valley.

In the 1830s, British India had minimal topographical and geographical information about the Chin and Lushai Hills.⁹ Constant disturbances and raids forced the colonial power to go on an expedition to subdue the unruly Chin tribes. Under the supervision of Lieutenant, T. A. Trant, the 38th His Majesty's Regiment expedited the Chin Hills from the Ava side, along with a surveyor.¹⁰

According to Lieutenant T.A. Trant:

'The people who inhabit the range of mountains that separate Ava from Aracan, and who are termed Khyen, are very different in character and habits from their Burman neighborhoods: appearance, the men are much inferior to the Burmese, their countenances being flatter, and not

⁵ The word *Shendus* was referred to *Lais* and *Maras* settled in territories of Southern Lushai Hills and Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh by colonial ethnographers like: T.H. Lewin, N.E. Perry and E.B. Elly.

⁶ Doungel, *Lai Chieftainship and its Impact in Politics*, 56.

⁷ Kenneth Vanbik, *Proto-Kuki-Chin: A Reconstructed Ancestor of the Kuki –Chin Languages*, (California: The Regent University of California, 2009), 1.

⁸ Chhawnmanga, *Mizorama Michengte*, (Aizawl: Hnamte Allied Industry, 1985), 3.

⁹ George Basalla view on the spread of western/colonial science in colonial countries has three phases, reconnaissance (exploration, trade, conquest, colonization and systematic exploration of nature), Residential Scientist and independent scientific tradition. Here the colonization process in Chin Hills did really follow Basalla's reconnaissance process in plain Indian subcontinent is questionable.

¹⁰ He was the first officer who used the term *Khyen* or *Chins* as a context.

*so regular: the dress also differs; it is straightforward; a black cloth, striped with red and white, is thrown over the shoulders, as black fabric is worn around the loins, and a black jacket is occasionally used.'*¹¹

The major problem faced by the British during the Chin Hills' reconnaissance campaign was difficulties in obtaining transport corps that could endure the subtropical Arakan climate and the deep/wild forest of Chin Hills. The British transport/labour corps and soldiers suffered from tropical diseases and epidemics.

The continuous raids of the Chins on their neighbouring tribes became a headache for the colonial-administered area of the Arakan and Chittagong Hill Tracts. They were very desperate to collect precise information about these tribes and terrains. In 1833, Lais committed a raid in a village a few miles beyond the northernmost police outpost. Shortly thereafter, they came down and the villages were under British control. In 1838, a small expedition was carried out to punish raiders.¹² However, the frontier remained periodically disturbed by the Chins from the hilly areas. Again, during the cold season between 1847 and 1848, the Chins carried out two different raids in the frontier villages of the Arakan and Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Several proposals have been made to control the Lai inhabited area through the Arakan side, not the Chittagong Hill Tracts.¹³ Many outposts were reorganised and posted to push back the Chin raiders. To punish those found guilty, a village expedition was laid out under Lieutenant Henry Hopkinson, the Principal Assistant Commissioner of Akyab, in December 1847.¹⁴ This expedition tremendously helped in acquiring knowledge about the Shendus (Lais), who inhabited near the Kolodyne River.

Along with the expedition report, Lieutenant Henry Hopkinson proposed that unless the British intervenes and controls a single administration, the Chins would be

¹¹ Lieutenant T A Trant, 'Notice on the Khyen Tribe inhabiting the Yuma mountains between Ava and Aracan,' in JASB, Vol- XVI, 1828, 261.

¹² Report on Progress made in Arakan, 19-20.

¹³ Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, (Calcutta: Reprint Delhi, 2001), 335.

¹⁴ Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*, 335.

more or less liable to incursion. However, his recommendation was delayed due to the Indian 'Great Revolt of 1857.' Therefore, after a thorough review of the proposal, the whole country east of the cultivated plains of Chittagong should be removed from the previous regulation and created as a separate non-regulation district under a Superintendent.¹⁵

The great Kuki invasion of 1860 simultaneously elevated the sense of fear of the remaining hilly tribes of the British regime and the uncontrolled area. This, in turn, stabilised the hilly regions until the arrival of Sir Cecile Beadon as the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in April 1862.¹⁶ The new Bengal Lieutenant policy brought peace among frontier tribes through European officers. After cautious revision, the Arakan Hill Tract came under the commissionership of Burma, where Bengal's control over Arakan ended.¹⁷

To implement and pursue the policy suggested by Beadon in which granting of a small police allowance to each chief to maintain peace and to prevent people from attacking their neighbour, Captain Thomas Herbert Lewin carried out a journey with two native servant and six policemen as escort to the Blue Mountain region (Lawngtlai, Mizoram) in November 1865. He explored an unknown area to spread peace and surveyed every village. However, on 15 December 1865 Lai warriors shot and wounded him while sitting in his hut.¹⁸ Somehow, he reached Akyab on 20 December 1865 where he met two colonial officials, Sir Arthur Phayre and Major Henry Munro. The trio decided to punish the culprit and made a fresh start in January 1866.¹⁹

To consolidate the unruly hills, three different governors were assigned to go on an expedition to the Lushai and Chin tribes. The expedition force reached Aizawl in May 1890. Correspondence letters between the Secretary of the State of India and the British Government of India revealed the measures that the British India

¹⁵ B.P. Barua, 'Extension of British Administration to the Chittagong Hill Tract', in *Proceeding of the History Congress*, Muzaffarpur Session, 1972, 514-519.

¹⁶ Mackenzie, *History of the relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes*, 342-344.

¹⁷ HH Dodwell, 'The Cambridge History of India', vol. VI, in *The Indian empire 1858-1918*, Cambridge university press, 1964(reprint), 441.

¹⁸ T H Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Help to Govern India*, (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2005), 146-182.

¹⁹ Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Help to Govern India*, pp. 146-147.

government took to secure the proper administration of the Southern Lushai Hills. The southern Lushai Hills were under control and constituted a separate charge under the Governor of Bengal.²⁰

Later, with all efforts, the British managed to recruit the Lai men to reach the unruly Chin Hills. Subsequently, they established the Chin Hills Battalion for the operation and occupation of the Chin Hills terrain.

Major Henry Bumey, the Company's Resident at the Court of Ava, in his report to George Swinton, Chief Secretary at Fort William in Calcutta, stated:

“The Khyens in the neighbourhood of Aeng are we understand amongst the most civilized of their tribe and from that vicinity, and the hills northward to the Koladyne, as far as our influence extended great number of these mountaineers, all of whom are practiced porters could be assembled at Aeng with little delay, whilst Mugs and other coolies could be engaged for the same service from the different districts of Araccan and Chittagong to meet any demand we can possibly foresee”.

After the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Fort William on 29 January 1892 the following resolution was passed:

Most of the conferences believe that it is desirable that the whole tract of the country, known as the Chin-Lushai Hills, should be brought under one administrative head as soon as this can be done. They also considered it advisable that the new administration be subordinate to Assam's Chief Commissioner. Sir J. Dormer and Sir Alexander Mackenzie would defer any final decision as regards the eastern part of the Tracts till further information is obtained.

The first thing to be done for the control of these hill tracts is to improve the communication between crucial places such as Cachar and Aizawl, Aizawl and Lunglei, Aizawl and Manipur, and the posts situated respectively on the eastern and western sides of the Tracts. The opening of these lines is a work of pressing important. The necessary commissariat staff should also be provided to arrange

²⁰Foreign Department Report on Chin- Lushai Hills September, 1892, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, 41.

transport and supplies, until the Tracts can offer them for itself.²¹ However, Carey stated that it was impractical for Assam to administer the Chin Hills, that the Chin Hills was as much part of Burma; the Chins sympathise and associate with Burma and not the Lushais or Assam and it will be more simple and convenient for this tract to be administered from Rangoon than from Shillong, Chittagong or a central Chin-Lushai Headquarters.²²

Statement of Problem

The British employed various surveillance tools, techniques, and control strategies to stop the raids, gain administrative control of the areas, and gain the confidence of the local populace in the valley to further their colonial interests. Records on these matters show a lack of unanimity and uniformity. This study analyse the colonisation process through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and the employment of surveillance programs over the Chin Hills.

Imdad Hussain, Pum Khan Pao, Lain H. Sakhong, David Zou and J. Zorema had extensively worked on the Chin Hills frontier problems, comprehensive colonial policies and the indigenous tribes' various culture, polity, society and economy. Every scholar has a unique approach, understanding, interpretation, and narratives. Greater parts of historical works need to be critically examined and reconstructed through further research. Some scholars mentioned the Chin Hills based on the Chin conglomerate tribes settled in Manipur and Chin State by overshadowing the role of the numerically dominant Lai tribe. Further, available literature indicates a conspicuous absence of oral sources in constructing a history. This study combined published, recorded, ethnographic, and oral sources.

The scholar visits various historically important places, interviewing knowledgeable local experienced people, which helps to triangulate between the local perspective of the past on the one hand and colonial observation of the past available in written forms to rewrite history.

²¹ Foreign Department Report on Chin-Lushai Hills, September, 1892, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, 1.

²² Foreign Department Report on Chin Lushai hills Septermber, 1892, (1980: Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl), 44.

This study employs a transnational, comparative approach from a global connection perspective in dealing with the Chin Hill people. Because the polycentric approach seems more feasible than the monocentric approach, we found more convergence than divergence among the Chin-Kuki Hill tribes. Writing the precolonial and colonial history of the highlanders of northeast India based on modern geopolitical boundaries obstructs the correlation between events and outcomes. Therefore, writing the history of this tribe beyond national boundaries is a more appropriate approach.

Anthropological and ethnographical works of Chester U. Strait, Carrey and Tuck, and Lieutenant Trant, T.H. Lewin, G.H. Leus, G.A. Grierson, Charles Paton, and Shakespeare, A. G. McCall and Captain G.C. Rigby talks about indigenous social structures, habits and customs, and belief systems. However, based on Chin-Kuki-Lushai cultural closeness, researching the divergences and convergence of their indigenous belief system from historical perspectives is essential.

Review of Literature

'Lai hnam Chin Hills atanga lo chhuk hmasate', written by Upa Manglinga Hlawmcheu, deals with the Lais (Pawi) ethnic group who have been migrated from Chin Hills to Lushai Hills. It provides information on how different chiefs established villages and expanded their territories. However, it mentions clearly that Lais (Pawi) once collected as many tributes and taxes from the surrounding communities. Moreover, the conflict between Lallula Sailo and Thlanrawn Chief, which later turned into war against each other, is clearly stated. Unfortunately, there is no information on the facts and figures of their settlements. Therefore, further research is required in this regard.

B. Lalthangliana's work *'Pi Pu Zunleng Chatuan Romei Pi Pu Zunleng A Zam Zodaiah'* provides information on the history of Lushai, tracing their origins, ancestors, culture, land and home. Aiming to encourage the Lushai culture, where Western cultures influence the minds of Mizo youngsters, this book describes how the Lushai ancestors gave more importance to elders, different ways of life such as establishment of villages and houses, dresses, festivals, cultivation (food gathering),

rearing of domestic animals, marriage and divorce, economy, *Zawlbuk* (Bachelors' dormitory), sacrifice, traditional funerals, folklore, etc. Although B. Lalthangliana gives great information regarding the norms of the Lushai, it fails to highlight the relationship and traditional differences between the Lais and the Lushais.

Zatluanga's book, *Mizo Chanchin (History of Mizo)*, presents an enlightening story of how humans evolved into the world based on the bible. He specifically traces the Mizo tribes, their ancestors, customary laws, and settlements in their present homeland. Thus, the author mentions tribal warfare between Pawi and Lushai chiefs, which created confusion. It is clearly stated that Lai and Lushei were different tribes, and early writers usually named Lais as separate tribes, which needs further authentic research.

'*Mizo Chanchin: B.C. 300 - 1929 A.D. (Mizo History)*', written by Col. V. Lunghnema is one of the few books dealing with traditional Mizos and their neighbouring tribes. He continuously stressed the similarities, traditional customs, folk songs, and material culture from side to side, which enabled us to identify the nature of ethnicity among Mizos. Remarkably, he includes all the cognate tribes in a single tribe known as Mizos. However, tribal warfare in relation to the Lai tribes is rarely found, which requires in-depth study.

A.S Reid's work '*Chin-Lushai Land*' provides information on how the British administration laid out many military expeditions in the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills. By subduing a powerful chief among the Chin and Lushai Hills, implementing colonial diplomatic skills has been highlighted. Tribal warfare imposed by the Chin and Lushai chiefs, as well as imposing fines among the ferocious and war-like chiefs by the British administration, is clearly stated. Moreover, agreement among the chiefs would further assist in gaining and suppressing the powerful Chin and Lushai chiefs in creating British administration within the Chin-Lushai land. Various tribal warfare exercises by the Lushai and Lai chiefs have been noted.

Another book worth mentioning in the history of tribal warfare is Captain G. C. Rigby's '*History of Operation in Northern Arrakan and the Yawdwin Chin Hills - 1896-97*', which precisely highlights the role and function of the British military

expedition as well as the officials' diary, where we acquire knowledge relating to tribal warfare. The book provides information regarding the gazette of villages, possession of guns, nature of the country, transport (method of carrying loads), climate, communication, supplies, fauna and flora, geological sites, and so on. On the other hand, although it is enlightening, the names of persons, villages, and rivers are quite confusing and require further research.

N.E. Perry's work, '*The Lakhers*', traces the early relationship with the Shendus, which refers to the Lais and Maras settling in the Kolodyne belt. It also defines that the Lakhers (Mara) were a sub-tribe of the Pois (Lais). The term Shendus covers all Haka (Halkha) chin tribes. Hence, the book describes the accounts of Mara and Lai chiefs with abundant historical records.

Carey and Tuck's '*Chin Hills, Vol. 1*' outlines the beginning of the British administration in the Chin Hills and Lushai Hills, which deals explicitly with the social customs, economic status, armour, and administrative setup of the Chin (Lais) in the Chin Hills. Fascinating is the local manufacture of gunpowder and bullets, which are normally used for hunting and tribal warfare purposes. Hence, the chief's role and function are clearly defined in society and the expansion of its territory. Tribal warfare carried out by the Chin and British military expedition against offenders and suppressing perpetrators is well recorded in detail. In contrast, particular names such as Hakas (Halkha), Klang Klang (Thantlang), and Yokwas (Zokhua) are misinterpreted.

'*Wild Races of South-Eastern India*' by T.H. Lewin deals with the relationship of the hill chiefs to the British authorities, their system of administration, and the people of the hills. The book also provides information about the disturbing activities of the Lai Chiefs, such as a surprise attack, plunder, and raids in the British protectorate area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, along with the Lushai Chiefs. The book provides clear information about specific raids and tribal warfare committed by hilly tribes.

A.G. McCall, in his book '*Lushai Chrysalis*', briefly discusses the social and cultural life of the Lushai and their customs and religious life in pre-colonial times.

Chapter 11 of the book clearly highlights the various wars committed by the different tribes of the Lushai Hills, which include Shendus (Lais), Lakhers, and their military expedition. This book is a valuable source for understanding the war-like character of hill tribes and their war tactics.

'The North-East Frontier of India', written by Alexander Mackenzie, is a valuable source which contains the history of the North-Eastern tribes, their early relationship with the British, and the British mode of dealings with them. In Chapter 11, the author discusses various outrages or warfare committed by the Lushai or Kookie (Kuki) tribes. In different chapters, the author also highlights the Shendus and others' raids and the Great Kookie Invasion of 1860, until the birth of subsequent events.

'Pawi Chanchin (Pawi History)', published by Tribal Research Institute, Directorate of Art & Culture, Government of Mizoram, is a great work dealing with the origin of the Pawi, their background, migration, administration and settlement. It also deals with the traditional beliefs, religion, marriage system, burial procedure, customs, and traditional practices of early Pawi (Lais). The author provides a wealth of information on the history, society, and culture of the early Pawi.

'Lai Nunphung (Chin Culture and Traditions)' is the work done by Stephen Nikio. This book provides valuable sources related to the traditional culture and practices of Lais, who are scattered across different parts of the world. This book contains various features, such as a marriage system with a specific bride price and domestic animal slaying for marriage. Moreover, it discussed a different divorce system in which a dispute arose between partners or among family members. The right to succession is well indicated among the sons of the Lais family. The significance of festivals and feasts observed on various occasions is elaborated upon. At the same time, it details the treatment of death or the burial system beyond life after death. However, using the term chin creates confusion, as Lais employed various names regarding geographical boundary differences, which require further research.

Chhawnkio, in his book *'Lai Miphun Thawhkehnaak Tuanbia'* (*Origin and Identity of Lai tribes*), covers the origin and settlement of Lais, colonial rule, and the establishment of an independent Myanmar country. It is one of the few reliable books written by a tribe. The early chapter focuses on how the Lai tribes came into being, relations with neighbouring tribes, and various stages of migration from China to the present Chin Hills in Myanmar. Details of migratory routes from plains to present inhabited hilly areas, the establishment of specific villages with populations, and surrounding tribes who live along with the Lais are mentioned. Royal clans such as *Chinzah*, *Hlawngchhing*, *Khenglawt*, *Zathang*, and *Hlawancheu* ancestors deal with the common masses and exercise their authority within the village setup and its tributary villages. It highlights tribal society, where disputes arise between villages regarding territory, resulting in war. The first encounter with the British, subsequent resistance by the Lais over imperial power, and the gradual pacification with the coming of a missionary of the Chin Hills are elaborated. Moreover, the end of colonial rule and Myanmar's independence were elaborated upon. Despite giving many histories of Lais, it places more importance on Myanmar. There is a lack of history of the Chins inhabiting the Bangladesh and India borderlands, which opens ground for further research.

'Mizoram a Michengte (Dwellers of Mizoram)' is a book written by Chhawnmanga, which focuses on the Lai tribes of Mizoram. This book precisely traces the Lais and neighbouring tribes who reside in present-day Mizoram, in particular, the different stages of migration taken up by a different clan of the Lais within Mizoram, along with the establishment of villages until the final settlement of the southernmost part of Mizoram. It also discussed the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1871-1872 and the second expedition of 1888-1889, resistance against the British, the uprising of Kuki and Lais in Chin Hills, and the subsequent administration under the British. However, the absence of important documents about the Chin Hills and the concentration on the Lushai Hills creates grounds for further research.

'Chuahkehnaak (Lai History in Lai)' is a book published by the Lai Autonomous District Council of Mizoram. This book highlights the various theories of the Lai identity and how the word '*chin*' came into the limelight and is used as a

generic term in the Chin Hills. The origins of Lai are a myth due to a lack of proper facts and figures, yet many assumptions and theories have been laid out by tracing as far as present-day China. It provides details of the movement and establishment of renowned towns such as Halkha, Falam, Thlantlang and Matupi in the Chin Hills and Village administration along with their tributary villages, which extended as far as Cox Bazaar (in present-day Bangladesh) in the pre-colonial era. Socioeconomy is the most important factor to survive as a tribe, due to its absence, which opens up another ground for further research.

‘Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed’ by James C. Scott explores why well-intentioned state-driven social engineering schemes to improve human conditions often lead to disastrous outcomes. Scott criticises the “high modernist ideology” as a sort of overconfidence in scientific and technical progress, centralised planning, ability to redesign the society which often ignores the importance and complex web of local practices and informal social systems. In this book, the author provides multiple historical examples from different parts of the world, such as Soviet collectivisation and Tanzanian villagisation, which validate his theoretical establishments and debates. Part 4 (The Missing Link) of this book strongly emphasises the indispensable role of meticulous practical knowledge derived from local experience and practices in creating functional social systems. The author clearly mentions that the state should never disown informal processes in society and oversimplify the centuries-old social mechanism which has always remained complex. Scott’s overemphasis on critiquing the state control of high modernism and its failures sometimes underestimates the successes of some state-led projects.

James Hevia’s *‘The Imperial Security State: Knowledge and British Imperialism’* examines the significant role of military intelligence in shaping the strategies and operations of the British Empire from the late 19th century onwards. Hevia employs a historical analytical approach, utilising archival sources namely military reports, training manuals, route books and operational handbooks. The book delves into the history of military intelligence and the integration of empirical sciences into military practices. It explores how irregular warfare in underdeveloped

terrains often exposed gaps in the British regime, creating epistemological crises in imperial security. This book has become invaluable for the critical study of surveillance, military expeditions, reconnaissance, road construction and the evolution of triangulation, surveying and mapping in the Chin and Lushai Hills during colonial times.

Mathew H. Edney's book, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843*, serves as a foundational text for understanding the intersection of cartography, colonial governance and imperialism within British Empire since its colonial establishment in the Indian Subcontinent. The book illustrates how the English East India Company (EIC) used mapping as a tool to consolidate and establish a confirmatory space for British power in South Asia. It reflects that the EIC's efforts in producing a series of maps of Indian Subcontinent were not merely driven by a passion for cartographic science but were instruments of colonial power, reflecting their colonial perceptions and governance needs. Edney notes that the British mapped "their India" rather than the "real India" the objectivity of mapping and colonial ideologies with rhetorical justifications for their projects. The book deals with the evolution of cartographic practices, the impact of mapping on British, and intriguingly narrates the cartographic anarchy which generally found in stitching together a series of surveys reports and to produce a comprehensive map. Although the author discusses the role of natives in survey data collection and mapping, he leaves ample room for other scholars to conduct further in-depth research on the contribution of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping modern maps.

'*Ruling the Savage Periphery Frontier Governance and the Making of the Modern State*' by Benjamin D. Hopkins offers an in-depth exploration of complex nature of modern frontiers, primarily shaped by imperial practices rooted in colonial expansionist policies. The book elucidates how colonial frontier governance reflects the administrative strategies employed to control indigenous populations, resulting in economic exploitation and cultural erasure. In postcolonial states, the enduring influence of colonial legal frameworks on contemporary governance and social structures is also addressed by the author in this seminal work. Hopkins utilises the

theory of frontier governmentality, centre-periphery relationships, sovereign pluralism and colonial spectre of savagery, which portrays indigenous people as “savage” to justify their governance and subjugation. The book bridges political theory, history, anthropology and international relations by demonstrating how governance at the margins shaped state institutions and the global structure.

‘*Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*’ by Thongchai Winichakul delves into the historical and conceptual formation of Siam (now Thailand) as a modern state. Thongchai intricately discusses the concept of the “geo-body” emphasising that Siamese nationhood is not an organic or gradual phenomenon but rather a modern construct shaped by colonial encounters and cartographic practices. The book highlights the pivotal roles played by French and British colonial forces along with Thai elites, in defining Siam’s boundaries, cartographic mapping, treaties, and other political negotiations. It combines history, geography and other disciplines to analyse how the discourse of geo-body shaped Siam’s identity. Thongchai vividly mentions how mapping altered natives’ understanding of territory, sovereignty and national identity leading to the creation of a modern geo-body. The book is valuable for scholars studying colonial cartography, mapping, colonialism, imperialism, as it provides insight into how a peripheral region or community grapples with the loss of its indigenous spatial conceptions and identity to modern mapping and geography.

Bernard S. Cohn’s ‘*Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*’ is a seminal work that critically dissects the colonial power’s cultural project of control, and Cohn says that this project is not merely an endeavour of economic exploitation or military domination but rather a complex power play aimed at subjugating the natives from all possible directions, not just through physical forces but more so through the invisible yet potent element of knowledge. The book highlights how the British used knowledge as a tool for domination, transforming Indian languages, legal systems and cultural artifacts into objects of colonial control. Cohn elucidates the systematic methods employed by the British colonialists, namely surveys, censuses, and museology, which were used to classify and control Indian society under his own term “investigative modalities”. The author discusses how

colonial knowledge reshaped Indian cultural forms by codifying vernacular languages and reinterpreted Indian texts, marginalising indigenous epistemologies, and establishing a colonial “truth regime.” Chon also explores how colonial policies shapes and redefined cultural identities.

Area of Study:

The geographical focus of this study encompasses the Indo-Myanmar frontier, with particular attention paid to Myanmar’s Chin State and the southern region of Mizoram. The study period extends from the punitive expedition in the southern Lushai Hills through the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90, and concludes in 1935.

Objectives of the Study

1. To trace the Chin community's traditional social system and worldviews.
2. To explore the indigenous Chin art of war and technological knowledge of saltpetre manufacture and the possession of guns.
3. To examine the establishment of colonial surveillance institutions and work such as surveys, mapping, and road construction in this region.
4. To examine the British disarmament/licensing of gun policy implemented in Chin Hills and later in Lushai Hills from a colonial surveillance and information gathering perspective.

Methodology:

In the realm of historical academia, it is conscientiously understood that matters that describe the nature, location, and collection of primary sources and other explanations about secondary sources are perhaps more ritualistic and overtly focused on tertiary matters rather than the core, especially in the context of doctoral research work. By default, all researchers are bound to hunt for these sources to build a historical research narrative of their respective fields. This research utilises military intelligence records, route books, military reports, and correspondence from military intelligence housed in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, along with other online archival sources.

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates history with geography, anthropology, sociology, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, and science and technology studies. It primarily utilises a qualitative methodology by examining colonial archival materials, vernacular sources, and relevant secondary literature. Although oral interviews were conducted during the research process, their contribution to the overall study was minimal. The historical discourse is grounded in a transnational historical approach to comprehend how colonial powers shaped territories beyond the confines of postcolonial nationalist debates. This study specifically focuses on three key aspects of colonial control: surveying, mapping, road construction, and disarmament policies. It also examines visual materials such as maps, sketches, and photographs from intelligence reports and general reports on the operations of the Survey of India. It also seeks to explore the close relationship between knowledge production and imperial control by critically analysing route books, military reports, and maps. These elements constituted an epistemological project that “framed imperial strategies” and “produced the very object of intervention” within this territorial space.

Rather than presenting a simplistic imperial narrative of colonial surveillance, this research adopts a comprehensive methodology to examine the ‘colonial imperialist body’ and its interactions with indigenous communities. Here, the term ‘body’ serves as a metaphor representing the territories, culture, and politics of the Indo-Myanmar frontier space and the communities inhabiting it. This approach facilitates understanding how colonisation processes affect indigenous peoples while simultaneously analysing the colonial administrative apparatus itself.

The primary objective is to investigate the surveillance mechanisms employed by British colonial authorities in this frontier region. While various surveillance strategies exist, this study focuses specifically on two areas for in-depth analysis: land survey and mapping practices and disarmament policies (euphemistically termed “licensing of guns”). This focus enables a deeper understanding of British colonialism beyond mere physical occupation or warfare, exploring the persistence of coloniality even after formal colonial rule has ended. This perspective is particularly relevant when considering the evolution of

surveillance theory from Jeremy Bentham's panopticon concept to Michel Foucault's surveillance theories, biopolitics, and governmentality.

This research employs critical cartography to analyse colonial maps not as neutral geographical representations, but as socially constructed tools reflecting specific ideologies and power structures. This approach reveals how mapping practices implicitly established racial hierarchies by defining indigenous lands as “empty” or “unknown” and characterising native inhabitants as “unruly” people requiring civilisation.

Decolonial theory serves as a framework to critique the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ within cartography and surveillance practices. The methodology involves identifying how indigenous place names were erased and replaced with colonial designations, and how traditional village-naming conventions were gradually altered to align with colonial administrative preferences. Similarly, an analysis of disarmament policies reveals multiple dimensions of colonial control, including the undermining of cultural pride associated with firearms, weakening indigenous resistance capabilities, and implementing firearm licensing as a sophisticated surveillance mechanism that allows colonial authorities to monitor individuals through registration numbers.

Through this systematic methodological approach, this research challenges the concept of impenetrability in colonial knowledge production by demonstrating how indigenous peoples actively contributed to and shaped the colonial understanding of the region despite being portrayed as passive subjects in official narratives. This critical examination reveals the complex power dynamics underlying cartographic practices and disarmament policies on the Indo-Myanmar frontier during British colonial rule. In this study, primary data was collected from three main archival institutions: state archives, church archives, and other native primary sources, such as chronicles and monographs. Relevant secondary sources were also collected and reviewed. In addition, the researcher collected oral sources through open-ended, scheduled interviews. Collected oral sources undergo transcription and are shaped into oral testimony for use as an alternative/supplementary source in writing the history of surveillance and colonialism in the Chin Hills. Data

classification, amalgamation, interpretation, and narration are based on British colonial-established institutions of surveillance and services.

Chapters

Chapter I: Introduction

Besides the literature review, methodology, and objective of the study, this chapter deals with the social structure and Chin's worldview.

Chapter II: Pre-colonial Polity and Warfare

Chin's economy and political relationship with the valley state and subjects, raids, the art of war of the Chin tribe, and traditional knowledge of making gunpowder are sub-themes of this chapter.

Chapter III: Colonial Survey, Mapping and Road Construction.

This chapter highlights the British efforts to make the road to the Chin Hills and how they continuously conducted a series of surveys and mapping of the Chin Hills for political and security reasons. The struggle of surveyors while mapping the Chin Hills is laid out here. How did indigenous people begin interpreting time and space from a Western perspective?

Chapter IV: Disarmament/Licensing of Guns as a Surveillance Tool

This chapter gives an account of the British licensing of guns, implemented first in the Chin Hills, followed by the Lushai Hills, which weakened the Chin chiefs' power. Disarmament/licensing, such as taping and monitoring over the indigenous community, and the headache of the British government in trailing the firearms from Chin Hills to Lushai Hills.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The chapter makes a critical evaluation and analysis of the research findings.

FINDINGS

For a long stretch of time, the Indo-Burma border was thought of as no-man's land, home to a patchwork of ethnic groups. Before the colonial push, harsh mountains, dense jungles, and communities that kept themselves blocked most outsiders, giving rise to many unique indigenous societies. Without British oversight, villagers seldom draw tidy lines between their territories. Instead, they relied on visible markers—ridges, rivers, or streams to shape daily life and keep neighbours from crossing uninvited. The Lai people already have well-formed social and political systems among these groups. Their leadership ran in bloodlines, with the chiefs passing power within a handful of clans, much like descent groups elsewhere. Through this lens, clans split into Bawi and Chia, the first seen as noble and the second as ordinary. The actual rule usually fell to the oldest Bawi line, which still commanded respect. Society then sorted itself into Bawiphun (nobles), Michia (commoners), and Sal (slaves). This clear hierarchy lay at the heart of Lai's identity and guided decisions in village life.

Lai culture sees belief and daily life woven tightly together, so the noble line (Bawi phun) could only rise when God Khua-hrum gave permission. That heavenly approval turned what could have been a rival claim into a kind of birth right townsfolk quickly learned to accept. Aristocratic houses maintain long lists of names that link them to their first ancestor and hold private ceremonies to praise Khua-hrum. Therefore, their rule mixes politics with a sacred duty inside the father-to-father clan system. Anyone wearing the title must meet strict tests - he cannot be under Eih thiam (witchcraft), must avoid Hnam nei (evil eyes), should never trace back to slaves, and stand apart from ordinary blood (Chia hrin). These checks mark 'Bawi phun' out, as the branch Khua-hrum himself picked. Under the old system, the term Ram Uk Bawi describes a higher chief whose sway touched many hamlets through family ties, raids, or marriage deals. Within the Ram Uk Bawi network, friendships twisted and turned each time he proved stronger than allies or rivals. Every settlement chose its own head, yet that head sent tributes and taxes because promised troops and guarding never failed.

When enemies appeared, many outlying villages sought shelter from the nearest strong chief, handing over loyalty for bodyguarding. Falam and Halkha stand out as the two most powerful chiefdoms in the Chin Hills. Naturally, the two rivals met on the battlefield far more often than either cared to be admitted. Their quarrels spread across the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Arakan, Chin Hills, and Lushai Hills, a patchwork of land that later joined under the broad title Falam-Halkha realm. Numerous Lais clans are thought to have settled within this shaky border. To mark their supremacy, leaders from both camps still exacted tributes and taxes from every village within their imagined limits. The flow of offerings then made its way upward, allowing the Falam and Halkha nobles to bend the Sailo chiefs to their will. Life on the frontier, therefore, turned into a never-ending round of skirmish between hill communities. This restless energy was unusual for tribal polities woven from pride and self-protection. Even before British officers appeared, clans in northeastern India prided themselves in a long martial heritage. Cultures everywhere, from Greece to the Andes, have found reasons for picking up weapons across the ages. The Lai groups living in the Lushai and Chin hills often attacked neighbours over land, cattle, or slighted honours. In the early years, their fame travelled far, fuelled by tales of head-hunting trophies gripped tightly in warrior belts.

People in the village respected anyone who could reliably take down an enemy or fierce animal, and they proudly called the experts Mithat Sathat. Long before colonial rule, the Lai clans frequently clashed among themselves. Warfare, brutal as it was, comprised a huge chunk of how one village spoke to another. Every skirmish was tied to basics, such as food, land, and simple bragging rights. The settlement that trained the hardest and fought smartest usually walked away with the spoils and upper hand. These victories allowed them to seize grazing grounds, stock routes, and sometimes, even water sources. With each decisive blow, the power changed hands, turning once-secure borders into shaky lines. During those years, being a good fighter was not just an honour; it was the best insurance a village had against going hungry or disappearing altogether.

In Lai cultural region, village fights sparked a mix of old and new reasons. Long-standing grudges still echoed in the streets, their roots buried deep in family memory. Tales told around evening fires kept those grudges from smouldering. Disputes over land and water piled on top, with every settlement claiming the right to boundaries and use. Money or its lack further twisted the knife. Stronger groups sometimes raided richer neighbours for crops and valuables, hoping to lift their fortunes. These historical, territorial, and economic pressures sparked open wars among Lai village. Locals saw the fighting not as madness but as one of the few answers to hard times. Within that world, taking the head served three clear goals. First, the heads featured in rituals were held when village chiefs were buried. Second, people believed that the captured skulls would serve late chiefs in the next life. Third, displaying such trophies proved a warrior's skill and raised his standing among peers. Thus, head-taking was more than slaughter; it was a woven strand of ceremonies, faith, and the social ladder. By practising it, Lais shaped their own ideas about living, dying, and what lay beyond death.

When trouble loomed, the village chief, elders, and a handful of warriors gathered to choose days for a raid or fight. They listened while the chief laid out plans, named target hamlets, and set rules for men who would go. Rumour had it the Chins picked up gunpowder-making from wandering traders—some even said that the craft came from the Chinese by the Burmans. Each Chin house sat over a pig pen, and the latrine emptied straight down, so the floor stayed thick with dung. Builders fixed tall boards around the pen to block rain, trapping the muck inside until the foetid layers were piled high. While the pigs ate and relieved themselves, heat and humidity slowly turned the droppings into crude nitrate. After three seasons, the pen was emptied, and the dung was scraped into baskets with holes that drained away muddy water, leaving bright red sludge. Cooks skimmed this reddened paste, allowed it to settle, and poured off a clear liquid full of precious crystals. Finally, they bubbled the liquid over slow heat until it was almost dry, scooped out the white grains, and tossed the last thin soup.

Once the brew cooled, the liquid was strained, yielding small glittering nitrate crystals. The powder was blended with charcoal to create simple but effective gunpowder. The Chins' method thus combined age-old know-how with impressive ingenuity. Likely shaped by Chin craft passed through Burman middlemen, their plan leaned heavily to clever waste reuse built into the home itself. Chins built toilets directly over pens, where pigs slept under the main living space, forming an in-house drain. This setup kept things tidy and offered the warm, moist, and salty conditions needed for good nitrate growth. Raised walls stopped rain from washing in, so a thick dung mat piled up over the months. After three years of careful upkeep, the mix had changed into a natural saltpetre, the lifeblood of the gunpowder. From there, the Chins ran a neat chain of drainage, oxidation, filtering, and final crystallisation to collect usable crystals. By blending these white shards with powdered charcoal, they turned kitchen scrap into explosive goods, ready for their own muskets, or trade in wider markets.

The Traditional warfare practice was quite barbaric, and the various forms of tribal warfare were as follows:

Ralpi was a type of tribal warfare between members of the same clan from different areas. They agreed to not use secret ambushes. The goal was to capture rivals as enslaved people, but they could be freed if the ransom was paid. Captives were often married in the captor's village, and the ransom money went to the captors who set the amount. The chiefs and their families were safe from capture because of the agreements between the clans.

Rawlral was a dangerous warfare style with surprise attacks such as guerrilla warfare. Warriors attacked the enemy villages when they did not expect them. They ambushed unprepared households, attacked villagers at night, and quickly moved to other places. Sometimes, they hid in the jungle to ambush enemies, attacking during tough times such as river crossings or natural disasters. Weapons included stone traps, firearms, spears, bamboo spikes, pellet bows, bows, arrows, and dao. Traps were the most harmful. They used homemade gunpowder that burned slowly but strongly with metal shots fired from the flintlock muskets.

Another tactic was for a man or group to kill and take the heads of the enemies from a village. A brave warrior may hide and attack anyone who comes nearby. Depending on the presence of the enemy, they could stay hidden for up to a week. The goal was to take the enemy's head for personal fame and recognition. In Lais, wars were only fought for good reasons, and no one was killed without a war declaration unless they were already in war with the larger community.

The study of warfare and raids among Lai communities uncovers a multifaceted social, cultural, and political institution that transcends mere acts of violence. Conflicts between villages were deeply embedded in the sociopolitical structure of Lai society, playing numerous roles that significantly influenced community growth and cultural identity. In the Lai society, warfare is a complex system of power dynamics and resource management. The competitive environment fostered by martial confrontations establishes community hierarchies, facilitates resource redistribution, and delineates territorial limits. This analysis reveals not random acts of violence, but a deliberate strategy aimed at community survival and progress within challenging environmental and social settings.

The root causes of warfare, such as inherited blood feuds, territorial disputes, and economic incentives, highlight the rational basis of this practice. Communities have made strategic decisions about when and how to conduct raids, utilising advanced intelligence gathering, tactical planning, and environmental considerations to enhance their chances of success. This strategic aspect emphasises that Lai warfare was not merely reactive but was intentional and purposeful.

A particularly important aspect was the cultural dimension of warfare, as seen in practices such as head hunting. The collection of enemy heads met ceremonial needs, reflected spiritual beliefs about the afterlife, and showcased martial skills. This practice wove warfare into the broader cosmological framework of the Lai people, linking military actions to their views on life, death, and social status. Meticulously organised ceremonies following successful raids further integrated warfare into the community's ritual life.

Defensive innovations such as strategically placing villages on elevated ground and developing sophisticated stockade systems demonstrate the technological adaptations that arose in response to ongoing conflicts. The various methods of warfare - *Ralpi* (combat war), *Rawlral* (guerrilla warfare), and *Rammu* (individual head-hunting expeditions)—highlight the tactical sophistication and situational flexibility that characterise Lai martial practices.

British colonial expansion in the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills during 1888-1945 was predominantly through military operations and minor punitive expeditions. However, as the prime mover of the discussion was surveying, mapping, and public work construction, despite efforts to downplay military expedition activities, it remained prominent as surveys conducted until 1900 were closely intertwined with military operations. During these 57 years of colonialism in India, Myanmar, and the Bangladesh frontier, the colonial authority, with rigorous and systematic precision, transformed the ‘unknown’ territory, from the colonial lens perspective, into a well-defined governed space, which was further legitimised by cartographic and textual representations.

The Chin-Lushai Hills’ periodisation of cartographic development provides a framework for understanding the development of British spatial authority. Military-led surveys prioritising tactical intelligence over accuracy characterised the first phase (1890–1900). Basic mapping efforts, such as creating route maps and sketch plans to support military movements and identify significant outposts, were expeditions, such as the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889–1890 and punitive measures against the Lai and Sizang tribes. Early surveys, which were often conducted under unfavourable circumstances, used techniques such as plane-table sketches and compass traverses to demonstrate the necessity of enforcing the frontier and putting down rebellious tribes. The region’s instability and the necessity of geographical knowledge for effective military operations were brought to light by the deadly ambush of Lieutenant J. F. Steward in 1888. Despite their limitations, these efforts have provided baseline data on topography, communities, and commercial routes, laying the groundwork for a more thorough mapping in the future.

Driven by the establishment of British administrative power, the second phase (1900–1927) marked a shift to systematic topographic surveys and boundary delineations. Surveys became more precise as the area changed from a disputed frontier to an administered territory, focusing on administrative goals such as jurisdictional delineation, resource extraction, and tax generation. Pertab Singh and H.P.D. demonstrated this transition. Morton's 1907–1908 boundary survey of the Lushai Hills, Chin Hills, and Arakan Hill Tracts used natural and artificial markers to establish the administrative boundaries. The increased involvement of Indian surveyors, such as the Bansi Ram, in the 1921–1922 surveys highlighted the professionalisation of the colonial survey apparatus and the growing reliance on local expertise. Triangulation techniques were standardised during this period by integrating local control sites into the Great Trigonometrical Survey framework, allowing for consistent mapping across administrative divisions, by classifying vegetation and identifying restricted forests, and specialised forest surveys, such as those conducted by the No. 20 Party in 1908–1909 supported colonial economic objectives while frequently undermining indigenous land rights.

With its advanced geodetic integration and multi-scale surveys, the third phase (1928–1936) embodied the pinnacle of colonial cartographic achievement in the area. Beginning in 1914–1915 and improved in 1928–1929, the Chittagong Principal Triangulation Series created a high-precision geodetic framework that connected the hill regions to the vast imperial spatial system. Surveyors like S.C. Chatterjee, who worked in the Lushai Hills between 1929 and 1930, combined disparate survey grids to create a unified spatial reference system that improved military and administrative planning. The scientific rigour of these activities was demonstrated using advanced instruments, such as 5-inch theodolites and invar tapes, as well as rigorous error correction procedures. From regional strategic planning to careful local administration, multi-scale mapping, which ranges from quarter-inch to four-inch scales, has met various needs. Operations demonstrated this meticulous approach during 1934–1935. Twelve parties surveyed thousands of square miles in the Chin and Lushai Hills, documenting administrative centres, road layouts, and resource viability. Indigenous biological knowledge is crucial for navigating the

area's dense bamboo forests and difficult terrain, as noted in the 1936 General Report. However, it was constantly filtered through colonial paradigms to achieve imperial goals.

Owing to the demands of World War II and Burma's administrative separation from British India, there were fewer new survey efforts during the final phase (1937–1947). Military operations during the Burma Campaign relied heavily on maps made in earlier decades, underscoring the colonial mapping endeavour's enduring strategic importance. This accumulated spatial knowledge made regular administration and military logistics possible, demonstrating the long-lasting impact of earlier surveying efforts.

These cartographic endeavours have resulted in several achievements. Significant gaps in British geographic knowledge were filled by mapping about 9,000 square miles during the Chin-Lushai Expedition and subsequent surveys, which turned “unknown” regions into documented, manageable areas. Accurate mapping and infrastructure development were made possible by establishing triangulation networks such as those that connected Fort White, Falam, and Haka. Verifying hydrographic features, such as the source of the Kolodyne River during the Thau Tlang expedition, resolved long-standing uncertainties and facilitated logistics. These surveys served symbolic purposes in addition to their practical ones, upholding British rule by enforcing penalties and tributes on native tribes and retrieving remains (such as Lieutenant Steward's in 1888). The resulting maps solidified the colonial power within the physical and social structure of the area by facilitating administrative supervision, resource extraction, military positioning, and infrastructure development.

The mapping project in the Chin-Lushai Hills demonstrates the Foucauldian idea that power comprises of knowledge. Geographic information makes borders understandable and controllable by promoting military dominance, bureaucratic governance, and logistical cooperation. A “scientific-military complex” that supported colonial development is highlighted by blending the scientific and military domains, as evidenced by surveyors' dual roles as scientists and pacification agents.

The colonial nature of these initiatives is further highlighted by the suppression of indigenous agencies through the marginalisation of local spatial knowledge and the implementation of uniform cartographic systems. Knowledge generation was impacted by environmental factors such as tropical diseases and dense vegetation, underscoring the fact that colonial mapping required negotiations with both human communities and nature.

The lasting impacts of these cartographic endeavours extend beyond the colonial era. The current territorial arrangements of Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar are based on topographical data, boundary delineations, and triangulation networks developed between 1890 and 1947. Administrative divisions in the colonial era that often separated historically cohesive ethnic areas became postcolonial national borders that shaped the region's geopolitical structure. The maps produced during this period continue to influence how people view land use, resource distribution, and infrastructure development. However, they still carry scars of colonial imposition, which destroy other spatial practices and cemented divisions that persist in modern territorial disputes.

In conclusion, the military and cartographic endeavours in the Chin-Lushai Hills between 1890 and 1947 serve as examples of how authority and science worked together to build an empire by mapping the uncharted British surveyors and administrators transformed a rebellious frontier into a documented, controllable area, leaving an imperial imprint on the region's physical landscape and social organisation. This history highlights the profound and enduring consequences of colonial knowledge production, in which the exercise of power was inextricably linked to the mapping process. To provide a more nuanced understanding of this crucial period in the history of the Chin-Lushai Hills, future research may examine indigenous perspectives on these changes and how local communities adapted to and resisted the imposition of colonial cartography.

Colonial expeditions were encountered and resisted on various occasions as the dwellers were not satisfied with being forcefully overrun in their territory and having their existing traditional structures and values transformed. However, in the

aftermath, whoever the villages or groups were involved in the attack or against the British, they confiscated the weapons. They imposed punitive measures by burning crops and houses and leaving them empty-handed. This effectively quelled the rebellion and reinforced colonial authority in the region.

The British colonial government used a strategic plan to snatch away weapons in the Chin-Lushai Hills from 1895 to 1896. This was a part of the colonial effort to control the Indo-Burma frontier. They did this by going to each village with the force to measure the number of guns to be surrendered. Therefore, colonial officers laid out extensive terms and conditions for the respective villages to surrender their valuable firearms. As a result, the British slowly gained control over the area and avoided retaliation from local chiefs. Despite the fighting, the British used psychological tricks and pressure. They asked for more weapons than the villagers said they had and threatened them with “consequences” if they did not comply. This method worked well, and they managed to disarm large tribal groups such as Tlaisuns, Zahau, and Hualngo without fighting. They also moved peacefully into southern villages. The disarmament was well coordinated among the different officers. Lieutenant Geoghegan worked on Thlantlang villages, Tuck collected weapons near the Lushai border, and Thurston focused on Hakha. This teamwork prevented armed groups from moving around to avoid disarmament weapons across administrative boundaries.

The colonial authorities implemented a quantitative assessment to evaluate disarmament initiatives by systematically collecting surrendered weapons. By April 1895, they had confiscated 895 firearms from 35 independent villages, four Halkha settlements, and the Zokhua tribes. During a 20-day operation led by Lieutenant Geoghegan, British forces seized 490 firearms, including 224 from Thlantlang and 84 from the Western Halkha. Over the course of a year, the administration recorded the seizure of 2,433 firearms, resulting in 6,940 weapons confiscated since the commencement of the occupation.

Regional disparities in the success of disarmament efforts were evident. Complete disarmament was accomplished in specific areas such as the Halkha and

Thlantlang tribal regions. By April 1896, the administration had issued licences for 278 firearms in the South Lushai Hills, predominantly to tribal leaders. The text offers quantitative data on disarmament initiatives in colonial territories.

These records provide insight into the prevalence of firearms in the region prior to disarmament and the administration's objectives for regulated ownership. At the 1896 Chin-Lushai conference in Lunglei, specific target ratios for licenced firearms were established; In the Chin Hills, the objective was to have one gun for every ten houses, equating to ten guns per village. In South Lushai Hills, the target was one gun for every 15 houses, with a maximum of 25 guns per village. Despite extensive confiscation efforts, colonial officials estimated that approximately 600 unlicensed guns had remained in circulation in the South Lushai Hills by 1896. With 5,500 households distributed across 60 villages in the South Lushai Hills, officials calculated that there were approximately 900 firearms in total in the region, with only one-third being properly licenced.

The licencing system transformed guns from symbols of traditional authority and martial skills to conditional privileges granted by colonial powers. This transformation signified not only physical disarmament but also a profound psychological and cultural shift that weakened indigenous power structures while embedding British administrative control into daily life. The meticulously planned licencing system served as a constant reminder of British sovereignty, while also creating administrative dependencies that supported broader colonial governance objectives.

Even after successful disarmament, colonial administrators continued to express security concerns, as officials warned against complacency due to the risks of future arm acquisition, particularly in Manipur and Lushai Hills. Despite the implementation of gun licencing regulations and penalty systems, apprehensions regarding potential arm-trafficking persisted. Notably, by 1895-96, the Chief Commissioner of Burma endorsed the perspective that “no extensive military operations should be again required in the district”, reflecting confidence in the efficacy of the disarmament efforts.

The British disarmament policy in the Chin-Lushai Hills profoundly affected colonial expansion and indigenous resistance. This initiative altered the power dynamics between colonial authorities and local communities by confiscating firearms, implementing licencing systems, and adopting strategic policies that reshaped the region's social and political landscape. For Chin, firearms symbolised status, power, and freedom, which led to strong resistance against disarmament efforts. The British transitioned from military force to diplomatic methods, creating voluntary compliance while simultaneously expanding its control.

Indigenous responses ranged from cooperation to resistance, demonstrating the complexity of colonisation. Punitive raids and village destruction revealed the force behind colonial “peacekeeping.” The firearm licencing system established enduring rules for gun ownership, shaping state-society relations.

The implementation of gun licencing in the Chin-Lushai area represented an advanced colonial control strategy that extended beyond mere disarmament. Following the substantial disarmament initiative of 1895, which brought most Chin regions under British dominion, the 1896 Lunglei conference established a comprehensive regulatory framework that balanced security requirements with practical governance. British officials recognised that complete disarmament was neither feasible nor advantageous; instead, the tightly regulated presence of firearms through licencing achieved several strategic objectives.

Despite British disarmament policies, Chin communities persistently rearranged through strategic cross-border networks with the Lushai and Manipur territories, exploiting administrative inconsistencies and jurisdictional gaps. Intelligence from local chiefs identified specific border villages as key distribution points for illicit firearms, thus revealing the limitations of colonial control mechanisms across these frontier zones. In response to this challenge, British authorities launched sophisticated coordinated operations spanning 1899-1900 that specifically targeted these porous border regions, resulting in significant weapons recovery: 54 firearms from Sailianpuia villages, 17 from Kairuma and Kapheia, 156 from Manipur border communities, and an additional 146 from administrative hubs

in Aizawl and Lunglei. This demonstrates both the scale of indigenous resistance to disarmament policies and the colonial government's determination to assert comprehensive control over arms circulation throughout the interconnected Chin-Lushai-Manipur borderlands.

The British colonial disarmament policy in the Chin-Lushai Hills shows how imperial powers utilised technological control to establish and maintain dominance. By systematically removing physical means of resistance while implementing regulatory structures, colonial authorities reconfigured power relationships and created new forms of subjection. This case study illustrates how colonial regimes deployed technological control as a cornerstone of imperial governance, with legacies that continued to shape state-society relations long after the formal end of colonial rule. The disarmament policy of the British colonial administration in the Chin-Lushai Hills represents a pivotal and comprehensive chapter in the history of colonial expansion and indigenous resistance in Southeast Asia. This campaign went far beyond mere pacification, fundamentally altering the power dynamics between the colonial authorities and local communities. The systematic confiscation of firearms, implementation of rigid licencing systems, and strategic policies served multiple objectives that reshaped the region's social, political, and cultural landscapes.

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