CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION
PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

Lushai Hills forms the tongue-shaped nily region in eastern India lying between 21°50 and 24°30 North and 90°20 and 93°20 East. It is bounded on the north by Cachar and Manipur state, and on the east and south by the Chin Hills (Burma) and on the west by Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and Tripura state. It has a boundary of 158 miles with Bangladesh and 270 miles with Burma covering an area of 8,134 square miles or 21,090 square kilometres. Its population has been estimated at 3,32,390 in 1971 census.

The hills of Mizoram fall in the belt which includes the Naga, Mizo and Manipur hills. The Himalayas have made an acute bend at the North eastern corner of Assam and extends further south towards the Arakans. The Patkai, the Naga hills and Lushai hills are important ranges of the Himalayas with high peaks here and there. The hills presented a wide uninterrupted view of low parallel ranges. It run from north to south tending to be higher in the middle of the territory. The average height is about 3000 feet; some peaks are much higher than 3000 feet. The highest peak is the blue mountain with a height of 2,165 metres or 7100 feet in the southern part of the country. Thick forests of trees and bamboos

1. In 1954 by an Act of Parliament the name of the district was changed from Lushai Hills to Mizo hills district. Till January 1972 it continued to be a part of Assam, when it was upgraded to Union Territory with the names of "Mizoram" or the Land of the mizos.
cover the hills and mountains from the high ridges to
the river banks, except in those places where they have
been cleared for cultivation. Much of the country is
not only uninhabited but impossible to inhabit or cultivate.

There are large number of rivers in Lushai hills.
The most important of these rivers are Tlong (Whaleswari),
the Sonai (Tuirial), and the Tuivol which drain the
northern portion of the territory and finally fall into
the Barak river in Cachar district of Assam. It is the
most important tributary of the Tlong. It runs parallel
for miles together before it joins the Tlong a few miles
near Bairabi. The southern hills are drained by the
Kolodyne (Chhimtuipui) on the east, with its tributaries
the Mat, Tuichong, Tiao and Tuipui; while the Karnaphuli
(Khawthlangtuipui), with its tributaries the Tuichong,
Kao, Deh, Phairang and Tuipuilian forms the western
drainage system. Very few of these rivers are navigable.
During the rainy season they are liable to rise as much
as forty feet, and their overflow often cause destruction
in the plains of Cachar.

The few plains in these hills are believed to have
been formed in the bed of silted lakes. They are
surrounded by hills and are covered with a thick layer
of rich alluvial soil. Champhai, the largest of these
plains, has a length of seven miles and is nearly three
miles across at the widest part. Vanlaiphai is about
six miles long and form quarter to half mile in breadth.
The remaining plains are comparatively narrower and
smaller. There are few level stretches of alluvium
in the valley bottom.

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2. Allen, B.C., Gazetteer of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills
   Garo Lushai Hills, Reprinted 1980, Delhi, part 11, p.4.
Climate - Flora and Fauna

The valleys in the hills are unhealthy. During the rains the climate, even on the lower hills, is moist and enervating. In the higher ridges it is fairly cool and pleasant even at the hottest seasons of the year. Violent storms usually sweep over the hills in March and April. At Aijal the average rainfall is 80 inches in the year; at Lungleh it is no less than 131 inches. The rivers rise after heavy rain with great rapidity owing to the steepness of the hill sides and the narrowness of the valleys.

Naturally, under such tropical climate the hills are clothed for the most part with dense evergreen forest of bamboos and different kinds of trees, plants, herbs, essential for timber and medical purposes. The vegetation is abundant, and almost all tropical plants are found. These forest areas offered sanctuary to wild animals, viz. elephants, the two horned rhinoceros, tigers, leopards, bears and various kinds of deer. Bears are of two variations, the Hymalayan black bear and the Malav bear. Jungle fowl, several kinds of pheasants and many varieties of birds are also seen in these hills.

Occupation of the people: (a) Jhumming

Owing to scarcity of plains the Lushais resorted to 'jhumming'. Normally a suitable plot on the elevated slope of the ridges was selected; the undergrowth was cut and the smaller trees felled, the large forest trees being left out, on account of dearth of labour to cut them down. A land covered with bamboos was considered most suitable and the bamboo's ash was a good fertilizer. When all were cut, it was left to dry in the sun, and

3-6. Ibid., pp.2-5.
then burnt in March or April. After burning, the larger logs and pieces of woods were collected and made a fence against the raids of wild animals. When rain set in, they began to sow a mixture of the seeds of rice, cotton, maize, and cucumber. This practice of cultivation which had been the backbone of the Lushai economy, even to this day, made the Lushais a migrating tribe. They shifted from one village site to another at regular intervals. They had very little property and what they had were simple to replace. They could easily carry on back what they had without the help of a furniture van.

(b) **Hunting**

The Lushais were in possession of flintlock guns mostly old two-muskets and imported from Burmah and Chittagong since the second decades of the nineteenth century. They were fond of shooting and large hunting parties frequently made expeditions into the uninhabited parts in search of elephants, wild mithan or bisan, deer, tiger etc. Hunting was not merely a Lushai past time but it has a place in the economy of the people. Because of scarcity of meat supply, hunting parties were occasionally arranged to procure meat. The Lushais ate almost anything.

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9. Shakespear, J., The Lushai Kuki Clans, Reprint 1975, Aijal, Part I, p.14. Spears and Daae were the other weapons in use. Formerly oblong shields of bisan-hide eighteen inches wide and about two feet long were carried. Bows and arrows were also used.
that they could get except rhinoceros and the hoolux monkey. In the Lushai economy the elephant tusks were the medium of exchanges; the bones and the skins were valuable articles of commerce. They had a very good market in the neighbouring plains.

(c) Trade : Internal and External

The Lushais were self-sufficient. So low was the standard of living, they could procure their requirements by jhumming and hunting. The modern practice of selling and buying was unknown to them. However they bartered goods from time immemorial. Bepari bazar in the Sylhet border and Kasalong in the Chittagong border were well-known trade marts to the Lushais. They welcomed the traders as friends from whom they used to get the supplies of sulphur, gun and flint glass. Enterprising tradesman who were familiar with the topography of the hills and language rendered valuable services in bringing the British in closer ties with the Lushais. The establishment of trade marts at different places was encouraged by Captain Lewin, hitherto Political Officer in charge of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The traders from Cachar and Chittagong were guaranteed the security of their life and property by the Lushai chiefs who collected rent.

10. Allen, B.C., Gazetteer of the Lushai Hills etc, Part III, Reprint 1980, Delhi, p.34.
11. BJP., 12 April, 1855, No.95; Verner, Superintendent of Cachar to the Secretary, government of Bengal.
preferably in kind, from the traders. The chiefs were happy since those marts were a source of permanent income to them. Hunter writes:

Three marts have been established on the southern frontier of Tipai Mukh at the confluence of Barak and Tuipui rivers, Lushai Hat on the Sonai, and Jhalmacherra on the Dhaleswari. It is estimated that salt, iron, brass, and copper utensils, tobacco etc., to the value of Rs.484,025 (£48,402) have been sold by the Bengalee traders at these marts since their establishments, exchange for rubber, ivory, etc.14

With the increase in number of marts, the Lushais became dependent more and more on the produce of the plains for their necessaries of life. They got accustomed to the peaceful trade which wrought a tremendous change in political and social outlook. Barter gradually died out and coins came into circulation. In 1902-3 trade in Aijal was chiefly in the hands of Hindu shopkeepers from Sylhet, Arrah and elsewhere. There were seventeen shops at Aijal and sixteen at Lungleh and Demagiri which sold goods to the value of Rs.53,375 or about Rs.300 per shop per month.15 Within a few years there had been a marked improvement in trade owing to the extensive use of imported and manufactured articles by the Lushais. Weekly bazars have been started both at Aijal and Lungleh which were well attended by Lushais even from distant villages. A noticeable features of the year 1921-2 had been a great increase in the number of Lushai shops. As a result volume and variety of trade increased

15. AS., Home B, 1903, August, Nos. 351-79; Administration Report for the year 1902-3.
which included cotton and woollen yarns, brass, enamel, aluminium, utensils, iron pans, daos, tobacco, cigarettes, matches, soaps, clothes, umbrella, piece goods, shoes, other fancy goods and food stuffs. Exports comprised of bee-wax, cotton, chillies, ginger, oranges and forest product.\(^{16}\)

**Lushai Raids: Causes**

Lushais considered raids as wars and the prestige and position of the chiefs were measured according to the number of successful raids performed. Death during fighting was honourable. Formerly the Lushais were good archers and skilled lancers; a dah (dao) and a shield was the constant companion of a Lushai fighter. The Lushais got accustomed to the use of artillery since the First Anglo-Burmese war (1824-6). Gun and gunpowder became a passion to the chiefs. They indulged in raiding the neighbouring territories for their lust of wealth and procurement of slaves or captives. These slaves were generally the conquered tribes or captives from the plains for indispensable for their jhumming and domestic works. Scarcity of land and food not unoften made the Lushais to raid the enemy's villages and carry off as many captives and loots as possible. Besides, the extension of tea gardens by the English encroached upon the forest of the Lushai Hills which they considered as a check upon their natural right of hunting. As a result the Lushais resorted to raids and thereby came in direct clash with the garden authorities.\(^{17}\) The Lushais' tactics was very much different from that of the Chins who ambushed the path, in the enemy's country and killed as many as possible without discrimination of age or sex. The Lushais

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17. BJP., 12 April, 1855, No.95.
considered this unsporting and extremely undignified. Their method was surprise attack on enemy's camp and this was usually conducted just before dawn. If successful, as many as captives as could be caught were collected with as much loot as they could carry. In addition to women and children a few youngmen were occasionally carried off to be killed during the festivities which were held in honour of the successful raids. 18

Lushai-Kuki Tribes

The Lushais (now Mizos) were hitherto called 'Kukis' by the people of Tripura and Surma Valley. In the official record too the term 'Kuki' had assumed a fairly definite meaning. We understand by it certain closely allied clans with well-marked characteristics belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock. It is loosely applied on the Chittagong border (Bangladesh) to most of the inhabitants of the interior hills beyond the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In Cachar it generally means some family of the 'Thado' or 'Khawtlang' clan locally distinguished as new and old 'Kukis'. Since 1871 the term 'Kuki' came to disuse in this hills. Even the term 'Lushai' had been superceded by the generic term 'Mizo' since 1954. All these clans are called "Chins" in the Chin Hills (Burma) 19.

The term Lushai is the incorrect transliteration of the word 'Lushai', the name of a clan who drove out the Kukis to Cachar in the eighteenth century. Coming from the Chin Hills near Falam,

The Lushais entered into the Lushai hills in the eighteenth century ejecting the earlier tribesmen inhabiting the hills. The Lushais, however, did not drive away all the clans they came into contact with, many of them they absorbed. In a wider sense all these wars known as "Lushais". But the general population of the Lushai hills called themselves as the "Mizos", the children of the hills which their dialect 'Lushai' or 'Dullen' means. All these Kukies, Lushais and Chins, in short, the Mizos resemble each other closely in appearance which is invariably of the Mongolian type.

Chief: Clannish rivalries

The Lushai chiefs all claim descent from a certain Thangur who belonged to the Lushai tribes and lived in the earlier part of the eighteenth century at Tlangkua, north of Falam (Chin Hills in Burma). From him sprung six lines of Lushai chiefs namely, Rokhum, Zadeng, Thangluah, Palian, Kivung and Sailo. Want of jhuming land and aggressions of the eastern clans (Chins) compelled the Thangur chiefs to move westward; they reduced to submission the Kukies of Lushai Hills and became the master of the land curving a slice of the country for each clan. The Syloos (Sailos), the great grandson of Thangur's, were the most important of all the Lushai clans. Lalul (Lallula), the Syloo, established his firm control over the entire north and


and southern Lushai Hills by 1840. He established a dynasty popularly called the Lalul dynasty which had been ruling the Lushai Hills till its annexation. Lalula had four sons Laling Khoom (Lallianvunga), Lalsavung (Lalsavunga), Bhuta (Vuta) and Mangper (Mangpawrha). The territory in between Manipur and Burma Bhuta's descendants became very powerful chiefs and the English described them as the chiefs of Eastern Lushai Clan. The very famous son of Mangper was Sukpilal (Suakpuilala), an illustrious figure in the Anglo-Lushai relationship. Descendants of Mangper were known as the western Lushais because of the geographical location. Howloms, the masters of a considerable part of the South Lushai Hills whom the English subjugated with great difficulty were a cognate branch of the Syloos.22

In the early decade of the nineteenth century Mangper moved his villages up to the Pakwa, north of Chuttarchurra, by driving out the Poitoos while Lallingvooom occupied the country between the Bellessur and the Tipai, Lalsavong got the hills east of the Tipai and Bhuta got the lands to the south of Lallingvooom. Later Sukpilal and his sons extended their villages from the Gootur to the Tipai. Lalpung (Lalphunya) and Vanolel (VanhnuaiMana), sons of Lalsavong, became great chiefs; Poiboi (Pawibawia), the son of the former, moved his village to south of Tipai Mukh. The sons of Vanolel were Leukom (Liankhuma), Deonts (Dothiauva), and Lalbearah (Lalbura) who succeeded to his father's village.23

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22. BJP., August 1872, No.220. Edgar's Memorandum to the Chief Commissioner, Dacca. 3 April 1872.
23. Mackenzie,A., North East Frontier of Bengal, Reprinted 1979, Delhi, Appendix E, pp.425-0.
It was these Lushai clan who had ejected the 'Old Kukies' who were the original inhabitants of the Lushai Hills towards the early part of the eighteenth century, and the 'New Kukies' about fifty years later. These Kukies settled themselves on the lower ridges of the Lushai Hills bordering Cachar and Manipur.

It may, however, be pointed out that there had been constant intermixing between the Kukies and the Lushai clan, and therefore they differed in no respect. There were many cases that people from Lushai villages moved and settled in villages belonging to a Thado chief in Cachar or a Poitoo chief in Sylhet or Tipperah while people from the above villages joined the Lushai chiefs. However, among the said chiefs there used to be intrigues against one another which often resulted in raids in the British frontier areas and sometimes in attacks made by one clan upon another.

Lalroo (Lalrihua) a Poitoo chief, being hard pressed by Mongper asked for the help of two Manipur Rajputras, Ram Sing and Tribhugbangi. Subsequently the two chiefs, under the guidance of the Poitoos, surprised Mangper's village. He was taken prisoner but was, however, released on his promising not to attack any of the Poitoo or Manipuri villages near the frontier. Later Lalchakla, son of Lalroo, entered into an alliance with Mangper and made a raid on Manipur village of Kochabarri in May 1844. Lalchokla said that he made this raid in revenge for injuries done to his father by Tribhuhubhanjit. This called for Captain Blackwood's expedition in the same year. Lalchokla was arrested and transported for life. His son Lurshailon, who was said to have taken an oath to avenge the cause of his father, patched up in 1862 a proposal with
Sukpial, Runghoom and Lal Hoolien to make raid on Sylhet. Accordingly the Adampoor massacre was carried out in the same year. In the thirties of the eighteenth century a quarrel broke out between the Zadeng and Mongper, then the most powerful Sailo chief, over the question of supremacy and land. The feud continued after the latter's death. Finally, Shuta, his brother, destroyed the power of the Zadeng and drove them away southwards.

Ultimately the Sailos, descended from Sailova have successfully crushed all their rivals and hold undisputed sway over representatives of all clans in the Lushai Hills. There were also frequent wars even among the various branches of the Sailo family. The causes were "almost invariably being a dispute as to land". In about 1856, there was fighting between the descendents of Lalul in the North and Cherra's family in the South over the question of the Piler Hill. This war came to be known as "the war of the North and South", and ended in a victory for the former. This was followed by the war between the Eastern and Western Lushais.

Conditions on the eve of British contact

On the eve of British contact with the Lushais, almost the whole of the present Mizoram was under the supremacy of Syloo chiefs, descendants of Sailoos. The entire tract, eastern, western and northern Lushai Hills, was under the sway of Lalul's descendents, who had established himself over north and southern Lushai Hills by 1840. Howlong, a cognate branch of

26. Ibid., pp.7-8.
the Sailos were the masters of a considerable part of the South Lushai Hills. Almost every winter when the Lushais were free from jhuming work, they committed daring raids upon the Kuki settlers at Cachar and Manipur killing many and carrying off many more as captives.

In 1832 Cachar was incorporated into British territory and administered by a Superintendent. For the security of Cachar-Manipur frontiers from the Lushai incursions the Superintendent set up two Manipuri Princes, Ram Rana Singh and Trihonjit Singh. The latter in early forties attacked and killed the Pytoo chief, Laroo. To avenge it his son and successor Lalchukla invaded a Manipuri village in 1844, and as already mentioned a punitive expedition was sent against the aggressor who was tried and transported for life. The Lushais considered it to be a breach of faith and their future relationship with the English became very much strained. This initial mistake created much misunderstanding; any amount of conciliation in future failed to restore the confidence of the people of the hills who considered the local authorities as their arch enemies.