CHAPTER 3

CHANGES IN POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION

The Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 led to the occupation and annexation of the Lushai Hills. This in turn resulted in the creation of two districts—The North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills, with headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. The North Lushai Hills came under the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1895,\(^1\) while the South district became a part of Bengal until 1898\(^2\) when it was transferred to Assam.\(^3\) Captain H.R. Browne was placed in May, 1890 as the first Political Officer for the North Lushai Hills District with a salary of Rs. 1,000 per month. In the South Lushai Hills District, Captain J. Shakespear took the charge of office as the first Superintendent on the 16\(^{th}\) April, 1891. But on April 1, 1898, the two districts were amalgamated into one and came to be known as the Lushai Hills District, administered by a Superintendent with its headquarter at Aizawl. Major J. Shakespear occupied the post of officer as the first Superintendent of the Lushai

\(^1\) Foreign Department Proclamation No. 1698 E, dated the 6\(^{th}\) September 1895.

\(^2\) Proclamation No. 591 E. B, dated the 1\(^{st}\) April 1898 (Manual of local Rules and Others, 1915, Volume 1, p. 2).

Hills. The whole district, since then came under the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

The British throughout the period of their administration indirectly ruled the country through the existing chiefs. Many new chiefs were also created. But the Government did not interfere in the internal administration of the chiefs. Chiefs were retained instead of being abolished, and the responsibilities of day to day affairs rested on their shoulders despite the fact that the British monopolised power and authority. The system of government had its parallel with the ‘dual government’ in Bengal during the administration of Robert Clive between 1765

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4 Shakespear was the last Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills and took charge just before the amalgamation. See Annual Administration Report on the North Lushai Hills for 1896-97, From The Offg. Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, dated Shillong, the 29th July 1897.

5 Ibid., pp. 38ff; Letter No. 106For/877 P., Shillong, the 15th March, 1897. From the Offg. Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.


7 The rights of the Lushai chiefs were much curtailed with new sets of orders and responsibilities. Ibid.
and 1767 under which the Company acquired real power while the responsibility for administration rested with the Nawab of Bengal.⁸

**Relations with the Chiefs:**

Having decided to continue with the institution of chieftainship, the colonial rulers as early as 1890 stated ‘the present administration by chiefs be absolutely left as it is, and that we should not interfere with the village administration of criminal, civil, and social matters, but confine the administration, at least for the present, to preserving the public peace, leaving internal matters to the Chiefs’.⁹ This principle was underlined after 1895 in a proclamation issued by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, which published the rules for the administration of the Lushai Hills: one of the main principles was ‘the internal control of villages by their own leaders, the Chiefs.’ This rule in fact, remained in force throughout the Colonial administration with periodical modifications. It also became one of the most important aspects of Major Shakespear’s policy as he stated in his report of 1897-98 that ‘his aim was to interfere as little as possible between the Chiefs and their people and to do all he could to impress upon the Chiefs their responsibility for the maintenance of order in their villages.’ In his note on the 22nd

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⁹ Foreign Dept., External-A, August 1890, No. 240.
March, 1905, Shakespear said, ‘I am sure that the sound policy is to do all we can to make the best of the form of Government we found existing.\textsuperscript{10}

Nevertheless, the coming of the British weakened the position and powers of the chiefs as they were reduced to a subordinate position and forced for political reasons to maintain friendly relations with the British administration.\textsuperscript{11} Co-operation and cordiality became the order of the day. The chiefs were instrumental in the maintenance of peace, collection of revenue and tribute and supplying of labour. They assisted the British during the two World Wars and became instrumental in maintaining the British administrative and political set up. They acted as a link between the Government and the people who were governed. Through this arrangement, the English saved money, energy and time and the whole consequence was that the chiefs were reduced to mere agents of the British Government.\textsuperscript{12}

The withholding of chieftainship was quite beneficial for the British. It was allowed to go on as it provided an effective but cheap administration for the

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\item \textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 43.
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It was the basic objective of the English to make the local chiefs act largely according to the wishes of the Government without having to assume the entire responsibilities of administration by themselves.

The Lushais law of inheritance was based on descent through the father’s clan and thus, patriarchal in form. Traditionally, the youngest son inherited his father’s property as well as his position. However, in respect to chieftainship, the British altered this custom and instead, the eldest son was made a rightful successor of his father’s position with the expectation that he would be more mature and experienced than his younger brothers in matters concerning administration and judgement. Nevertheless, the existing chiefs functioned with the recognition of the British and acted with the sole acknowledgement of the latter. Many new chiefs were also created and appointed by the Government. As many as around 350 new chiefs were the creations of the colonial rulers till 1947.

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15 A.G. McCall has stated in his *Lushai Chrysalis* that the number of chiefs rapidly increased to more than 400 after some 40 years under the British which was around 60 at the beginning of the occupation. In the midst of division of opinion where there were some sections of the British officers who disapproved of the creation of new chiefs, the Government continued with this practice.
General Census under the Colonial Rule:

Under the British Government, the first general census for the North Lushai Hills was held in 1891. The Census recorded a population of 43,634 persons in an estimated area of 3,500 sq. miles with a density of 6 persons per sq. miles. However, the first complete census for the whole Lushai Hills District was undertaken for the first time in 1901. Total population comprised of 82,434 persons living in 239 villages with a density of 11 per square mile. There were 761 literates and only 45 Christians among the tribesmen. Ten years later a new census was undertaken in 1911. Out of the total population of 91,204 persons, the number of Christians increased to 2,461 persons and it reported 3,635 people as literates.

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16 The Census of Assam for 1891, Report by E.A. Gait of the Bengal Civil Service.

In South Lushai Hills, there was no census in 1891, See Census of India, 1901, Vol. I, India, Part I- Report, p. 46.


The 1921 census recorded a total population of 98,406, a rise of 7,202 persons only in ten years.\(^{21}\) This was due to the Great famine, *Mautam* of 1911-12, a number of families from Aizawl sub division emigrated to Tripura and many left Lunglei for Chittagong Hill Tracts and Tripura. Also, by the end of the First World War in 1918-19, a severe epidemic known as influenza devastated the whole land and took the lives of hundreds of people. The consequence was manifested in 1919 when some villages were even said to have lost as many lives as the number of houses in their village.\(^ {22}\) The village of Hriangtuinek, which was the worst affected recorded the death of 380 villagers.\(^ {23}\) All these adversities were exacerbated by unfavourable agricultural conditions and the disturbed situation in the south, which resulted in a bad year altogether.\(^ {24}\) However, this Census report shows a large increase in the number of Christians to 27,720 from 2,461 persons.\(^ {25}\)

Another census was undertaken in 1931 and it recorded 1,24,404 population in the Lushai Hills. The literacy rate had also gone up and there were

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\(^{21}\) V. L Siama- *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.


\(^{23}\) Rev. Liangkhaia- *Mizo Chanchin*, Mizo Academy of Letters, Aizawl, 1938,


\(^{24}\) Robert Reid- *op. cit.*, p. 46.

13, 320 literate persons in the whole District.\textsuperscript{26} In the 1941 census, the population further increased to a total of 1, 52,786 persons with 29, 765 literate persons.\textsuperscript{27} However, the growth rate was not up to expectation due to the fact that proper census could not be taken as a result of the Second World War.

\textit{Colonial Legislations:}

The colonial administration also introduced a number of legislative measures. The first legislation introduced was the \textit{Scheduled Districts Act. XIV of 1874}, which became effective in 1898.\textsuperscript{28} It acted as the guiding principle in the administration of the Lushai Hills District till 1919. The Act empowered the Provincial Government to declare what enactment should be enforced within its territorial jurisdiction. Against this backdrop, the \textit{Chin Hills Regulations} was passed in 1896. \textit{The Government of India Act of 1919} empowered the Governor-General-in-Council to declare any part of British India as a ‘backward track.’ Thus The Lushai Hills District was kept as a ‘\textit{reserved subject}.’ Robert Raid, as a Governor showed much interest in the hill areas so much so that he visited the Lushai Hills twice during his five years in office.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} Sangkima- \textit{Mizos, op. cit.}, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{27} Siama- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 77. For variation in population during the last fifty years, refer to R. B. Vaghaiwalla’s \textit{Census, 1951, Assam, Lushai Hills, District Census Handbook}, Shillong, Printed at the Assam Govt., Press, 1952.

\textsuperscript{28} AR; Notification No. 921P of 1 April, 1898.

\textsuperscript{29} McCall- \textit{Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit.}, p. 238.
On the basis of the recommendations of the Simon Commission, 1927-28 to which the Government readily agreed, the Lushai Hills was placed as ‘excluded’ from the purview of the New Constitution, and accordingly classed as an ‘Excluded Area’ in the Government of India Act, 1935, as per the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order, 1936. 30 This Act of 1935 and the Chin Hills Regulation Act, 1896 were combined to function as the ‘Inner Line’, which was a permit system enforced upon any outsider to enter the hills so specified by the Regulation. Along with the provisions of Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1 of 1873, the Inner Line served as an instrument to prohibit or forbade outsiders from entering beyond a certain line into the Hills without a pass from the concerned authority. 31 The Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Act XIV of 1860) and Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure were also introduced and extended into the Lushai Hills almost the same time. 32 All these legislations not only prevented the Lushai hills from outside penetration like the Assamese and the Bengalis, but were also instrumental in maintaining law and order in administering the Hills.


**Boundary Settlement under the British:**

As discussions about the future administration of the Lushai Hills were conducted in the year 1890-91, the boundary issue became an important concern. Though Lyall, the Commissioner of Chittagong Division, proposed for the inclusion of the whole District under Bengal, this was modified to a horizontal division of the country between Bengal and Assam.\(^{33}\) The Government of India in its letter No. 1396-E, dated the 3\(^{rd}\) July, 1890 accepted that ‘the south of the country occupied by the descendents of Lullal’ should form the northern boundary of the South Lushai Hills. Also, the Government in its letter No. 2641-E, dated the 24\(^{th}\) December 1890 agreed that the Lushai Hills should form a separate district under Bengal and Assam.\(^{34}\)

Demagiri, which was located within the area of Chittagong Hill Tracts was placed within the South Lushai Hill District ‘for administrative purposes’ in accordance with Charles Elliott’s orders, passed in 1892. This was endorsed by letter No. 278-P.D., dated the 4\(^{th}\) September, 1897 by the Government of Bengal.\(^{35}\) The latter also submitted to the Government of India, a notification for demarcating the boundary between Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Lushai Hills.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{34}\) Bengal Secretariat, Political, A, April 1891, Nos. 1-38, File No. L/10.

\(^{35}\) Bengal Secretariat, Pol., A, November 1897, Nos. 5-8.

\(^{36}\) Letter No. 667-P.D., dated he 9\(^{th}\) Oct., 1897.
The amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills into the Lushai Hills District had long been the subject of discussion, way back from 1892. A Conference was held at Fort William in Calcutta, known subsequently as the “Chin-Lushai Conference” on the 29th January, 1892 ‘to discuss civil and military affairs connected with the control of the Lushai and Chin Hills.’ The majority participants of the Conference were of the opinion that the whole tract of the Chin and Lushai Hills should be brought under one administrative head, subordinate to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The Conference also agreed that North and South Lushai Hills, with portions of the Aracan Hill Tracts as might be determined later on, should be brought under Assam at once, as one administrative unit.

The conclusions that the Governor-General in Council arrived at in respect of the proposals of the Conference was that the whole of the Lushai country should be placed under the Chief Commissioner of Assam, and the transfer of the South Lushai Hills from Bengal to Assam should be achieved as early as possible. The Northern Arakan Hill Tract should also be transferred from Burma to Assam. However, some four years had to pass before the Government of India again reviewed the situation. In September, 1896, a suggestion for holding a conference

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of the Superintendents of the three tracts was made. The Conference took place between 14th and 18th December, 1896 at Lunglei and was attended by—

A. Porteous, i.c.s., Political Officer, Northern Lushai Hills.
R. Sneyd Hutchinson, Bengal Police, Superintendent, South Lushai Hills.
H.N. Tuck, Burma Commission, Political Officer, Chin Hills and
Captain G.H. Loch, I.S.C., Commandant, North Lushai Military Police.

On both political and financial grounds, the Conference recommended the amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills Districts and the transfer of the South Lushai Hills to Assam. In February 1897, the Government of Bengal decided to vacate Fort Tregear as advised by the Chin-Lushai Conference. The scheme took its final form on the 17th July, 1897, when the Chief Commissioner submitted to the Government of India his proposals for the future administration of the Lushai Hills. Henceforth, the transfer of the South Lushai Hills to Assam was to take place on the 1st October, 1897, however it was delayed for six months and became effective on the 1st April, 1898.

Another Conference to discuss the numerous matters relative to the transfer took place on the 12th August, 1897 at Chittagong, in which H.J.S. Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam and Collier, Commissioner of Chittagong were

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present. The proposals given by the Chief Commissioner was accepted by the Government among other things, with the amendment of the **Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation**, 1880. Two Proclamations were issued on the 1st of April, 1898, which placed the South Lushai Hills under the administration of Assam and the newly formed ‘Lushai Hills’ should be managed by an officer known as ‘Superintendent of the Lushai Hills,’ and thereby appointed Major John Shakespear as the first Superintendent. The whole Lushai Hills thus, constituted one area, placed under the immediate control of the Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills District.

The third Proclamation by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, was rules for the administration of the Lushai Hills, which remained in force with periodical modifications throughout the British rule. One of the main principles of these rules was the internal control of the villages by their own chiefs. It was also one of the most important aspects of Shakespear’s policy, who held the view that ‘it is better to uphold the government of the chiefs and to govern through them, rather than to try to govern without them.’

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44 Robert Reid- *The Lushai Hills, op. cit.*, p. 60.

45 In a note which Shakespear recorded on 22nd March, 1905, on leaving the District.
Administrative Changes:

After the annexation of the Lushai Hills in 1890, the first and foremost task which occupied the mind of the British was that of permanent occupation and administration of the land. With ‘the intention of the Government of India to completely dominate the country’, D.R. Lyall, the then Commissioner of the Chittagong Division, recommended for the present, the ‘system of Government to function through the existing chiefs,’ as early as 12\textsuperscript{th} January, 1890 and drew up a set of orders for the chiefs as follows—\textsuperscript{46}

(i) All raids are absolutely prohibited and any offending chief would be punishable even to death, in addition to his village being destroyed.

(ii) There must be absolute security of person and property and everyone should have free access into another village so that any European would also be as safe as the European Superintendent. If access is refused or a traveller robed, severe fines would be imposed upon the offending chief.

(iii) Each village and chief should be held responsible for the maintenance and improvement of roads. The Superintendent had the right to fine and compel any chief not complying with the orders of the Government.

(iv) Each chief is liable to supply labour and accountable for revenue payment of his village.

\textsuperscript{46} Foreign Dept., External-A, Aug., 1890, No. 240.
There should be a meeting of the chiefs every year at the centre post, and attendance should be compulsory as an acknowledgement of British sovereignty, and absence would be punished by fine.

Captain Lewis, who knew best the Hill people, had a similar opinion with regard to the final point. Consequently, Captain Browne summoned a Durbar of chiefs on 14th June, 1890 at Aizawl for supply of labour and payment of revenue. He also announced that Lengpunga had been deposed for four years from his chieftainship. These enraged the Lushais so much that Browne had to pay his life later on.

Another such durbar was held between the 1st and 4th of January, 1892 at the vicinity of Lunglei which was attended by the representatives of all the tribes. The Durbur was addressed by Shakespear, who emphasised on the subject of the ‘permanency of our occupation’ and punishment and the chiefs would suffer if they carried on feuds with one another. For this, each chief was made to swear friendship or peace with each other, which became effective in later years.

The South Lushai Chiefs’ Conference was inaugurated in 1935-36 with the initiative of Pu Makthanga, the chief of Aizawl. Three Conferences were

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47 Foreign-A, Progs. August 1891, Section 1, General and Political Conditions prior to the Rising in September 1890.

48 Robert Reid- op. cit., p. 45.

successfully held during that cold season.\textsuperscript{50} In order to create a better understanding and co-operation between the chiefs and the administrators, McCall summoned a conference on October 14, 1941. An election for representation of the chiefs of the North as well as the South Lushai Hills District was held in this Conference. McCall pointed out further that the elected chiefs were the representatives of the Governor, the Viceroy and ultimately the King himself.\textsuperscript{51}

J. Shakespear in 1902 divided the Lushai Hills into \textit{eighteen zones} known as ‘Blocks.’ He created eleven Blocks in the north and seven in the south. He also appointed two Government representatives called ‘\textit{Circle Interpreter}’ from each Block to represent the Block.\textsuperscript{52} However, there is a slight variation in the account of Robert Raid, which says that under the Circle Administration of J. Shakespear in 1901-02, the whole District was divided into \textit{eighteen Circles}, twelve in the Aizawl Sub-division and six in the Lunglei Sub-division. Instead of two, he stated that an interpreter was appointed in each Circle as a ‘channel between the Sub-Divisional Officers and the Chiefs and their people.’\textsuperscript{53} This system of appointing Circle Interpreter did work well except that there were some reports of abuse by the interpreters for their own advantages. As such, an interesting change was later made in the Circle System by which interpreters were made to reside at Aizawl.

\textsuperscript{50} Reid- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{51} Ramchuani- \textit{Love Mizoram, op. cit.}, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{53} Robert Reid- \textit{The Lushai Hills, op. cit.}, p. 44.
and to visit their circles once in three months instead of residing there permanently.\textsuperscript{54}

The dawn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century marked the shift of British concerns from the plains to the Hills as a reprisal against the rising tide of Indian nationalism. As a result, the colonialists’ notions towards the Hills underwent a considerable change. Under such circumstances, the Lushai Hills was classified as a “\textbf{Backward Tracts}” by the Government of India Act, 1919 Section 52 (A), essentially aimed at keeping the tribes aloof from the mainstream of Indian nationalism and also to maintain their rule through the chiefs.\textsuperscript{55}

With the passage of time, when there arose severe impasses between the people and their chiefs, complaints against some of the chiefs and their interpreters reached the Superintendent, who was N. E. Parry at that time. In compliance or non-compliance to this restiveness which first appeared outwardly in 1926, Parry developed the idea of strengthening the power and position of the chiefs, who were the direct agents of the British. For him, the decline of ‘Zawlbuk’, the traditional bachelors’ dormitory, meant the relative decline of the chiefs’ power and position. He therefore, issued orders as part of his administrative measures for the restoration of the system by every village comprising more than 25 houses. He also ceased the further division of the chiefs’ lands into smaller villages. In this way, he

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 45.

\textsuperscript{55} J. Zorema- \textit{Indirect Rule in Mizoram, 1890-1954}, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2007, p. 94.
attempted to save the political base and conventional administration of the Lushai people.

In order to partially relieve the burden of the people on whom demand for food supplies like egg, fowls, goats and others were usually made through the village chiefs by circle officers or interpreters while on tour, the Superintendent issued an order on the 13th November, 1926 stating that the officers on tour must indent and pay for what they obtained. In another issue like hnatlang or forced labour, important steps were also undertaken by Parry to remove some divergences. Yet, he desisted to abolish such inconsistencies with the apprehension that such an act would create administrative difficulty and reduce the chiefs’ authorities. Therefore, his orders supported the continuance of the system as a custom, favourable to the chiefs except in unusual cases.56

With regard to judiciary, the chief possessed judicial right and authority over his subjects. All petty cases were to be decided and judged by him except cases or appeals like murder, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent. But when reports reached the latter about the Church elders called ‘Kohhran Upa’ and school headmasters who tried cases without the knowledge of the chief, bypassing the chief’s authority, he viewed the matter seriously. In order to put an end to such a malpractice which posed severe problems and setbacks to

56 Ibid., p. 97.
the district administration, Parry issued a prohibiting order, which sternly warned everyone to try all cases in the Chief’s court.\textsuperscript{57}

Proper study found that there was no uniformity in the administration of justice among the Lushais. The chief delivered justice with the help of his council of elders in accordance with the customary laws of the land. But the customary laws were not coded and could be interpreted differently by an individual chief. This troubled the British when they administered the Lushai Hills. It induced Parry to prepare a pamphlet on judicial laws in 1925 with the hope that inconveniences for the future administrators and chiefs would be done away with.\textsuperscript{58}

Parry’s ideas on the future administration of the Lushai Hills and the hill districts of Assam crystallised into a scheme to form a separate administrative unit. His opinion was that though the Lushai possessed a high literacy rate, they still remained backward and savage at heart. Their land was not suitable for the introduction of industries and had no future as there were no natural resources like minerals. Trade and transport system were not properly organised or managed. He thus, recommended the Lushai Hills to be placed as an ‘excluded area’ in future constitutional reform. Together with his other two alternatives, he placed this

\textsuperscript{57} Parry-\textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{58} Rules of Procedure for the trial of cases on the Chin-Lushai border, Nov. 25, 1925, From Superintendent, Lushai Hills.
suggestion before the Simon Commission in the form of a memorandum when the latter visited Assam in 1928. His other two alternatives were—\(^{59}\)

a. A hill division comprising all the hill tracts of Assam must be constituted and placed under a Chief Commissioner directly responsible to the Government of India. This division should have a separate budget and the deficits shall be met by grants from the Imperial revenues.

b. A separate North Eastern Frontier Hill Province may be formed to include the hill districts of Assam and Burma with headquarters at Kohima.

Parry was not in favour of the Hill districts being merged with the plains under a single administration. Though, his scheme did not materialise, it led to discord till almost the end of the British rule. The Simon Commission came to the conclusion that the hill areas should be excluded from the purview of the provincial legislature without any representation in the legislature, and termed it as ‘Excluded Area’ to be administered through the agency of the Governor.\(^ {60}\) Another term it coined for was ‘Partially Excluded Areas’, which were however, to be represented in the provincial legislature. These recommendations were accepted by the Government which agreed to bear all financial expenditure required for the development and administration of the specified areas.

\(^{59}\) Zorema- op. cit., p. 100.

\(^{60}\) It was decided as per the report of the local officers of the District. See Secret letter from L.L. Peters, Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to The Commissioner, Surma Valley & Hill Div., Silchar, August 1935.
As the Lushai Hills was ‘Excluded’ from the purview of administration of Assam Legislature, some sections of the Lushai intelligentsia demanded the inclusion of the Hills in the Reformed Council. To pursue their demand, a petition was submitted to Sir Michael Keane as early as on December 4, 1933, asking for two representatives from the Lushai Hill District in the Assam legislature. Though there were many more such petitions, they were turned down by the then Political Officer, McCall and curbed the protest with all high handedness.\(^61\) The Lushai Hills was ultimately included within the ‘Excluded Area’ in Part 1 of the Government of India Bill, 1935.\(^62\) It became effective under the Government of India Act, 1935. This fulfilled the intention of the British once again and acted as a complete fulfilment of the indirect rule of the British in the Lushai hills.

*Village Administration:*

In order that the chief administer his own village effectively and with greater control, McCall introduced a system of Village Welfare Committees.\(^63\) It was a device for him to encourage the ruled to submit to the new system brought about by *Pax Britannica*. It would also improve public health and living conditions and would operate under the supervision of the District Red Cross

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61 Zorema- *op. cit.*, pp. 103-04.

62 Appointment and Political Dept., Reform Branch, Govt. of Assam, Secret letter, No. 2709-12Fr, Shillong, the 15\(^{th}\) July, 1935.

Society with its headquarters at Aizawl. The chief would act as its President, assisted by heads of the church, school, pensioners and in addition, two men and two women. The Committee would render voluntary service and every responsibility for its effective functioning rested on the chief. The system was intended to strengthen the relationship between the Chiefs and their subjects.⁶⁴

The formation of such committees were approved by the then Governor of Assam, Robert Neil Reid. The overall motive of such formation was aimed at strengthening the position of the village chiefs as Zorema noted, “Though the system was ostensibly aimed at promoting village welfare, its real motive was to strengthen the position of the chiefs by enlisting the support of the village elite.”⁶⁵

A noteworthy development in the early years of the British administration was the proliferation of chiefs and minor chiefs as head of villages. This eventually diminished the reputation and status of the chiefs as any one could easily become a chief if he earned the favour of the British administration. So, in order to reduce it to a limited number, McCall consulted as many as thirty nine northern chiefs and with their consent, took steps for the regulation of succession on the principle of primogeniture.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Robert Reid- History of the Frontier Areas, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶⁵ Zorema- op. cit., p. 114.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 115.
Rules were framed to ensure the successful working of this principle. The Superintendent could appoint his own regent or guardian if the heir was still a minor until he attained majority. If a chief died without leaving any legitimate heir, then the case of succession would be considered on merit basis. McCall achieved his object of regulating the rule of succession of the Lushai chiefs during his administration. He compiled a manual, “The Lushai Hills District Cover” early in 1938 which received official recognition on the 7th November of the same year. Major John Shakespear had prepared way back in 1898 the same type of manual of the original rules and standing orders, duly approved by the Government on April 1, 1898 and enforced thereafter. This had now been replaced in the form of amendment by McCall’s Lushai Hills District Cover.

Though various measures and steps were taken from time to time by successive officers, such measures only increased the chief’s duties with a corresponding decrease in their power and position.67

Another development relating to religion impacted the administration during McCall’s time. This was the appearance of revivalism known as ‘High Revival’ or ‘Harhna Sang’ resulting to a reawakening or nationalism among the Lushais.68 As it was considered to be a threat to the administration and peace and tranquillity, it became a matter of concern for the administrators. By the time of the ‘Fourth Revival’ in 1935 the situation took an alarming and disquieting turn,

67 Ibid., p. 116.

because the revivalists declined to pay taxes and began to challenge the authority of the chiefs, Mission Heads and officials of the Government including the Superintendent.\textsuperscript{69} Stern action followed and the revivalism was successfully suppressed by McCall himself as it might have led to open rebellion.

The British also introduced the Chiefs’ Durbar. It was not permanent but was an important appendage of the colonial government to perpetuate its rule unhindered, and met from time to time to deliberate on administrative and legal matters.\textsuperscript{70} At the beginning in 1936, the Chiefs conferences were held in different Circles. Three Conferences were held during July 1936 at Bukpui, Lungchhuan, and Lunglei with nine, sixteen and nine chiefs attending the Conferences respectively. This was done as the need for training the chiefs to face new challenges and development was urgently felt by the Superintendent himself. A variety of issues were discussed in the Conferences which enabled the chiefs to express their views on different subjects.

To further strengthen the chiefs’ authority, McCall extensively toured the District during 1938 and held a conference of chiefs at Lunglei in the same year, followed by another one at Aizawl the next year, which resulted in the formation of a ‘District Chief Durbar’ in 1941, in which the Superintendent installed himself as its President. The Sub-Divisional Officer of Lunglei acted as its Vice-President.

\textsuperscript{69} Zorema- \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 117-18.

\textsuperscript{70} For the chief functions of the Durbar, see McCall- \textit{Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit.}, pp. 249-51.
and Ex-Officio members and other members were also inducted. The previous conferences and the durbar provided direct links and contacts between the Government and the Chiefs. The Durbar was supposed to act as a consultative and advisory body supporting the Superintendent and also for strengthening the power of its member. These measures resulted in the chiefs becoming subservient, loyal and co-operative to British policy.  

Accordingly, the first Durbar was held at Thenzawl on the 14th October, 1941 and was attended by as many as twenty six chiefs, who discussed numerous subjects of general nature. To strengthen the Durbar, McCall adopted a Ten Point Code, which was translated into Lushai. The Code was aimed at forging unity and social harmony among the various sections of the society as well as between the chiefs and the people, and for strengthening the position of the chiefs. But all the favours and privileges of the chiefs turned into a device for a wayward challenge and resistance for the common people after 1947 that chieftainship was abolished in 1954.

The administration actively involved the Lushais in the two World Wars. During the First World War, the Superintendent, A. Playfair insisted that the Lushais should participate to defend the British Empire. He raised about 2100

71 Ibid., pp. 246-48.

72 List of chiefs, see C. Chawngkunga- Important Documents of Mizoram, Art & Culture Department, Aizawl, 1998, pp. 299-301.

73 McCall- Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., pp. 260-68.
Lushai volunteers to form the 27th Lushai Labour Corps, who were sent to France and other parts of Europe. Around 30 Lushai men were also induced to join the 8th Army Bearer Corps to serve in Mesopotamia.\textsuperscript{74}

The Lushais were again dragged into the war when the Second World War broke out in 1939. Apart from their administrative duties, the Lushai chiefs were urged to reaffirm their allegiance to the British Crown by engaging in the War. The polite request from the authority, the positive experiences of the Lushai men in the first War and the benefits they earned, coupled with a curious bend of mind, encouraged the Lushai youths to venture in the War front once again.\textsuperscript{75} McCall, the then Superintendent, convened a meeting of the chiefs of Aizawl Division on the 3rd April, 1942 and asked the chiefs if they were prepared to defend their country. The result was the formation of the “Lushai Hills Total Defence Scheme” on March 7th of the same year. Under McCall’s direction, Rev. Horace William Carter organised the South Lushai Labour Corps during April to August, with Lunglei as its headquarters. By 1943, the Lushai Scout Corps, which had been raised in 1941, combined with the other forces, to form the ‘Lushai Brigade’, popularly known as ‘\textit{Pasaltha Pawl}’ by the Lushais, and was sent to the War front with around 3551 recruits. But McCall was transferred with the change of Governorship

\textsuperscript{74} Dr. Rosiem Pudaite-\textit{Indian National Struggle for Freedom and Its Impact on the Mizo Movement}, 2002, pp. 81-82; V.L. Siama-\textit{op. cit.}, p. 72; Sangkima-\textit{op. cit.}, p. 154.

\textsuperscript{75} Zorema-\textit{op. cit.}, p. 122.
in Assam in May, 1943 and at the same time, the Japanese invasion of the Hills was successfully averted during the War.76

Administrative development in the Lushai Hills after 1943 was political in nature, which drifted towards the transfer of powers. A topic on the future policy of the Lushais set the tone of the whole administration in a messy and restive position. Under such a condition, there could be no remarkable breakthrough in administrative work worthy to mention towards the last decade of the British rule. Nonetheless, throughout the colonial rule of around 57 years, there occurred many significant changes and developments in the administration. It directly or indirectly impacted the Lushai people adversely affecting the traditional socio-political set up. The Lushais were also aroused from their slumber and the Hills witnessed astounding political changes not long after the British left the Country.

Political Development:

There were sweeping changes before and after the British occupation of the Lushai Land. The difference was effectively felt in the area of political consciousness, in chieftainship, in legal laws and their political application, system and nature of governance, structure of organisation and approach in polity, etc. The changes gave rise to feelings of national consciousness, solidarity, cohesion, political and constitutional awareness as well as rise of new social and political forces, formation and growth of political parties, abolition of chieftainship, demand for

autonomy or local self government, birth of militant organisations and political movement for statehood and secessionist activities in the subsequent stages.

**Abolition of Head Hunting:**

From times immemorial, head hunting was the usual practice of the Lushai warriors to prove their bravery and showcase their superior skill. It was done in order to gain prestige and fulfil one’s responsibilities. When a village was raided or a territory conquered, heads were taken home to mark one’s victory in war. Head hunting was also sometimes necessitated in case of ceremonies linked to death and burial of a superior chief. For example, it so happened in the case of a Paite chief, Lalroo, the father of Lalchuka, who was caught and killed by Ram Singh and Tribonjit Singh, Manipuri fugitives in 1843. Being a great chief, Laroo’s body was kept dried for several days for people to pay their last respect. According to custom, the princes of royal blood required slaves to serve them in ‘Mithikhua’ or the ‘underworld’. This necessitated the offering of human heads at the place of burial. Observing this tradition, Lalchuka, who succeeded his father, decided to offer a hundred slaves’ heads at the funeral of his father. He then sent his men to the nearby Kachubari village, whose inhabitants had misbehaved with his people to

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77 Shakespear in his ‘Notes on the Lushais’ in *Report of the Census of Assam, 1901* argued the belief that head hunting was one of the peculiarities of the Hill tribes. He stated that head hunting was not the usual practice but mere incident in the raid.
destroy and obtain their heads in retribution.\textsuperscript{78} This perpetration was known as the ‘Kachubari massacre’ which caused severe panic and distress in the next few years.

The weapons used by the Lushais in wars were Pelt bows, daggers, spears, axe, dao and later on, muzzle loaders and guns were invented or obtained as a sophisticated form of defence. Guerrilla warfare, and attack or waylay were the fighting tactics usually adopted. Barricaded posts and ditches formed the defensive infrastructure. Every village adult had to compulsorily be trained in combat.

When the Lushai Hills was conquered in 1890, the British took immediate steps to do away with head hunting considered as abhorrent.\textsuperscript{79} In due course, it was completely abolished and after thirty years of occupation, the land was turned into a land of ‘soul hunting instead of head hunting’ and such inhuman and heartless practices were replaced by love of humanity and compassion.\textsuperscript{80} The result was manifested in the sense that tribal feuds, internecine warfare and strife became a thing of the past.


\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Arrangements for Political and Military Control of Chin-Lushai Country}. Foreign Dept., Ext. A, Aug. 1890, No. 240.

\textsuperscript{80} Rochunga Pudaite- \textit{The Education of the Hmar People}, Published by Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, Sielmat, 1963, p. 130.
Abolition of Chieftainship:

The existence of chieftainship among the Lushiais can be traced back to Zamuaka in 1701.\textsuperscript{81} He was the first chief in the real sense of the term. The heads of villages who existed before him were only petty and nominal heads. The tribes in those days formed a kind of loose confederacy who led a nomadic life without any permanent settlement. There was no baron or lord as in feudal Europe to lead them in war. But as time passed, the tribes felt increasingly insecure, and were desirous of having a leader to guide them. The choice fell upon the eldest son of a Paite warrior, Zamuaka of Seipui, who however, hesitantly accepted the request. The Lushais were since then organised into a collective unit under the banner of their chief.

The chief appointed his own council of ministers called upas. They helped and supervised him in carrying out his day to day affairs in the administrative sphere. The chief also appointed a priest to preside over religious ceremonies and care for the spiritual welfare of the people. Each village had its own ‘thirdeng’ or blacksmith, whose importance was underlined by the fact that he was appointed by the Chief himself. Though in theory, the chief exercised supreme authority, he was not a despot. He exercised the power that had been granted to him by virtue of his position. The chief’s authority rested on his own ability and personal charisma. But all in all he was a benevolent ruler, caring for the welfare of his subjects. The chart

\textsuperscript{81} Thathang Hangshing- \textit{Brief History of the Zoumis} (unpublished), p. 2. Also see Animesh Ray- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 23.
below illustrates the political institution or the village administrative system of the Lushais during the medieval period.

![Political Structure of the Traditional Lushais]

**Fig: Political Structure of the Traditional Lushais**

When chieftainship became an established institution, every village began to have its own chief starting from the eighteenth century. If more than one village was placed under a single chief, the village that the chief himself established was called ‘khawpui’, meaning the ‘Principal village’ and the other villages were known as ‘khawper’, meaning sub-villages.\(^2\) The sub-villages were generally given away by the chief to his sons who sometimes remained independent without

\(^2\) Barkataki- *Tribes of Assam, op. cit.*, p. 92.
having to pay any tribute or tax. This generous gesture had the effect of diminishing the chief’s power and suzerainty, leading to the ultimate disintegration of the chief’s domain.\textsuperscript{83}

Some of the prominent clans within the Lushais (Mizos) fold were—the Haulongs, the Hualnams, the Sailos, etc. There were some other important tribes like the Pawis, the Thadous, the Suktes and the Guites (Paites) in the Lushai Hills during the nineteenth century. They were commonly and uniformly designated by the British as ‘Kukis’, ‘Chins’ or ‘Lushais’. Sometimes, the Suktes were confused with the ‘Kamhaus’. Kamhau was in fact, the greatest chief of the Suktes in the 1850’s in the Chin Hills whose fame was heard even by the Meiteis and the British that the tribe came to be called also by his name. The numbers of the Houlongs and Sailos in 1861 were 12, 600 and 10, 800 persons\textsuperscript{84} respectively and William Shaw, in his record placed the probable total number of houses which could be classified as belonging to the Thadous as around 5, 500 with an average population of 27, 500 persons, spread over an area of about 10, 000 square miles.\textsuperscript{85} Carey and Tuck estimated the possible population of the Sukte tribe as 59 villages, 1,801 houses

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84} T.H. Lewin- \textit{Wild Races of the Eastern Frontier of India}, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1984, p. 247.

and 9,005 persons, including the 678 houses of the Kamhau clan and 651 houses in the Nwengal tract.  

On the basis of chieftainship, three great chieftaincies arose in the 18th and 19th century which continued till the British invaded and annexed the Chin-Lushai country in 1890. The three great chieftaincies of the Chin-Lushai territory were—

1. *The Guite Chieftaincy (c. 1705-1929 A.D):*

The Guites were the earliest Zo people who established themselves between Tedim in the Chin Hills of Burma and various parts of the north eastern Lushai Hills as far as Manipur. They were the first ruling family who made their rule hereditary by founding three large villages named Tedim, Geltui and Chiimnuai. The Guite chieftainship was founded by Guite, whose eldest son was Tuahchiang. But the real beginning of chieftainship and supremacy of the Guites commenced with Thanggou in around 1722 A.D. The strongest and most well known Guite chief was Goukhothang (1821-1872), who built his chief village at Mualpi in the Chin Hills.  

The Guites reached the pinnacle of their power during the reign of Sumkam, eldest son of Goukhothang, who ruled from 1872 to 1893.

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Sunkam extended his territory as far as the foot hills of Moirang in Manipur by 1876. Given below is a table of the order of succession of the Guite chiefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guite (C. A.D 1200-1272)</th>
<th>Tuahchiang</th>
<th>Nivang</th>
<th>Sinte</th>
<th>Kulngen</th>
<th>Kullai</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lamlei</td>
<td>Hauzel</td>
<td>Dousel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leimang</td>
<td>Ngaihte</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mangvum</td>
<td>Kipmang</td>
<td>Mangte</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngeknguk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bawklu</td>
<td>Thatzui</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guisum</td>
<td>Duhlisan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matlun</td>
<td>Galte (Ralte)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mangpi</td>
<td>Thangvui</td>
<td>Vuphil</td>
<td>Hilsia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manglun</td>
<td>Khuptong</td>
<td>Valte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonlun</td>
<td>Hatzaw</td>
<td>Hatlang</td>
<td>Hatlei</td>
<td>Langel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 Ibid., p. 3.

The Manipur Maharaja also organised a strong force of 2,400 fighting men against the Guite and Sukte in the previous year, though to no avail. However, peace was concluded between the two in 1876 on Sumkam’s favoured and over 2,000 Guites and Suktes crossed the border in 1877-78 and settled down on lands towards the south-west of Moirang, allocated to them by the Manipur Maharaja as per the terms of agreement. This migration was a necessity for the Guites as their power had declined, it had been snatched away by the Pawis in their original land that a new settlement would eliminate the need of confrontation and hostilities. The Guite influence began to rapidly decline after the death of Sumkam in 1893, though it lingered on for some more years till about 1929.

The last great chief of the Guites was Kamzamang (1895-1929). By the time Kamzamang ruled over the Guites, most of the Guites and their tributaries were settled in the Lushai Hills and Manipur. The Guites also scattered towards Assam and Cachar. The most important villages of the Guites were Chimnuai, Geltui, Kalzang, Tedim, Mualpi and Lamzang, all in the Chin Hills and Tonglon.


Lawibual, Songtal, Sialbu, Hanship, etc in Manipur and Mimbung, Teikhang, etc in the Lushai Hills.

An important feature of Kamzamang administration was the establishment of friendly relations with the British who had occupied the Hills as well as the plains of Manipur since 1891. Maj. Cole, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District also established close bonds with the chief and provided facilities for his education at Aizawl during the term of his tenure. B.C. Gasper, another British officer in Manipur, visited Hanship, the principal village of Kamzamang in 1925. His education sharpened his intellect and together with his physical attributes, Kamzamang was able to get from his people respect and obedience. After his death, due to lack of a capable successor, his chieftaincy languished. Simultaneously, the British made their entry into the area formally dominated by him. The Guites scattered in all directions.

2. The Sukte or Kamhau Chieftaincy (c.1760-1890 A.D):

The Sukte chieftainship originated and ruled in the Chin Hills in the early part of the 18th century. A contemporary of the Guites, matrimonial alliances were made between the two ruling chiefs for mutual assistances in war and other matters. But the alliance favoured the Suktes who in course of time conquered and subjugated almost the whole of the northern Chin Hills, pushing other powerful kindred tribes like the Guites, Thadous and the Lushais towards the north, compelling them to emigrate to the Lushai Hills and Manipur.

92 Zamzachin- op. cit., p. 7; Piangzathang- op. cit., pp. 98f.
The Suktes attained fame and glory during the reign of Kamhau in the mid-nineteenth century. Kamhau, as a chief was so strong and powerful that his name inspired both awe and fear, and none dared to oppose or disobey his orders. He earned fame and reputation as a great warrior and adventurer and even the British administrators and military officers were wary of him. He never suffered the humiliation of defeat in any encounter. His fame was such that the Suktes began to be referred to by the British as Kamhaus after him.

Fig: Genealogy of the Suktes

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93 Based on Vumson- Zo History, Aizawl, n.d, p. 78.
Kamhau was the eldest son of Khantuam, a great Sukte chief. Mualbem was the capital of the Suktes, while Tedim became the second capital in later times. In fact, Zapau Sukte ruled at Mualbem while Kamhau reigned at Tedim at the same time. Kamhau slowly and gradually occupied the Guite’s lands and was considered invincible. He collected eight different kinds of taxes, which were—

(i) Agriculture tax
(ii) Taxes on trade and commerce
(iii) Taxes on cattle and other domesticated animals
(iv) Tax on hunted game
(v) Tax on trading of animals
(vi) Land revenue
(vii) Taxes from emigrants and
(viii) Taxes from protectorate villages and vanquished tribes.

It was during his reign that arms were greatly used and the Suktes were in large possession of arms and ammunition as illustrated by Mackenzie’s comment, “The Lushais hold the Sooties in great dread, and are falling back before them.

94 Ibid., p. 79; Thathang- loc. cit.

They are well supplied with fire-arms, supposed to be procured from Burma, whence they also obtain their ammunition.\(^{96}\)

Kamhau died in 1868 in Tedim and his youngest son, Khochin Sukte succeeded him as per custom.\(^{97}\) But Khochin bore no son, and the Suktes gradually lost its power and influence as no other powerful chief arose. Meanwhile, a foreign power established domination and introduced modern method of warfare and weaponry.

**The Sailo Chieftaincy (c. 1750-1890 A.D):**

The Sailos are stated to belong originally to the Paites.\(^ {98}\) They traced their lineage from Chhuahlawma,\(^ {99}\) the father of their first chief, Zahmuaka, who was captured in a fight by the Hualnams of Seipui village when they raided Tedim, a Paite Village in Chin Hills in c.1680 A.D. Though brought as a slave, Chhuahlawma was married at Seipui and bore a son whom he named ‘Zahmuaka’, ‘Za’ means ‘hundred’ and ‘Hmuaka’ means ‘a male person who is being met’, thus

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\(^{96}\) Mackenzie- *op. cit.*, p. 163.


‘Zahmuaka’, mean ‘being met by hundreds’ of the villagers. Chhuahlawma’s real name was ‘Siammang’, his father was Ralna, son of Bawklua or Sizanga.100

Zahmuaka married Lawileri who bore him six sons- Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma. From these six sons of Zahmuaka, the different clans of the Lushais subsequently originated.101 Zahmuaka was physically big and strong like his father and so, he was invited to be their chief by the Lushais. His six sons also became chiefs of six different villages over which Zahmuaka presided. Thangura, the fourth son of Zahmuaka, bore two sons- Chawnglula and Thangmanga. Thangmanga bore Sailo, who became the progenitor of the Sailo clan.102 The table below is the genealogy root of the Sailos.103

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TABLE 1: GENEALOGICAL TREE OF SAILO

Bawklua
  | Sisanga/Sihzanga
  |   | Ralna
  |   |   | Chhuahlawma(Siammang)
  |   |   |   | Zahmuaka

Zadenga   Paliana   Rokhuma

Thangluaha   Rivunga

Thangura

Chawnglula   Thangmanga

   | Sailova

Source- Genealogical Tree of Mizo\textsuperscript{104}

TABLE 2: GENEALOGICAL TREE OF SAILO (Lalsavunga)

Sailo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chungnunga</th>
<th>Lianlula</th>
<th>Darpuiiana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rohnaa</td>
<td>Lalchera</td>
<td>Lalhluma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thangphunga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lallula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lalpuiiana</th>
<th>Lallianvunga</th>
<th>Mangpura</th>
<th>Vuttaia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lalsavunga</td>
<td>Ngura</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vanhnuailiana  | Lalphunga | Thawmphunga |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|

Dothioa | Liankhama | Lalbura | Buangtheua | Cinhleia |
| Saihranga | Hrangkima | Lallhuta | Lalsailoa | Suakphunga |
| Thangkhuma | Rokima | Laluaua | Suakhama |
| Hrangchuna | Lalchungnunga | Lalbawnga |

Fig.: Lineages of Sailo

By virtue of their intellect, ability to govern and vanquish enemies, the Sailos established themselves firmly from one end of the hills to the other. Their suzerainty was recognized by other clans and tribes so much so that the Sailos

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tended to become cruel and arrogant.\textsuperscript{106} Within a short span of time, they established themselves as rulers in the entire Lushai Hills until the advent of the British.

Lallula was the most powerful and famous ruler among the early Sailo chiefs.\textsuperscript{107} He ruled at Selesih and the village expanded to accommodate more than three hundred houses within a few years and at one time numbered over 7000 houses.\textsuperscript{108} He died around in 1803 A.D but before his death, Lallula contributed in spreading the Duhlian-Lusei dialect, which in due course became the \textit{lingua franca} of the Lushai people.\textsuperscript{109}

It was Lalsavunga, who consolidated the power of the Sailo as the central authority.\textsuperscript{110} From Zawngtah village, he moved to Hlimen around 1805 and then continued to move north, and founded his capital at Aizawl. He is believed to have built Aizawl in about 1810 A.D.\textsuperscript{111} It was here that Lalsavunga started the process of subduing the Zadeng chiefs, another powerful Lushai tribe. He then built a new village at Darlawng in about 1818 when he was at height of his power. The eldest

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{106} Lal Biak Thanga- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9.\\
\textsuperscript{107} Thangtungenung- ‘Medieval Political History of the Zos’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.\\
\textsuperscript{108} Lal Biak Thanga- \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 5, 87-88.\\
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 90.\\
\textsuperscript{110} Thangtungenung- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.\\
\textsuperscript{111} Lal Biak Thanga- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 92.
\end{flushleft}
of the three sons of Lalsavunga, Vanhnuailiana achieved fame due to the construction of a splendid village, Tualte, with 1700 houses.\textsuperscript{112} Even today, Lushais frequently mention that their forefathers lived at Tualte. Lalphunga, the second son of Lalsavunga, earned fame for resisting the British occupation. Lalsavunga’ third son, Thawmvunga was a legendary figure because of the heroic bravery he displayed in fighting the Pawis to gain the release of his grandfather, Vuta, who was captured by them.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{The Position of the Sailo Chiefs:}

The chief was the head of the territory.\textsuperscript{114} There might be other heads of villages or sub-chiefs within his territory. His territory could vary in extent—from one to many villages and hamlets. In theory, the Sailo chief was a despot but in practice, he was a benevolent ruler. The extent of his power and influence largely depended upon his own personal capabilities. Generally, his words were obeyed as law by all his subjects.\textsuperscript{115} Everything within the village and within his territory belonged to him. Whatever he required, he could demand from any of his

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{114} HNC Stevenson- \textit{The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes}. Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Reprint, 1986, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.
The power of life and death was in his hand. He was the chief justice of the village and every case was tried by him with the help of his Council members called Upa (elders). As the head of the village, he was the owner of the land, protector and father of his subjects and the supreme commander in wars.\(^{117}\)

However, the position and power of the Sailo chiefs underwent certain changes under the British rule. The power of life and death enjoyed by a chief was curtailed and the chief could not pass a death sentence. An appeal could also be taken to the Superintendent against the chief’s decisions if one so desired. In the words of H.K. Barpujari,

“The presence of a European officer between the chief and his people no less contributed to the lowering of the status of the chief. It became increasingly difficult on the part of the chief to meet the demands of the government, whether revenue or labour for the general tendency of the people was to resent any authority being exercised over them.”\(^ {118}\)

**Authority and Privileges:** The chief enjoyed the power to extract fines and tributes and had the right to impose even death penalty within his jurisdiction until the

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\(^{117}\) Rosiem Pudaite- *op. cit.*, p. 32.

British rule was established in the Lushai Hills. But he was not an all in all in everything and to a great extent, he was dependent for his continuance upon the allegiance of his subjects. In his daily administration, he was assisted by his council of elders called *Upas* or *Khawnbawl upas*. This *upa* council advised the chiefs in administrative, judicial and welfare activities and carried out work related to day to day affairs. Therefore, in many cases, it was the *upas* that ran the administration and the chief issued orders according to the consensus taken in the council. It was this council which served as the only available court of appeal and whatever decisions taken by the *upas*, who dominated the Council, became supreme and final.

Other then the *upas*, the other village functionaries who were under the direct control of the chief were *puithiam* or the priest, *tlangau* or village crier, *thirdeng* or village blacksmith. Except from the above *upas* and functionaries, the chief was entitled to receive a number of dues like *buhsun* or *fathang*, a certain baskets of paddy, *sachhiah* or the right fore leg of a hunted animal, *chichhiah* or salt tax and *khuaichhiah* or tax from a portion of extracted honey, etc from his subjects.

The chief was also entitled to extract free labour from his subjects as and when he required. Each villager was compulsorily bound to provide labour for three days in a year and each house in the village was required to furnish its share of any expense incurred in feeding or entertaining the *Lal’s* guests. The

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construction and repairing of the chief’s house was done by the voluntary labour of his people. Not only this, the chief was to ensure that all the villagers contributed free labour for the construction of public utilities. He was also responsible for the construction and maintenance of Zawlbuk. The chief was to allocate lands among his villagers for cultivation and look after their welfare and standard of living.

However, the chiefs neither maintained a standing force nor possessed regular fighting men. He was, of course, the supreme commander of the army and every grown up man was considered a soldier. The Zawlbuk or ‘bachelor’s dormitory’ was the nerve centre of the chief’s authority-- the collective unit of young men was presided over by the chief.

**Law of inheritance:** The youngest son as per customary law, usually inherited the position, land and properties of his father. But after the coming of the British, the law of primogeniture operated with regard to succeeding the deceased chief but the law of inheritance remained as before. However, the law of primogeniture was applicable only on the condition that the eldest son had not been assigned a separate village to rule independent. Any succession was also subject to the

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120 Lewin- *op. cit.*, p. 252.

121 McCall- *Lushai Hills District, op. cit.*, pp. 24f; Rosiem Pudaite- *op. cit.*, pp. 32f.

122 *Rules Regulation the Succession of Sailo Chiefs and Clans; Section 1.*
approval of the **Superintendent of the Lushai Hills**.\textsuperscript{123} Even in regard to ownership of land, though previously, a chief was the absolute owner of the land under his jurisdiction, the Government now reserved the right to take away any or whole of the land from his possession whenever necessary. It could also be confiscated as a punishment whenever the chief violated rules or disobeyed the Government order. Hence, each chief was provided a boundary paper or *ramri lehkha* after properly demarcating the boundaries of his land.\textsuperscript{124} This was unheard of or unknown before the occupation of the British.

**Nature of Chieftainship:** In the past, chieftainship was an integral part of the Lushai political life. The right to succession remained only with the ruling family provided the heir was mentally and physically sound. The large majority of the chiefs belonged to the Sailo lineage of Thangur clan. There were also a number of chiefs from the Hualngo, Hualnam, Paite, Hmar, Pawi, Ralte, Fanai and some subordinate clans. However, when the British arrived in the Lushai Hills, they also appointed chiefs from the commoners who rendered good administrative service to the Government. Such chiefs were designated as ‘*hnamchawm lal*’.\textsuperscript{125}

**Function:** Almost each village functioned as an independent entity ruled by its own chief called ‘*Lal*’. His words were law in Council and with reference to military decisions but barring this, all villagers were equal in status. This is

\textsuperscript{123} Parry- *op. cit.*, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{124} Sangkima- *Mizos, op. cit.*, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{125} Parry- *A Monograph, op. cit.*, p. 1.
illustrated by an incident narrated by Lewin in 1866 when he visited a Lushai village. On one occasion, as he stood talking with the chief in the village footpath, a drunkard came stumbling along, and when he found them standing somewhat in the way, he grasped the chief by the neck and shoved him off the path, asking why he stood on the road. Lewin was shocked by this impertinence and asked the chief for an explanation. He replied that “In war or in council, I am Chief, and my words are obeyed; behaviour like that would be punished by death. Here, in the village, that drunkard is my fellow and equal.”

From the above narration, it was visible that the power of the chief was duly circumscribed. A chief’s status and his village’s grew if he was successful in war. It was forbidden to kill a *lal* or chief. His house was a place of refuge for a criminal or a fugitive because, once such a person had taken a refuge in the chief’s house, he could not be harmed. The protected person, in turn became the slave of the *Lal*.

The chief alone owned slaves called *bawi*. This was one of the oldest institutions of the Lushai social and political life. There were three different types of *bawi*—

1. **Inpuichhung bawi**, a person who took refuge in the chief’s house due to poverty,
2. **Chemsen bawi**, a person who took shelter in the chief’s house by catching hold of the main pillar in the chief’s house called *sut* to escape revenge for his heinous crime and
3. **Thukluh bawi**, a person who joined the victorious chief by deserting his own side and promised that he and his descendents would remain

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126 Lewin- *op. cit.*, pp. 250f.

loyal to the chief. He could buy his redemption by payment of a mithun to the chief.¹²⁸

There was also a different form of slavery called sal. A sal was generally a warrior captured alive in war by a chief.¹²⁹ It was common in the early periods when inter-tribal feuds were the order of the day. A sal was in many cases interned in the chief’s custody but he could also procure his freedom by paying a big ransom. The system of bawi and sal was abolished in the Lushai Hills by an act of the British Parliament in 1927.¹³⁰

*Abolition of Chiefs’ Rights:

In the pre-British days, the position, power and function of the chiefs were extensive and vast, though they might not always be fully exercised. McCall¹³¹ has given a list of the perquisites of the chief. The chief:

a. had the right to order the death penalty.

b. had the right to seize food stores and property of villagers who desired to transfer their allegiance to another village.


¹²⁹ Shakespear- *op. cit.*, p. 49.


c. had property rights over land.

d. had the right to tax traders doing business within the Chief’s jurisdiction.

e. had the right to make their sons Chiefs under their own jurisdiction.

f. had the right to free Bawi (slaves) who were not able to purchase their own freedom.

However, the British curtailed these rights traditionally enjoyed by the chiefs. Taking over the administration of the Hills, the British Government in 1898 outlined the functions and duties of the chiefs:

1. The chief was responsible for all that went on in his village. All orders, etc. affecting his village would be sent through the Circle Interpreter.

2. The chief would adjudicate all civil disputes between people of his village. He would also dispose of all criminal cases except serious ones. His orders would not be interfered with unless he acted in bad faith.

3. The chief was responsible for keeping records on the following matters:
   (a) all births and deaths (b) all movements of people into and out of the village (c) all changes in licensed guns.

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132 Ibid.

The Government modified some of the provisions in 1937 and fresh orders were issued accordingly, which remained effective till the abolition of chieftainship in 1954.\(^{134}\) The eastern and the western chiefs had risen in revolt in 1892 when the British made further demands on the chiefs. Eventually, the British benefited greatly by saving themselves from a good deal of trouble by honouring the existence of the chiefs and at the same time burdening them with numerous responsibilities. In this way, the colonial government reaped the fruit of the travailed tasks shouldered upon and accomplished by the chiefs. The chiefs, uneducated and ignorant, on their part, failed to permanently uphold their rights, power and position that as soon as the colonial master, who had protected them left the scene, their status was eliminated by their own subjects. With the diminution of their power and the withdrawer of the British, chieftainship was abolished by an Act of the State Government, known as the Lushai Hills (Acquisition of Chief Rights) Act of 1954\(^{135}\) due to the efforts of the Mizo Union, a socio-political organization formed by the newly emerging middle class.\(^{136}\)

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\(^{134}\) For the detailed modified provisions, see A.G. McCall’s *District Cover, op. cit.*, pp. 24-28.


\(^{136}\) Barkataki- *op. cit.*, p. 93.
Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 endorsed the government ‘to prescribe, and from time to time alter by notification...a line to be called the Inner Line and to prohibit any subject living outside the area from living or moving therein.’\textsuperscript{137} It also stated that ‘the active control of the district officer needs not necessarily extend up to the boundary, but it must, under no circumstances, be carried further. Beyond this line the tribes are left to manage their own affairs with only such interference on the part of the frontier officers in their political capacity as may be considered advisable with the view to establishing a personal influence for good among the chiefs and the tribes.’\textsuperscript{138} Like wise, the Inner Line covered the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills and Cachar.\textsuperscript{139}

British rule was extended across the Inner Line and movement of non-officials were restricted continuously. The Line covered a vast area in the later period and only the officials and persons like missionaries, approved by the Government were permitted to enter within the zone.\textsuperscript{140} ‘This Regulation gave power to the Lt. Governor to prescribe a line to be called the Inner Line in each of

\textsuperscript{137} Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 (27\textsuperscript{th} August, 1873).

\textsuperscript{138} The Calcutta Gazette, 2 March 1870, part II & 1 Nov. 1871, part II, pp. 89-90.

\textsuperscript{139} Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, MSA.

\textsuperscript{140} Chaube- op. cit., p. 16.
the tribal areas beyond which no British subject and certain classes of foreign residents could pass without a license or pass. The pass or license might be subject to such limitations as might appear necessary. Rules were laid down regarding trade, the possession of land beyond the line and other matters which gave the Executive Government an effective control. The Regulation also provided for the preservation of elephants and authorised the government to lay down rules for their capture.  

Under the Scheduled District Act, 1874, the whole of Assam had been declared to be a Scheduled District. A majority of the Hill Districts were however, excluded from the operation of the Acts by Section 14 of the Assam General Clauses Act, 1915, passed by the Assam Legislative Council. The Montague-Chelmsford Report in 1917 recommended that the typically backward tracts should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Reformed Council. Legislation for such areas should be in accordance with the Regulations of the

141 V. Venkata Rao- A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India, 1874-1974, S. Chand & Company (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, pp. 45f.

142 Proposal for the Administration of the Lushai Hills. No. 119P From The Offg. Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign department, Shillong, dated the 17th July 1897.

143 Draft Notification I, Scheduled District Act, 1874 (XIV OF 1874), Bengal Eastern Frontier (Amendment), Regulation, 1925 (V of 1925).
Governor-General-in-Council under Section 71 of the Government of India Act, 1915.\textsuperscript{144}

The Government of India Act, 1919 stated that the Governor-General-in-Council reserves the right to declare any territory in British India to be a backward area under Section 52A of the Government of India Act, 1919.\textsuperscript{145} Thus, on January 3, 1921, the Council declared almost all the Hill Districts including the Lushai Hills as backward tracts. The Assam Frontier Tract Regulations, 1880 had also empowered the Governor to direct the withdrawal of any enactment in force in these areas.\textsuperscript{146} The Simon Commission discussed the constitutional position of the hill areas once again. There prevailed a strong and lengthy debate on this issue of excluding or including the Hill Areas within the legislative reforms. Hutton, The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, took the view that the administration of the hill areas, except the Jaintia Hills should be completely separated from that of the plains. N.E Parry, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, also strongly put forward his expressed desire for the exclusion of the Lushai Hills from reform schemes on the ground that the Lushais were totally different from those of the plains.\textsuperscript{147}

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\textsuperscript{144} Venkata Rao- \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 46f.


\textsuperscript{146} Venkata Rao- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 69.
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The matter was again discussed by the Government of Assam in 1930 which unanimously recommended the exclusion of the Hills areas with the exception of Shillong municipality. The Simon Commission in general, accepted the recommendations of the Provincial Government and therefore, recommended the exclusion of the ‘typically backward tracts’ excepting perhaps the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, to be administered through the Agency of the Governor. It was the recommendation of the Commission that the backward tracts should be classified into two- excluded and partially excluded areas.\(^\text{148}\) However, which areas should be designated as partially excluded or not was not clearly specified and the suggestion for its administration was also somewhat complicated. The classification- ‘excluded areas’ only meant the replacement of the somewhat derogatory term- ‘backward areas’ for a more colourful aphorism.

The proposals of the Government of Assam were not fully accepted by the Government of India. The latter was not in favour of the total exclusion of even the Naga, Lushai and the North Cachar Hills including the three Frontier Tracts. The Secretary of State for India however, did not approve the views of the Government of India and instead, consented with the views of the Government of Assam.\(^\text{149}\) The


\(^{149}\) The retention of the ‘Excluded” Areas for the Lushai Hilll District as set forth in Part I of the original Sixth Scheduled to the Government of India Bill was desired by the administration of the Lushai Hills as reflected in *Secret Letter, From L.L Peters, Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to The Commissionaer, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silcher, dated Aijal, August, 1935.*
view of the Secretary of State for India was also the desire of the Royal Empire Society, which constituted a committee to consider the recommendations of the Simon Commission. Thus, the White Paper on Indian Constitutional Reforms accepted the proposal of the Simon Commission in 1933, including the classification of the areas into ‘excluded’ and ‘partially excluded areas’. It was contained in the Sixth Schedule to the Government of India Bill, 1935.\textsuperscript{150}

In this manner, the Lushai Hill District was placed within the ‘Excluded’ areas of the Government of India Act, 1935.\textsuperscript{151} But there was agitation from some sections of the Lushais under the aegis of Rev. Nichols Roy for the inclusion of the Lushai Hills under constitutional reforms.\textsuperscript{152} A memorandum was submitted in this regard on 4\textsuperscript{th} December, 1933 to Sir Michael Keane for representation of the Lushai Hills in the Legislative Council. Another petition followed on the 18\textsuperscript{th} December, and on the 11\textsuperscript{th} February, 1934, fifty three additional sheets of paper,

\textsuperscript{150} Secret letter No. 2709-12Fr. From C.S. Mullar, Reforms officer & Addl. Sect. to the Govt. of Assam in the Appointment & Pol. Dept. to Commissioners of Divs. & Pol. Officers of Sadiya & Balipara Frontier Tracts, Shillong, the 15\textsuperscript{th} July, 1935.

\textsuperscript{151} Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas under the Reformed Constitution, Secret, Appointment and Political Department, Reform Branch, Government of Assam, No. 2709-12Fr, dated Shillong, the 15\textsuperscript{th} July 1935.

\textsuperscript{152} Venkata Rao- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 91.
containing 3,882 names were submitted to the Governor. Again in April 1934, the Aijal Association submitted a petition directly to the Governor.  

A representative Public Meeting was called by McCall, the then Superintendent of the District on the 26th April, 1934 to make out a case for the representation of the Lushai Hills in the Reformed Council. Here, each signatory was publicly coerced to withdraw his name from the petition. This eventually put a swift end to the agitation.

The inaction of McCall revealed the high handedness of the colonial Government which in no way was different from that of a martial state. Intimidation and suppression by armed force was the common practice of the British officers and coercion, oppression and injustice became the order of days. To quote J. Zairema, ‘Thus, the bureaucracy had successfully maintained ‘Indirect Rule’ in the Lushai Hills.’

Reasons for Inner Line:

The Inner Line Regulation Act of 1873 imposed several restrictions beyond the Line. It restricted the British subjects from entering beyond the line laid down for the purpose without obtaining a pass or license from the competent authority.

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153 Zoremia- op. cit., pp. 102f.

154 Ibid., p. 103.

155 Ibid., p. 104.

156 Public Instruction Form No. 26A (New), Assam Scheduled IA, Nos. 26 to 41 (As
The Regulation also prohibited the tea planters from acquiring lands beyond the inner boundary. Thus the Inner Line segregated the hill tribes from the rest of the country by closing the door to outsiders.\footnote{157}

There were several reasons for the imposition of this Act. The first important reason might be their reluctance to administer the vast and unproductive hills.\footnote{158} Second, the policy of the colonial Government based on the principle of least interference and administration through the existing tribal chiefs, would have led to the extension of the Inner Line into the Lushai Hills. Thirdly, the introduction of the Inner Line was to bring under rigid control the ‘commercial relations of the British subjects with the frontier tribes.’\footnote{159} Fourth, it is done to protect and safeguard the tribals and their lands from possible encroachment by the plain people and to prevent their annihilation. This would enable the tribes to continue with their traditional way of life.

The perception of the British in this regard seems to be lack of consciousness and awareness among the hill tribes vis-à-vis their surrounding plain dwellers in every walks of life. This necessitated the British to take concrete steps

\footnote{approved in letter No. 1448, d. 26-01-05. From C.G.G. Helme, Superintendent, Lushai Hills to The Under Secretary to the Government of Assam, Shillong, dated Aijal, the 18\textsuperscript{th} March 1929.}

\footnote{157 Rosiem Pudaite- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 71.}

\footnote{158 Foreign Dept, Ext. A, Oct., 1900, No. 1982-EB.}

\footnote{159 Venkata Rao- \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.}
to shield them from undesirable disturbances. Economically, the tribals were backward and led a very simple living. Socially, their cultural existence needed protection. Politically, they were at the disadvantaged positions and lack self consciousness. They had not been involved within the national mainstream and modern political system. They sustained their own aged old village administration and self government. They were educationally illiterate and ignorant. They lacked far behind the nearby Assamese and Bengalis.\textsuperscript{160}

The British came to the Lushai Hills which were largely untouched by forces outside the region much later than their entry into the plains. This very reason itself gave rise to what was known as the Inner Line Regulation.

**Merits and Demerits of the Inner Line:**

The Inner Line to a large degree, safeguarded the tribal land and rights. Within the line, they were allowed to live a life of their own undisturbed by outside forces. The traditional structure of governance continued unhindered as also their customary law and practices.

Simultaneously, the Inner Line isolated the hill tribes. This policy of the Colonial Government shut the hill areas from the inflow of political ideas and national feelings from outside.\textsuperscript{161} While the rest of the country was engaged in the

\textsuperscript{160} See Secret Letter from L.L. Peters, Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills to the Commissioner, Surma Valley & Hill Division, Silchar, dated Aijal, August 1935.

\textsuperscript{161} Rosiem Pudaite- *op. cit.*, p. 71.
fight for independence, the Lushais remained excluded and even the new political philosophy of the Indian National Movement stirred no ripples—as new ideas were unable to cross the barriers erected by the British. As a result, when India achieved independence, the Lushais (Mizos) or Kuki were left to themselves dispersed both within and outside the national boundary.

The barrier of administrative measures like the ‘excluded area’ and the ‘partially excluded area’ prevented the Lushais to struggle their own separate existence.\textsuperscript{162} As the Lushais, being in the ‘excluded areas’ were not represented in the state legislative assembly of Assam according to the Government of India Act, 1935, the Lushais remained detached from political movements in British India. Till India independence, they remained politically backward and unconscious. The leaders of the Indian national movement too, paid very little attention to the hill people and their grievances.\textsuperscript{163} As a result, the Lushais were uncertain of their future once the British left the Country in 1947.

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 72.