CHAPTER I

THE KUKI-CHINS: HISTORY AND THE IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLE
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The Kuki-Chins are represented by a great number of peoples settling widespread on the boarder terrain of the international boundary between Myanmar on the east, and India and Bangladesh on the west. To be precise, they are found in their scattered abodes in the Kale-Kabo, Chindwin and Myittha valleys, the Chin Hills State and the Rakhine (Arakan) State on the Myanmar side; Manipur, Mizoram, Lower Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland on the Indian side; and Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet district of Bangladesh, thus covering the extent of the tract of land lying between 18° N and 25° 30' N latitudes, and 90° 30' E and 95° E longitudes. Davis, W. and Barbara G. Frazer, (2005:13) estimate their total population to be roughly between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000.

1.1 Physical Appearance

As regards the physical identity of the people one may turn to J. Shakespear's reproduction (1912:1-2) of Lt. R. Stewart’s description of the appearance and physical characteristics of the people that reads as: "The Kukis are a short, sturdy race of man with a goodly development of muscles. Their legs are, generally speaking, short in comparisons with the length of bodies, and their arms long. The face is nearly as broad as it is long and is generally round or square, the
chick bone high, broad and prominent, eyes small and almond-shaped, the nose short and flat, with wide nostrils. The women appear more squat than the man even, but strong and lust.”

Shakespeare adds that the colour of the skin varies between dark yellow-brown, dark olive, copper colored and yellow olive. Beards and whiskers are almost unknown. This description of the physical appearance and characteristics may fittingly apply to the Old Kukis scattered here and there on the Indian side and some of their ethnic compatriots on Myanmar side, but not to the whole race. One can see the great variations of their physical traits from the description of the other members of their stock living on the Myanmar side, furnished by B.S Carey and H. N Tuck (1932, reprint 1976:165-166): “Physically the Chin is a fine man; taller and stouter than his neighbours in the plains on both the north and east, and although he falls short of the built of the Pathan, his measurements compare more than favourably with those of the Gurkha. The measurements of the individual Chins are so uneven that it is hard to strike an average, but should the nature of Chin in course of time becomes amenable to discipline, a recruiting officer would have no difficulty in enlisting men averaging 5 feet 6 inches in height with chest measurement of 35 inches and calf measurement of 15 inches. It is no uncommon occurrence to find men 5 feet 10 inches and 5 feet 11 inches in height with chest measurement of 39 inches with a calf measurement of the abnormal size of 16 inches.
“Individual tall men are found in the Kuki villages immediately south of Manipur and among the Suktes, but the finest built men in the hills are the Siyins, Hakas, and independent southerners.

“The Siyins, though small in structure, are splendidly limbed and are the most evenly built tribe in the hills, though the Hakas and independent southerners are as a whole taller and produce the finest individual men. The late Lyenrwa of Kotarr and Lalwe of Klangklang are perfectly proportioned giants with a magnificent development of muscle.

“The worst built and puniest men in the hills are found amongst the Tashons, who are as a whole distinctly inferior to the other tribes in physique and in carrying capacity. There is a saying in the north ‘one Siyin is equal to three Tashons, but then there are over 15 Tashons to every Siyin.’ It must have been observed that the whole of the descriptions on the physical features of this group of people only point to the internal physiognomic diversity among the members of this group.

1.2 Linguistic Background

G.A. Grierson (1904:3) classifies the Kuki-Chin languages as belonging to the Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. These languages are thus placed much more closely with Burmese than with Tibetan. Kuki-Chin languages are closely connected with all the surrounding languages of the Tibeto-Burman family,

Now in the light of recent findings of linguistics of the Sino-Tibetan languages Meitei language also may be excluded from Grierson’s list of Kuki-Chin languages. Graham Thungood’s observations (2003:14) may be quoted here: “...The language has some lexical similarities to Kuki and to Tangkhul, but interpretation of these similarities is difficult, given the long-term contact between these groups. Like Karbi, the place of Meitei within Tibeto-Burman sub-grouping remains to be determined, in part because the picture has been clouded by long-term contact.”
1. 3. Internal Tribal Groupings

The Kukis of the Indian states where they are dispersed and of Bangladesh, as well as the Mizos of the Mizoram, fanned out from their stem in the Chin Hills State and its adjoining areas of Myanmar. It is, ergo, felt necessary to make a survey of the variously identified tribes of the broad areas of Chin Hills.

Carey and Tuck (ibid: 3) report that the Northern Chins call themselves Yo; the Tashons, Hakas and more southern tribes Lais; and the Chins of the Lower Burma give their name Shu. Yo is Zou. The Yos of the Northern Chin Hills comprise two major tribes: Sokte (Sukte) and Siyin or Siyang. It appears that the term yo is used as a generic name of all the Northern Chins as well as the name of all those who were left, after the separate tribal identifications of the Suktes, Siyins, Thadous, Nwites (Guites) etc, out of the general Yo population. Hence, yo as the name of a distinct tribe occurs. On their settlement in Manipur, the Yos, Thadous and Nwites are known to the Manipuris as Khongjais. When the British administrators came in contact with Chin Hills the three tribes whom the Manipuris call Khongjais had left Northern Chin Hills. So, they are excluded from the group of tribes designated the Northern Chin Hills people.

According to their tradition of origin, the Siyins are descended from a pair of primeval man and woman emitting out of a gourd falling from the heaven. Carey
and Tuck (*ibid: 127*) say: "This story is peculiar not to Siyins, but is believed by all the tribes in the Northern Chin Hills."

Historical traditions have it that both the Suktes and the Siyins first settled at a place called Chin Nwe whence the Suktes forefathers moved south. They are so named after this direction (sok meaning 'south/down,' and te meaning 'descendants' or 'people'); hence the name means 'people who went down off the original place.' The Siyins ancestors, on the other hand, went east and settled near some alkali springs after which their group was given the general name Siyang (si meaning 'alkali', and yang meaning 'side') i.e., 'people settling by the side of alkali spring.' Siyin is the Burmese corruption of Siyan(g). They are called 'Taute' or 'Tuakte' by the Lushei and the Southern Chins. The Manipuris also used this expression to mean this people. Twantak, Toklaing, Limkai (Sagyilain) and Kimlai (Breman) are the major clans of the Siyang.

The Northern Chins (now popularly known as the Tedim Chins as Tedim is the place of their concentration) are traditionally the Hmars (Northerners) to the Chins who live to the south whom the Lushei call the Pois. This territorial division of the two people works with certain corresponding cultural dichotomy; men of the Hmars coil their hair at the nape of the neck whilst the Poi men bind their hair over the forehead.
Down to the south of Tedim are the Shunklas as the major tribe thereof. These austral Chins call themselves by this name after the name of their original village, Shunthla or Shunkla. Tashon is the Burmese appellation for them. Tashon is the Burmese corruption of 'Klashun' or 'Tlashun' which is the changed form of the word order of Shuntla (i.e. from Tlasun, or, Klasun to Shuntla or Shunkla). Kla and tla are interchangeable in their phonetics. As reported by Lebar (et.al, 1964:50), H. Stevenson coined in 1943 the name Shimbrin as a general name for the culturally very close Zahau, Laizo, Khuangli and Shunkla. The British administrators chose Tashon to refer to them. The Siyangs and other northerners call them Palamte or Falamte after their original capital Falam. The Shuntlas believe their original parents stepped out of the solid rock, neither out of the burrow in the earth as among the Thadous, nor originating from heaven as among the Siyangs and others. The Shuntlas include the two powerful communities of Yahow and Whenoh. These two communities had the air and semblance of being Pois as they were brought under the control of the Shunklas during their hey-days after the latter had founded Falam. They are, however, distinct in their ethnic identities from the Shunklas. The Yahows origin myth suggests certain similitude with that of the Nwites (Guites). Thus, they believe that the sun laid an egg on the earth that hatched out producing four boys, the last being Yahow, a myth that is reminiscent of the birth of Guite out of illicit relation of Doungel with his sister according to W. Shaw (vide Appendix-B), mythically concocted into being born out of the egg kept in a paddy bin where a ray
of sunlight fell on it through a hole in the matting. This Guite myth is probably so modeled after their belief, in common with the Northern Chins, that they are the descendants of the man and woman who fell from the cloud on the earth at Chin Nwe (Carey and Tuck, *op. cit.*: 140).

The Whenos, also known as Hualngos (the two names are perhaps homologous), are apparently of Shuntla tribal identity in so far as they claim like the Shuntlas, their originators as coming out of rocks. Some of their co-members moved to the west and finally landed in Lushai Hills where they become renamed the Lushei. The Lusheis of present Mizoram and the Hualngos of the tract of land between Chin Hills and present Mizoram are one and the same people. Oneness of the Mizos and the Hualngos, and the apparent Shuntla identity of the latter certainly lead one to confusion because unlike the Shuntlas who claim rock origin of their ancestors, the Mizos believed in the origin of their ancestors in a cave at the place called Chhinlung. The fact could have been that the Hualngos/Whenos, under the influence of the Pois, adopted the Poi theory of origin of their ancestors from a rock. They must have shared with the Lusheis and other people like the Thadous the cave earth origin theory before their coming over under the fold of the Pois.

It may be mentioned here that G.A. Grierson (*op. cit.*: 107) reports that the Zahaos and Whenos were formerly known as Poi, Poi-te and Pai-te. But, it was not their original identity. For assistance they took from the Shunklas in their fights with
their neighbours they paid tributes to the Shunklas who are Pois, and hence they had to identify themselves as Pois. Grierson’s former identifications of these two communities as Pois probably refer to this historical stage of them. The fact is that they were initially a section of Northern Chins who follow the tradition of cave-origin theory. It is affirmed by another finding that they fall within the genealogical ambit of the Chongthu (vide infra: 205, Appendix-ID).

After settling at Shunthla, a village between Falam and Haka, in time a section of the Pois moved southward to Haka wherefrom the area around it was controlled. Those who remained at Shunthla as well as those of the Sunthlas who shifted to Haka themselves claim the title Lai. Poi is their exonym given by the Lushei. But the name Poi is still retained in official use for their identity. The name Bungshe for the Lais is just a nickname as it is derived from the Burmese buang meaning ‘to put on a turban, and she, ‘in front.’ According to Carey and Tuck, the clans which claim to be Lai are the Hakas, Klangklangs, Yokwas, Thettas and Kapis as well as certain other independent southern villages. But, to these two authors only the first two are genuine Lai whereas the other clans are of different origins. For instance, Yokwa probably means the people of Yo village (kwa or khaw is the local word meaning village). The chief families of the old Haka stock are reported to be:

1) Shanpi, 2) Shante, 3) Nunthwasun, and 4) Kenlaut.
Klangklang or Tlangtlang is the name of the Haka Pois (Lais), who had moved into the area east of the Haka Lais. Those Lais who moved south crossed the Kaladan River and settled in the south-east corner of the present Mizo Hills call themselves Mara; they are known as Lakher to the Mizos, and Shendu or Sindu to the Arakanese. The principal divisions of this tribal group are Tlongsai, Hawthai, Zeuknang, Sabeu, Lailai and Heima. Hnaring is the name of another culturally Haka-related group whose seat is in Laotu region south of Haka in between Zophei and Zotung. The Bawms or Boms in the eastern Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh are also culturally related to the Lais.

There is possibility of a major section of the Lakhers being originating from the ancient Burmans, in so far as this people call themselves Mara, because Mara is, in accordance with G.E. Gerini (1909:55), an ancient designation of the Burmese. What happened could be that in their crossing of the ethnic boundary, they become taken to Lai language while, yet, retaining their original group name Mara. The same ethnological reflection *ifso facto* be applied to the Mrus as well; Gerini tells us that Mru is another rendering of Mara. The Mrus are still living in North Arakan Hills. The Arakan Chronicles record the existence of the Mrus in the Arakan Hills since the 11th century A.D., and also that a Mru man was a king of Arakan during the 14th century A.D.; *mru* is the written form of what the Arakanese pronounce *masho*. So, Mru and Masho refer to one and the same people. The Mrus (Mashos)
are also found in the Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh. David W. & Barbara G. Frazer (op. cit: 163) echoes Helga So-Hartmann’s recognition of nine Mru (Mro) groups in Myanmar: Wakone, Arung (Arang), Likhe (or Likung), Lemi (including Kaung Su), Anu (or Anoo), Taung Mro, Dak, Xena, and Pamana. The said source goes on saying that other local informants suggest the Xena and Pamana are sub-groups of the Arangs and do not distinguish between the Daks and Taung Mros. The Wakone Mros (literally “people who live at the river junction”) generally call themselves Khami. The Mros of Bangladesh correspond to the Taung Mro group of Myanmar taung (Rakhine) or takone (Mro) = “hill”). Thus, according to the latter view only six Mro groups are recognized; these are: Wakone Mro (Khami), Arang, Anu, Kaung Su, Likhe and Taung Mro. Alexander Mackenzie (1884: 527-528) reports on the Anoos (Anus) as was having had a confederacy of its own, and from this report it seems to have been that sword, shield and spear were the characteristic war weapons of the Anoos. And, Burma Gazetteer (1880) reports that “the Anoos or Khoung–tsos dress like the Khamis but have a distinct dialect that contains many words intelligible to the Manipuris” (reproduced in David W. & Barbara G. Fraser, op. cit: 177).

Besides the absorption of Burman ethnic elements in the so-called Chin population of Chin Hills, observed just above, presence of elements of Mon-Khmer extraction may also be noticed among the Chin-speaking Khumi (Kumi or Kweymi)
and Khami who are now settling in the Paletwa region of Southern Chin Hills and also in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Asho are another, but less known, community, who are apparently transitional, half-Burman and half-Chin community living mainly in the plains proper of Myanmar and Arakan. One finds some of them as well along the Arakan Yoma and west to Paletwa, and still also in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh where certain of them are called Khyang, a rendering of the Arakanese variant of the Burmese term “Chin.” The Burman call the Chins of northern Mindat or Kanpetlet Chinbok, and the northern Chins of Mindat Subdivision, Chinbon.

It is most likely that a section of the said people settling in the Paletwa subdivision of the old Arakan State identify themselves as Chaungtha. F. K Lehman (1963: 17) notes W. G. Hughis’ statement (1876-77) that the Khyang and Chaungtha in this region had an old relationship to Arakan like that of some Old Kuki to Manipur and Tripura. The name Chaungtha could possibly have been the local Arakanese rendering of what the section of the Chins (who claim cave-origin theory of their ancestors) express as Chongthu. Probably reminiscent of common identity with the Chaungthas, are the Toungthas (“children of hills”) of Chittagong Hill Tracts, who cultivate the higher hills. Captain Lewin cited in Alexander Mackenzie (op. cit: 330), however, reports the Toungthas (sons of the Hill) to be a composite tribal group composed of the Tipperahs or Mrungs, the Kumis or
Kweymis, the Mrus, the Khyangs, the Banjogis, the Pankhos, the local Lushais or Kookies, and the Shendus or Lakhers. The name *pankho* suggests retention, among the people who identify themselves by this name, of the name of the dog ancestor, P’an-ku, of the Miao-Yaw of Southern China and Northern South-east Asia, from whom a section of the Kuki-Chins may have been descended, a point that will be highlighted later.

Nearby the Toungthas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are captain Lewin’s (1869, reprint 2004:55) the Khyounthas (sons of the river) living north and south of the Karnafuli River. Lewin details that most of those living north of Karnafuli acknowledge a chief called the Mong Rajah, and the whole country south of this river is nominally subjected to the head of the Phru family, called at times the Poang and Bohmong Rajah. The Shan names Mong, Phru, Poang etc., all point to the Shan identity of at least the ruling aristocracies of the people. The Chukma or the Tsakma tribe is distinct among the Khyounthas by their language and race. They are jhoom cultivators at the river bottoms towards the Fenny River and lower ranges. J. H. Hutton, (1931, reprint 1986:121) gives the view that the name ‘Chakma’ is derived from the Maghi word *chaok*, meaning “of mixed origin,” and the Chakmas are undoubtedly in the main the descendants of Maghi women and Mogal soldiers. Hutton, (*ibid*: 119) reports on the Magh (written as Mug in some other texts): “They are almost certainly of Tai origin, their ancestors being the Tai Long (Greater
Tai) who were driven out of China towards the south and south-west. The earliest home, however, of which they have any definite traditions, is Arakan, whence they migrated early in the 17th century into what is now Cox’s Bazar subdivision. There they split up. Some migrated further into Bengal proper, while two bodies entered the Chittagong Hill Tracts. But, Edward Tuite Dalton, (1872, reprint 1960:110-111) aligns ethnically this people with the Kuki; thus he reports: “The tradition of the Kukis respecting their origin is, that they and the Maghs are the offspring of the same progenitor, who had two sons by different mothers and the Mugs have the honour to be descended from the first born. This tradition of their common origin receives much support from the similarity of the Mug and Kuki languages, many words of which are the same and their general resemblance is such that a Mug and Kuki can make themselves understand by each other.”

What has been rendered Sho or Kxou is the general name of still another Southern Chin community. Local people, however, call themselves by different local names. M’Kang (whose women are heavily tattooed on their face for which reason the M’Kangs are called Chinme or Black-Chin by the Burmese) to the east of Lemro, Ngala at Matupi, and N’Men in the region between Mindat and M’Kang. David W. and Barbara G. Fraser (op. cit: 21) mention the Dais as another Chin-speaking people. This people may have been of Lai cultural background; this is perhaps the reason why the Burman know this people by the name Yindu (Shendu,
another name of Lakher who are mainly of Lai origin) when this people was living in the plain among the Burmans.

1. 4 Dispute on their Common Nomenclature

   It is a point of interest to note that the linguistic identity of the people cuts across the aforesaid territorial boundary; wheresoever they are within the said tract of land of their settlement, they speak one or the other of several dialects of a language, the linguist conventionally term Kuki-Chin, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. The linguistic taxonomist, G. A. Grierson endorsed this linguistic designation after the two varied ethnonyms of the people, ‘Kuki’ in India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and ‘Chin’ in Burma (now Myanmar), officially so recognized since the British contact with them.

   The name Kuki the British administrator styled the people by on the Indian side has not been free from internal differences of views. In the formerly Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) Kuki has hardly been employed by the people thereof. The name Lushai had been locally gaining currency before it became later replaced by the autonym Mizo. Meanwhile, observation may, however, be made of the phonetic linkage between the words Lushai (or Luhai) and Kuki that may be derived from C. A. Soppitt’s (1893:2) scheme of the sequence of word change from Lushai (Luhai) → Lukai → Kukai → Kuki (Lushai and Luhai are phonetically interchangeable). In
the light of this order of word change, if accepted, Lushai is simply another rendering of Kuki. It was probably in the light of this homology between the two expressions Kuki and Lusei that the Britishers applied the appellation ‘Lushai-Kuki’ to the Lushais of former Lushai Hills and the Old and New Kukis of other parts of (undivided India), as so J.Shakespear did in his book, *The Lushai Kuki Clan*. This wished name of the people has nevertheless been replaced of late by Mizo in Lushai Hills (hence now Mizoram, ‘land of the Mizo’).

In the easternmost Indian state of Manipur, too, the name Kuki is currently not popularly accepted by the people whom the British Colonial rulers styled by this name, perhaps, with the exception of a small chunk of the Thadou speakers who zealously still call themselves Thadou Kuki. A usage of this ethonym prevails also in the Tripura, North and South Cachar Hills, Meghalaya and Nagaland, as well in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet District of Bangladesh.

There has been a strong view among a section of this people that welcomes the word ‘Chin’ be used as the ethnonym of their entire community. This view is best represented by that of the Paite National Council (PNC) of Manipur; in its representation to the Prime Minister of India in 1963 for the official recognition of Chin as the common ethnonym of the entire community. The said representation of the PNC reads in the words of Vumson (1986:3) as: “.......... the Paite National Council (PNC) of Lamka Churachandpur in Manipur has speculated that the name
‘Chin’ originated with the Chin Dynasty of China. In a letter to the Prime Minister of India in 1963, the PNC suggested that Chin people be unified into one territory. The PNC cited the *Linguistic Survey of India* by G.A. Grierson and said, “The word ‘Chin’ is supposed by authorities to be a corruption of the word ‘Jen’ or ‘Man.’ The PNC choose ‘Chin’ because under ‘Chin’ as a genus, come all Kuki tribes; whereas Kuki as a species is a sub-group of Chin, or in other words, Kuki is another grouping system excluding some tribes under Chin. Hence Chin is a wider denotation and Kuki is a narrower denotation.”

One finds a parallel version of the above view of the PNC of Manipur in the observations of Hrangnawal, a former Parliamentarian from Haka from the Myanmar side on the present question, which, Vumson (*ibid*: 3) echoes as: “.........believed that the word Chin, Ciin or Tsin was the original name of the Zo people, and he suggested that it originated in China. His suggestion is based on the fact that there are many places in the Zo country which ‘Cin’, ‘Tsin’ or ‘Chin’ as names such as ‘Ciinmual,’ ‘Chintlang’ or ‘Tsinkhua,’ Hrangnawi has also suggested that Chin could have come from Ciinlung, Chhinlung or Tsinlung,” the cave or rock from whence according to the legend the Zo people emerged into this world as human.

But the Chin people strongly object the Burman usage of the word Chin as their name, because it carries derogatory meaning. The Burman word Chin connotes ‘uncultured’ and ‘uncivilized’. The Chin people interpret this undesirable
connotation from the Burman meaning of the word Chin for basket. They feel that this Burman usage of the word hints at their habit of their carrying basket, it thereby conveying the Burman attitude about the alleged uncouth nature of the so called Chin people. G. H. Luce’s statement that Chin is an old Burmese word (written as Khyan) meaning ‘ally’ or ‘comrade’ corroborated by the Burmese Encyclopedia (1950), defining Chin as ‘ally’ seemingly falls flat on the peoples’ pre-empted obsession with the derogatory meaning of the word. This ethnic stance challenging and flatly rejecting Chin as their name accuses that interpretation of Chin in the sense of ‘ally’ or ‘friend’ is nothing else than the Burman ethnic mask concealing behind it their attitude of looking down upon the people. Tunuang, an M.P from Mindat protested in the Burmese parliament and accused the Burman of politicizing the name. Haunjob, the first from east Zoram to receive an M.A degree and a lecturer at Mandalay University expresses his comment in this regard: “Chin is altogether foreign to us. We respond to it out of necessity, but we never appropriate it and never accept it and never use it to refer to ourselves. It is not only foreign but derogatory for it has become more or less synonymous with being uncivilized, uncultured, backward, even foolish and silly. When we considered such name calling applied to our people as Chinboke (stinking Chin), we cannot but interpret it as a direct and flagrant insult, and the fact that we have some rotten friend is no consolation.”
In the Chin Hills state of the present Myanmar some of the people thereof have denounced their Chin identity in favour of Zo as the collective name of the entire community. It has been reported that the Northern Chins call themselves Yo or Zo or Zou. In his book, Zo History (1986), Vumson strongly pleads for Zo as a collective name of all the peoples of Chin Hills and ethnic compatriots elsewhere. There has, however, been serious objection to this Zo identification of all the peoples in question. In south Falam and north Haka areas the people assert that they are not any kind of Zo at all; they rather call themselves Lai. Vumson (ibid: 6) himself admits of the weakness of his proposal of Zo for the name of the entire so called Chin Community; he says, “The author chooses Zo as the designation of all Zo people, because it appears to him that Zo is the most widely used name, whether it be Zo, Yo, Jo, Cho, Sho, Khxou, or Yaw. The author does not insist that ‘Zo’ is the proper or right designation. However, he believes that the names Kuki and Chin which originated as abuse names should not be adopted as designation of a people. Such name could hinder understanding between the abuser and the abused. It will be in the interest of all Zo people to be known by a common name most possibly Zo.”

T. Gougin’s (1980-1984) Zo theory for the common name of the people appears to be more explanatory. He expresses his view that very long ago there were three brothers, namely Sawngthu, Sawngja, Zahong, who had been beneath the earth. They show a very lofty cold mountain which they called Zogam or Zoram and
they try to settle on the foothill side abandoning Khul or cave shelter. Hence he derived the meaning of Zomi in the sense of dwellers of Cold Mountain. Gougin advocates his theory not only in semantic terms of the name in point, but as well in its anagrammatical terms whereby he justified the word order ‘Zou’ followed by ‘mi’ in Zomi as against the contrast of the order i.e. ‘Zo’ preceded by ‘mi’ in Mizo; he further attempts to explain the question at length (op. cit: 5).

Gougin and Vumson (quoted above) can’t come to terms each other: Gougin’s naming of the people, as has been observed above, rests on the geographical condition of the place i.e. lofty mountain and its cold climate, where the originator of the people, first settled after emerging out of the ‘inner world’, a view which Vumson flatly rejects when he says, “The generic name ‘Zo’ has no relation with the geographical, climatic term zo” (ibid: 6). This lack of uniformity of views is veritably a self baffling pitfall of the Zo theory. The premise on which Vumson raises his argument of the Zo historical identity of the people, that the term is widely used in several names, sounds inadequate to sustain his theory. Gougin’s argument based only on the etymological meaning of the word Zo or Zomi is not a satisfactory explanation, either. Both views suffered from the lack of comparative historical authentication.

Now a closer look into the Kuki nomenclature of the people is suggested. Above, limited acceptance of this name has been observed. Though it was allegedly
of exogenous origin, in as much as the British administrators applied it, there is, however, a point that deserves a deeper reflection on its application itself. Whether of Manipur or Bengali origin (F. K. Lehman, [1963:5] is in favour of Manipur origin), Rawlin first applied it under the rendering “Cucis” or “Mountaineers of Tipera” in *Asiatic Researches* (Vol. II, XII, 1792). Manipur origin of the British usage of the name may be justified by a fact of Manipuri History that, according to the historical tradition of the Manipuris, their first king Nongda Lairen Pakhangba who, as the Manipuri historical chronicle *Chaitharol Kumbaba* records, reigned in the first century A.D., allied himself with the Kukis and Laicis or Kuki/Laici in his war preparation for the throne. It may also be noted that many Manipuri victims of the Seven Years Burmese occupation of their country had fled and settled in the erstwhile East Bengal and Cachar Valley of Assam where also they found the people whom they called Kuki since long. In Manipuri, perhaps also in Bengali, there is no other usage of the word Kuki than its application to refer to the people, a few of whose compatriots Rawlins, adopting the Manipuri name for the people used there, put under ‘Cucis’ for the first time in the mountains of Tripura. Afterwards on coming across several other populations of the Kuki stock, such as of the mountaineers of Tripura, one after another, scattered in India’s North-East, the British officers applied it to all those other peoples, too. It is now certain that Kuki as an ethnonym has a long history. Further, an hypothesis could perhaps be formulated on the dim past of this people when the people called themselves Kuki,
which was, however, abandoned under certain circumstances in their long history of continuous series of migration till they finally settled in their present habitat, the people’s name which the Manipuri yet remembered and so continued applying it to this people whose representatives have formed a large chunk of population in Manipur. Asserting the dim past of the Kukis, C. G. Verghese and R. L. Thanzawna (1997: xiv-xvi, Preface) trace the history of the people or at least this name of the people as far back as the historical antiquity of the Middle East whence the ancestors of the Kukis among others passed on migration through Central Asia on way to the highlands of Mongolia. These two authors derive the historical fact of the Kuki inhabitation in Mongolia before they were brought as prisoners by Shih Huwang Ti of Ching China, from the name of Ko Ko Nor lake of Mongolia. This emperor used them as conscript labours in the construction of the Great Wall of China. They hold that in Chinese language, the literal meaning of Kuki is the ‘people of the Ku Lake.’ Ku is the Chinese form of Mongolian Ko Ko Nor (Nor means lake). Subsequently, running away from northern China, to get rid of the hardships of their life under Imperial China, they migrated southward and settled in Indo-China. Evidence of their inhabitation in Indo-Chinese countries is adduced by Colonel Yule’s note that “... the Indo-Chinese countries appear, from Taranatha’s “History of Buddhism” to have been anciently known as Koki...” (G. E. Gerini, 1900:95). And, Gerini adds that the Malayan rendering of Koki is Kochi which they used until recently to designate the Annamese empire, whereas Kao-chih was still
the older rendering of the name for that same region. On the basis of these evidences one may search hopefully for such other historical evidences of the ancient settlement of this people in the land of present Myanmar around the beginning of the Christian era, whose name was rendered as Kuki or such other identical renderings.

Now, considering the possibilities implied hereabout, C. A. Soppitt’s statement that, “The term ‘Kuki’ itself is too well established to be given up .....” (1893: i, preface) may be honoured, and it is in the light of this positive reflection that Kuki is proposed to be retained as the name of the people whose ethnic fission is being studied in the present work. It would be of interest to observe, further, in this regard that the British writers like B. S. Carey and H. N. Tuck (1932:165) stated that the various clans and communities that peopled the Chin Hills calling themselves by various names all belong to one and the same, the Kuki race. It can’t but be remarked, however, that this conclusion in favour of the Kuki nomenclature of the entire people in point is only tentative; it can’t escape the possible observation that the premises of the reasoning involved in it are too lean for the austerity and gravity of this moot problem of a collective name of the people. Indeed, it still calls for a deeper historical substantiation on a wider range of comparative history. Under this circumstance of irresoluteness of the issue of common name of the people, it is felt imperative to temporarily recognize the people by their varying regional names
by which they have been conventionally known. The present piece of work obliges this command of the situation: those of the people in Myanmar being referred to as the Chins, their compatriots in Mizoram as Mizons, and those others in Assam, Manipur, Tripura, and Bangladesh as Kukis. Hence, retention of the name Kuki in the present proposed thesis on the problems of emergence of ethnolingus in the state of Manipur.

On the other hand, one finds another clue probably in the people's own traditional belief in the origination of their ancestors in the south or south west China, for a sound comparative understanding of their history. Could there be some elements of truth in this theory, more rigorous historical authentication rather than mythical/legendary narration of the said elements is probably called for.

On the urge of the necessity of wider comparative history stressed hereabove, a possible ethnic connection can be observed between the people and the Miao-Yao speakers who are now found not only in China's Kweichow and neighbouring provinces but also in North Vietnam, Laos and northern Thailand. Leber (*et. al*, 1964:63) apprises that in northern South East Asia the Miao speakers are expressed as Meo, which has been held to be derived from the Vietnamese term ManMeo; the term Man was, reportedly, used in early Chinese historical records to refer to those non-Han peoples, except the Tai, of southern China, and later its expression changed into Yao or Yaw. Zo or Zou of Chin Hills of Myanmar would
be local rendering of Yao or Yaw; if it could be accepted, Miao would be the shortened form of Mi and Yao. This inference further leads to the hypothesis that the term ‘mizo’ of Mizoram is derived, consciously or unconsciously, from Miao or Miyao or Miyaw (the suffix ram means ‘land’; therefore, Mizoram means ‘the land of the Miao or Miyao or Miyaw people’). Miao is the Chinese name for this people, it literally meaning ‘rice-shoot,’ according to Ruey Yih Fu (reproduced in Lebar, et al, op. cit: 6). It is reported that the name is, however, not used and even disliked by the people concerned. In the post-Han times, it referred in the general sense to the southern barbarians.

Linguists hold that Miao-Yao can’t linguistically be clearly affiliated either with Tibeto-Burman or with Chinese or Mon-Khmer languages. As such, Miao-Yao is tentatively classified as a separate, distinct branch of Sino-Tibetan. But, Grierson classified Chin as a language of Tibeto-Burman family. Even if this Tibeto-Burman identity of Zo (Chin) could be accepted possibly in the light of influence of the Burman tongue on it, it is linguistically different from Burmese in the earlier stage of their history.

Meanwhile, before the work proceeds further, on way to exploring the history of the people on a wider range of comparative history a few reflections may be put forward on the early history of the people. The possibility of derivation of the expression “Mizoram” from Miyao (meaning ‘Yao or Yaw men,’ and Mizoram
meaning ‘land of Yao men,’ ram or gam meaning ‘land’ or ‘country’) has been observed just above, thus establishing historical and the ethnic affinity of the Mizo and Miyao of southern China and Northern South-East Asia. Now the point that may be further highlighted is that the toponym Mizoram could perhaps suggests certain linkage with Mizraim of Genesis (Chapter 10: The Table of Nations) wherein the word ‘Mizraim’ stands as the name of one of the four sons of Ham. The said source also tables as the sons of Mizriam the Ludites, Anamites, Lehahites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Casluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphorites; the peoples here identified as the descendants of Mizraim are all most likely some of the groups of people whom the ancient Greeks called Palasgoi (‘people of the sea’) who had their earlier home in the Mediterranean sea before they later landed in the eastern Mediterranean coastal belt sometime around the 14th century B.C. following the southern expansion of the Indo-European speakers from the northern lands to the Mediterranean world.

The above discourse with reference to the Old Testament incites, it is hoped, one to bring in the picture of the claim of some people of Mizoram to have genesis of the Zo people at large in the Bible history of the Jews to the extent that they are the descendants of the tribe of Manasseh (elder son of Joseph), one of the lost ten tribes of Israel. The point has broadly located the discourse in the context of the ancient history of the general region of the Near East; and it may be treated as a
matter of certain considerability. Another material of historical geography of this region may also be taken into account to enrich the discourse; it also centers round the name Mizraim, this time as an identical toponym of Mizoram. *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1960:357, f.n.1, Vol. Part III), based on the Assyrian inscriptions, mentions about a Mizraim (Musri) to the north of Syria, though its exact location is uncertain. Traditionally the name Mizraim (Musri) refers to Egypt. So, the application of this name to a land to the northern outpost of Egypt (southern Syria) could be nothing else than transplantation of the place name Egypt to that northern area. The area comprising Syria, Lebanon and Palestine had cultural influences from Mesopotamia since pre-or-proto historic times. But during the early centuries of the third millennium B.C. cultural allegiance of this area shifted to Egypt, it corresponding to a time period beginning from the Second Dynasty to the Sixth Dynasty of Egypt. (*vide, The Cambridge Ancient History* 1960: 343-562, Vol. I, Part III).

All this information veritably points to the reliability of the possible historical linkage of the Yaw or Yao or Yo people of South China and Northern South-East Asia, and by that very reason, of the Kuki-Chins (since their historical derivation from the Yaw or Yao has been shown above) with the people of the transplanted Mizraim to the north of Egypt. Here is also suggested the strong possibility of reference of the ethnonym Mizo to Miz(a), the first part of the
toponym Mizraim; this reference also presupposes at the same time that they were a people of ancient historical Egypt. This suggested Egyptian identity of the people may, however, be considered only in politico-territorial terms, because, as has been clarified above, the ancestors of the people had their abode in a land somewhere upto Syria along the eastern Mediterranean shore, that bore the transplanted name of Mizraim since the classical Egyptian kingdom of the early centuries of the third millennium B.C. expanded its territory in the north upto there. The people in point of that ancient past probably adopted Mizraim as the name of their land also out of their attraction to the glory that was associated with the then Egypt. While thus the Egyptian identity of the people is considered tenable politically and territorially, it would be yet hard to assume such identity of the people in the ethnic sense.

As narrated in Lebar (et. al, ibid: 63), the Miao had an historical stage synchronizing with the pre-Han period of China, i.e. roughly around second century B.C, when they were living in the lower Yangtze as an ethnically distinct people. They flourished there with a population growth to the effect of migrating northward toward the fertile valley of the Yellow river, only to face the then southern expansion of the Hans Chinese, under which circumstance they retreated into Kwangtung-Hunan-Kwangsi area and finally into Kweichow. They had a long history of migration under the Chinese pressure, resulting in their breaking up into isolated swedden-farming groups hidden away in more remote mountain villages
and hill sides, surrounded by peoples of other ethnic backgrounds, most noticeably
the low land wet-rice growing Chinese and the Tai, at whose hand they in due
course of time underwent cultural absorption. In effect the Miao culture transformed
itself into a mixture or aggregate of Tai, Chinese and Lolo, and as such cultural
uniformity could be maintained among them in their widespread settlements. Yet,
despite centuries of their dislocations, fragmentations and the consequent dispersal
all over southern China and the northern South East Asia, following the Chinese
pressures and oppressions to the effect of their loss of independence vis-à-vis their
resistance and their frequent uprisings, they have, interestingly enough, retained a
considerable degree of linguistic homogeneity.

The internal variations that their history brought about, as shown above,
amongst them assumed such a considerable scale as tending to identify the Miao
and Yao separately from each other. But, certain of their original cultural traits, the
myth of the dog ancestral, P’an-ku in particular, are still found common to them
both. It would be appropriate to mention here that certain migrants of Chin Hills
and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, in all probability while preserving
this age-long cultural tradition of the Miao-Yao, called themselves P’an-ku.

To add to their history, the Miao-Yao people came across peoples of the Li
(Lai) ethnic background, another pre-Chinese people of Southern China, who also,
under the southern expansion of the Chinese, got dispersed in South East Asia.
Gerini (1909:162) indicates the Li identity of the people of ancient Campa
kingdom of Cambodia, thereby suggesting ethnic affiliation of the Li with the
Cambodians of past history. The Lais are historically an ethnic group distinct from
the Miao-Yao. Linguistically they are placed in closer affinity with Tai and Kadai.
At present one finds a considerable concentration of Lai population in the island of
Hainan in whose mountains inhabit also the shifting agriculturist Mias. History
tells that these Mias in Hainan are the descendants of their ancestors, called
"Crossbow-Warrior," brought by the Chinese from Kwansi about 1520 A.D as war
mercenaries to suppress the Lai rebellious there. It may be noted well here that the
Lais, a major section of the so called Chins of Chin Hills state of Myanmar who
object to the Zo identification of their people, must have been descendants of the
migrating group of their ancestors who left the country of the Lais in south China
and northern South East Asia for their new home in the Chindwin valley and later
in the Chin Hills of Myanmar (they are now found in concentration mainly in
Falam-Haka area of the Chin Hills).

Above, is sketched a brief history of the Zo or Chin people of the Chin
Hills of Myanmar when their ancestors were moving about the general region of
South East China and South west Asia over considerable distances for many
centuries until the recent past. There is a strong possibility of the existence of the
ancestral elements of Naga ethnic group in juxtaposition with the ancestors of the
Chins. Thus Lehman (op. cit: 11-12) says "... indicates clearly that in the not distant past the ancestors of such different people, as the Nagas and the Chins formed a relatively unitary speech group."

Vumson (op. cit: 27-28) apparently traces the origin of the Tibeto-Burman people to the Ch’iang who were residing in the corridor between Tibet and China since the time of China’s Shang dynasty (1600-1028 B.C.). The Ch’iang origin theory of the Burmese is well narrated by G.D.E. Hall (1964). There is, however, no such historical evidence, yet, for the validity of the theory in the case of the other Tibeto-Burman speakers of Myanmar. Lehman (ibid: 22) gives the opinion that "The ancestors of the Chin and of the Burman must have been distinct from each other before they first appeared in Burma."

The possibility of relationship of the Chins with the Karens is suggested by the presence of words, in both Chin and Karen, traceable in an archaic Tibeto-Burman stratum. Edward Tuite Dalton (1872, reprint 1960:115) refers to Dr. Latham’s thinking that "word for word Khyen (i.e. Chin) is Karen, and reports that the Karens are sometimes called Ka-Khyen which is a name applied to the Singpho (Kachin). Historical relations of the Chins with the Sak-Kadu/Kanto (or Thet or Thek) people cannot also ruled out, though the latter are plains-dwelling people (who are scattered on both the northern and southern margins of the Chin-speaking area of Myanmar) whereas the proper Chins now occupy the mountains."
1.5 Southern Migration of the Ancestors of the Kuki-Chin and their Dispersal

From the northern areas of Southeast Asia a section of the Miao-Yaos and the Lai who became the ancestors of the Kuki-Chins passed through the Mekong valley (the M’kang nomenclature of a cluster of Chins in Southern Chin Hills is reminiscent of their past sojourn at the Mekong valley) in their south western exodus. The migrating horde had settled in the Hukwang valley in the upper Chindwin basin of Upper Burma before their subsequent habitation in the Kale-Kabo/Kabow valley whence some members of the Anal, Koieng, Lamkang, Chothe, Maring, Chiru, Kom, Aimol, Tarao, Hmar, etc., moved to the western hills and entered Manipur sometime around the beginning of the Christian Era while another section proceeded south-westward passing through the Chin and Lushai Hills into Cachar and Tripura, where the people called themselves by such names as Biate and Hallam (related to the Komrem of Manipur) while the main body moved down the valley of the Chindwin and the Iravati, later spreading far south up to the Myittha valley that conjoins the Kale-Kabow valley in the South. In the southern limit of the present Chin Hills this core group got split off: some settling there, who became known to the Burmese as the Chinbok, Chinbon, Chinme etc., while others marching to the west as far as the Chittagong Hills Tracts of Bangladesh, and still others inhabiting the plains as far as Sandowy
District where they have been known as the Plains Chins who are much Burmanised as they have been living there in close contact with the Burmese. Most likely after crossing over the Mekong valley a sizable section of the migrating ancestors of the later Kuki-Chins branched off moving eastward toward Mandalay where they settled side by side and in close contact with the Burmese, from where again around 950 A.D. they left for Khampat in the Kabo valley. Lal Biak Thanga (1978:3) reports that those who came to the Chindwin valley lived there for nearly two hundred years. During certain period of their settlement in the Kale-Kabow valley they came in contact with the Shan because this valley was studded with innumerable Shan princely kingdoms all over it, that all owed allegiance to Mogaung, their centre of power, in the Hukwang valley. Thanga goes on reporting that in the Kale-Kabow valley the Chin suffered from a great famine that compelled them to leave the country. They were so emotionally attached to the land that before they left they planted a banyan sapling at Khampat with the pledge that they would return to the place when the sapling would grow into a tree with its hanging root turned into new stem. C. Hobbs (1956:721-777) in F.N. Trager's (ed) *Burma*, reports that some Chins have really resettled recently the Kale valley. Lehman further observes here: “A few of these seem to be genuine plains Chin villages, probably from the Yaw valley........ The rest of the Kale valley Chin villages are inhabited by Chins from the Northern Hills, and the largest, Tahan, was founded in recent decades by the Lushai from India.” Some of
those who left Kabow valley directly entered the hills of Manipur; and some others proceeded in a south western direction, and passing through the Chin and Lushai Hills into Cachar and Tripura. It would be this group of people, including the Waipheis that may rightly be called the Newer Old Kuki, at those places of their new settlement.

Lehman proposes the beginning of the Current Era as the point of time when the various ancestral groups of the later fully identified ethnic groups of Myanmar first appeared in Burma. This backward projection of the historical antiquity to that hoary point of time perhaps finds its near corroboration in the Manipuri historical record that the first king of Manipur entered into alliance with the Kuki chief (a historical material already alluded to in a previous context in this work) in the first century CE. Now, in the light of these historical probabilities Lehman’s classification of an ancient horde of the Chins, which he phrases “Older Old Kuki’ is quite appropriate, and this horde must have landed in Manipur, probably also in Tripura much more ahead of the ‘Old Kuki’ in coming over to these lands and other parts of Assam and present Bangladesh. Luce (reproduced in Lehman, ibid: 14) adds a prop to this historical projection when he says; .... “That peoples related to the Chins were probably involved as mercenaries in the early history of such principalities as Tripura bordering the Lushai Hills on the west.”
A brief history of the Chin Hills is a prerequisite for understanding how and when the Newer Old Kukis came over to the Indian side. According to the Arakan chronicles the Chins appeared in Arakan first in the 11th century. And the Pagan inscriptions of the beginning of the 13th century purport the settlement of the Chins in the Chin Hills and plains to the east at the time. There is seemingly shortage of authentic evidence as to whence, from the Chindwin valley or what, these early Chins came. Next in the sequence, sometimes between the 14th and the 16th century, reportedly, there occurred migration of another Chin group into the Chin Hills from the Chindwin-Irrawaddy plains upon whose arrival some groups that had earlier occupied the Northern Chin Hills were pushed north and south. Those displaced moving north entered Manipur, Assam and Tripura; it is this group of the Chins who are designated as the Newer Old Kukis in India, and in the Manipur Chronicles this event of the Newer Old Kukis influx in this state is recorded as occurring about 1554. Again, in the early 18th century there took place additional migration of Chins from the Northern Chin Hills to Assam and Manipur, consequent upon the internal warfares among the powerful Tedim Chins of Northern Chin Hills. The same internecine wars among the Northern Chins for territorial expansion and political supremacy also led to the expansion of some Chin groups in the Falam-Haka area of the Chin Hills and the consequent displacement of the other Chin groups previously inhabiting those areas of the Southern Chin Hills to Arakan, the Chittagong Hills, Assam and Manipur. A brief
account of the political turmoil that emerged in the Northern Chin Hills generating the said Chin migrations follows here below.

1.6 Internal Conflicts

The Soktes were formidable tribal groups in Northern Chin Hills. Both the Soktes and the Seyangs commenced their lives in the Chin Hills at Chin Nwe where, according to their common tradition, their ancestors, a man and a woman, their Adam and Eve, were emitting while a fallen gourd from the heaven bursting out with the fall. They assume their respective names after taking off from Ciimnuai, their garden of Eden i.e. Chin Nwe, when the Soktes became known so named after their movement down or below (locally expressed as sok or suk: the name thus implying those who went south or below the parent village to settle at Molbem), and the Siyins or Seyans bore the name after their ancestral movement eastward and settling near some alkali springs (She meaning ‘alkali,’ and yan, ‘side’) to Twantak. Kantum or Khamhuruam, son of Mang Kim, was the first historical chief of the Suktes. He was a scion of his father, who took refuge in the south among the Shunthlas or Shunkhlas or Tashons wherefrom he, accompanied by followers from the Tashon country, returned to Molbem after his father’s death. He proceeded to conquer the Northern Chin Hills upto the plains of Manipur. Kantum conquered the Nwites (Tornlgorngs or Maltes, Sukte nickname for the
Guite vide Carry and Tuck, (ibid: 125), a people who also claim origin from a man and a woman falling from the clouds/heaven to the earth at Chin Nwe.

About 1870 the defeated Nwites were on a great exodus from around Tidim, following two routes, one group of the said migration going north and settling down around Mwelpi in the Southern Hills of Manipur (Mwelpi was earlier occupied by the Thadous), and their further advance into Manipur is recorded in the Administration Report of 1877-78 as: “Parties to the number of over 2000 persons belonging to the Sooties migrated during the year into Manipur territory, where they settled down on lands assigned to them by the Maharaja in the neighborhood of Moirang, to the north-west of the valley ..” The new comers are mostly not actually of the Sootie/Soote tribe but are reported to belong to a Helot race living in villages of their own among the Sooties (A. Mackenzie, 1884:171). As already pointed out above, Carey and Tuck identified this Helot race to be the Yos and the Nwites, and the other group going to Lushai Hills and living among the Lushais under the Lushai chief Poiboi. Those Nwites who remained in the Chin Hills were subjects of the Suktes. Another tribal group named Yo was a co-victim of the Nwites under the rise of the Sootes power in the Northern Chin Hills in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The migrant Yos also went along with the Nwites and settled in the midst of the Nwites wherever the latter settled. The Yos who stayed back in the Northern Chin Hills became known
as Kamhowte or Kamhow men i.e. men under the rule of Kamhow (a powerful section of the Sootes, that later grew into an independent tribe). This northern migration of the Yos and the Nwites was preceded by similar movement of the Thadou along with their closely related tribal peoples to the same direction. Here, Carey and Tuck are aptly quoted (ibid: 135 f.n.1): “The Khongjais or Kookies until late (1859) occupied the hills to the south of the Koupooees. Whilst in this position, little or nothing of them was known, but they caused fear from their numbers and the bloody attacks they sometimes made upon their neighbours. South of them lay the Pois, Sootes, Looseis, and other tribes, better armed than they were, and the same genus as themselves, and are now scattered around the valley of Manipur, and thence through the hills to North and South Cachar.”

The people whom the Manipuris later called Khongjai (Kuki) were mainly the Thadous including the Waipheis and other genealogically related kin groups. They were the major tribal groups among those tribes lying on the immediate south of Manipur, the others being the Yos, Nwites and Suktes. It can be derived from the above statement of Alexander Mackenzie that out of the fear caused by the aggressive force of the Suktes, the Thadou group marched ahead of the other tribes (their fear was perhaps also aggravated by their separate origin in as such as they claim cave-origin unlike the heaven origin or the like of most of the Northern Chin Hill tribes). And a section of the Thadous and their cognate tribes, after
landing around the valley of Manipur, further moved west through the western hills of Manipur to north and south Cachar. It must be noted here that it is these peoples, namely the Thadous and their cognate tribes, Yos, Ngwites (Guites), Suktes and a few other tribes like the Simtes (whose identity and appearance in Manipur will be dealt with subsequently) who entered Manipur and Assam and beyond in India’s North-east in the 19th century that the British administration classified as the New Kukis. A group of the Lushei (now Mizo) clans are also included in the list of the New Kuki tribes of Manipur; the members of the Lushei clans in Manipur are the descendants of 957 captives from two Lushei villages brought by Kakatung, Zo chief of Mwelpi (Carey & Tuck, op. cit: p. 141) that was then under the control of the Kamhaws of Northern Chin Hills, who came into the camp of the Manipur Contingent (Kakatung was earlier enemy of the Manipuris), this time apparently not expecting to be treated as enemy. Kakatung was put into Manipur jail, but those 957 Lushei captives were, instead of being treated as prisoners, given settlement in Manipur.

The Siyins or Siyangs were another Tedim Chin tribe. They were not as formidable as the Suktes. They appeared in the political History of the Chin Hills more like an adjunct to the Suktes; they carried arms against the Manipuris while simply assisting the Suktes, to repeal the former’s attack on Tedim in 1857 and accompanied the Suktes raiding expedition into Lushai Hills. All these were
happenings during the time of the Sukte chief Kamhow. Here a small clarification may be made on the relationship between the Sukte and the Kamhaw. The Kamhaw may be treated as a sub-tribe of the Suktes. Its founder, Kamhaw was the eldest of the six sons of Kantum or Kanthuam, the first chief of the real note in the history of Suktes while this people were settling at Molbem. While not breaking their succession customary law of ultimogeniture, Kamhaw, however, went to a village called Tedim which he had founded in the midst of his father's conquests, and ruled over his villages, though assumed customarily subordinate to his younger brother Yapao, Sukte chief at Molbem. He ruled there so absolutely that the Suktes became known as having two separate communities. But, later it looks more apparent that Kamhow has been recognized rather as a clan of the Sukte Tribe. They suffered crushing blow at the hands of the Tashons from the south around 1867 A.D.

The Tashons or Shuntlas are a section of the Lais(Pois) of Falam-Haka area of Chin Hills. The original place of settlement of the Lais in the Chin Hills is said to have been at a village called Sunthla, located in between present day Falam and Haka. While they were settling there a section of the Lais moved to Yoklang near present day Haka. Meanwhile those Pois who remained at Shuntla moved northwest and found a new village at Klashun while another family of the Sunthla moved to settle at Saiyo. By now, the Shunklas (Tashons) gradually rose to power
by bringing all their neighbors, relations and aliens (including the Yahaws and the Whenohs, whose separate identities having been shown above), under their control. On this composition of the Tashon tribesmen Carey and Tuck (ibid: 142) say, "They are a community composed of aliens, who have been collected under one family by conquest, or more correctly by strategy." These authors further report that, "by the time when the British occupied Chinland they found the Tashons numerically the most powerful tribe in the hills."

Thereafter the evergreedy Shunklas, while realizing their ambition to turn Yoklang into one of their tributaries, demanded a heavy tribute on pain of immediate attack on the latter. This led to the Shunkla-Yoklang skirmish in which the Hakas suffered defeat and they thereby paid a heavy indemnity to the Shunklas as a mark of making peace with the latter. The Hakas lost Yoklang to the Shuntlas and consequently came over to Haka proper. Murder of nine Haka women with their children by the Shunklas in the battle rang a great shocking knell that still rankles in the minds of the Hakas ever after the restoration of peace. The Hakas buried in their minds a grudge to burst out on any opportune time by way of revenge upon the Shunklas. They found the opportunity later during the time of their able leader Tat-in when they under his leadership attacked the Shunklas villages in the valley where Reshein and Shunklapi now stand, in which battle the Hakas came out successful and they regained their lost independence from the
yolk of the Shunklas. In their boundary settlement thereof the Shunklas left Klashun for Falam as their seat of power.

Empowered and emboldened with grant success on their northern neighbours, the Hakas now turned their attention to the Lushais west of Haka sometimes between the 14th and 15th century. After migrating from the Kabo valley to the Chin Hills, the Lushais (Khawrings and Zawngtes) had been settling in the area around Falam in the country as far east as the banks of the Lavar streams barely 20 miles west of Haka (their chief centres were KwaHring and Vizan on the western slopes of the Rongklang range) where their kinsmen the Hualngos/Whenohs still live. From Falam they moved north and west to the area west of the Manipur River where they lived during the 15th and 16th centuries. The occasion of the Lushai exodus from the border of Falam-Haka area was the consequence of the Haka attack on them soon after the Haka victory over the Tlashuns/Shunthlas. The reason of the Hakas attack on the Lushais on this occasion was harassment of the Lushais from their two chief villages (KwaHring and Vizan) at the Haka border. Even at their new western country beyond the Tiao River the Lushais could not settle peacefully as they were constantly pursued by the eastern powerful Chin tribes demanding tributes on them. Among their relationships with those eastern tribes, their relationships with the Yahaw tribe emerged most threatening to them. The Lushais tried to tackle the Yahaw
dominance by adopting the contrived play of inviting the Zahaws to collect their annual tributes whereupon the visiting Zahaw had to be profusely feasted only to massacre them in their unguarded moment. The plan was successful. The Zahaw army of about reportedly three hundred soldiers led by the then Zahaw chief, named Thangchuma, appeared in the scene; they were victims of the Lushai clandestine massacre. But the irony of fate prevailing on them was that having felt threatened by their own deceptive act of treachery on the Zahaws, many of the Lushais migrated west, arriving in the southern Lushai Hills in the mid 18th century towards the end of which they began to expand north and in the wake of the 19th century they occupied the whole of the Lushai Hills. The Lushais did not feel secure at their new home first in the southern part of the Lushai Hills as the Lais were pursuing them on their heels. It was mainly under this circumstance that they moved further to northern Lushai Hills.

The Thadous and Hmars had earlier settled there by displacing the still earlier occupants thereof like the Hallams, Hrangkhawls and Biates who consequently fled to Cachar and Tripura. This time when the Lushais appeared thereon it was the turn of the Thadous and the Hmars to flee, and thus they got spread over the Cachar plains, Tripura and Sylhet of Bangladesh, and a section of them entered the southern hills of Manipur.
Although some of the Kuki-Chins thus settled in the plains of Cachar District of Assam, Sylhet District of Bangladesh, Tripura and Manipur, the land of Chin Hills State of present Myanmar and the Lushai Hills remained the stronghold of their massive population. Their restlessness expressed in their internal conflicts leading to internecine wars among themselves continued until these were stopped in the wake of *Pax Britanica* following the British conquest and annexation of them one after another. Mention may be made here that the chief aims of their warfare seem to have been booty, slaves, and revenge. The same lust led them also to raid and plunder on the plains of the Chittagong, Tipperah, Assam, Arakan Hills, Manipur and Burman borders during the early period of British occupation of these lands. In Assam for many years long before its British occupation the inhabitants of the plains in the south had been victimized by the Kuki raiders who massacred many of them, taking their heads, and plundering and burning their houses.

1. 7 Contact with the British Government

The British Bengal Government initially adopted the Trans-border tribal policy of non-aggression and non-interference with these tribesmen. But these hillmen still continued plundering in those British occupied territories, slaving, taking heads and carrying into captivity of the British subjects till 1871 when the unpardonable outrages of the Lushais in Cachar and Sylhet compelled the British
Government to send an expedition, known as the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, into northern Lushai Hills, with the force of two columns, one advancing from Chittagong and the other from Cachar. The Lushais submitted, and consequently there ensued peace in Assam thereafter. Now the hillmen’s area of marauding attack was shifted to the Chittagong Hill Tracts; from 1883-1888 the Chin-Lushai community, known as the Shendus, hurled two more outrages in the said tract. These attacks gave the British Government of Bengal the opportunity of settling the Lushai issue once for all. The situation occurred at exactly the same time as the British Burma Government felt the necessity of facing the Chin question in the interest of the newly acquired province of Upper Burma including Kabow and Kale valleys. Consequently, what has been known as the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90, was launched, the Chins being dealt with from the west, and the Lushais from the east. The result of the expedition on the eastern side was that Lushai tract was occupied by the British Government, with administration of North Lushai Tract under a Political Officer, and the South Lushai Hills was placed under the administrative authority of a superintendent with headquarters at Lungleh and subordinate to the Commissioner of Chittagong.

On the eastern side i.e., Burma side the British interest in the Chin affairs was motivated mainly by the involvement of the Chins in the questions of the Kale state and the Yaw country. The alliance of a royal scion of Kale state, Maung Yit
and a rebel of the Yao country, Shwe Gyo Byu (both taking asylum in the Tashon territory of Northern Chin Hills), supported by the Chins, particularly the Tashons, the Soktes and the Siyins gave a serious threat to the Britishers. Carey and Tuck (ibid: 26) reports on the atrocities and ravages caused by them: "... the Siyin Chins, who came down to the plains, burning, killing, and capturing with the utmost daring; nor were the Siyins the only tribe on the war-path, for the Soktes swooped down on the Kabow valley and the Tashons under the Shwe Gyu ravaged the plains. During the month of October the Shwe Gyu Byu's men committed five, the Kamhows one. Within 12 days 122 Shans were carried off, 12 killed, and 14 wounded; moreover, the ancient town of Khampat was entirely destroyed and Kalemyo lost 35 houses by fire." These circumstances led to the British Government's expeditions to the Chin land for the first time in 1888-89 and again in 1889-90. The expedition continued up to 1894-95 for the complete annihilation of the obstructions in entire Chin Hills territory.

The British Government administered the Chin-Lushai people initially under three administrative units: the North Lushai Hills, the South Lushai Hills, and the Chin Hills that belonged to three separate provinces, namely Assam, Bengal and Burma, respectively. The Government soon realized the inconveniences and difficulties of running their administration from separate provinces, and subsequently in the Chin-Lushai Conference of 1892 held at Fort
William, Calcutta, as the first step of establishing a common administrative unit for the Chin-Lushai peoples it was resolved that the North and South Lushai districts with some portion of Arrakan Hill Tract should be amalgamated. The resolution was implemented; the North and South Lushai Hills, both of Indian Territory, were brought together into a single district of Assam, named Lushai Hills District. Obviously, the territorial reorganization did not take into consideration the cases of the Chin Hills and Arakan of the then Burma. It would be no exaggeration to pass the remark that this act of British administration was the first step of dichotomizing the people.