

TRIBAL STUDIES IN INDIA: INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

Lecture20

Lecture 20: Case Study on Lushai Hills: Part-I

Thank you. Good evening, everyone. Welcome back to the NPTEL MOOC online course, Tribal Studies in India, Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Approaches. We have covered quite a significant topic and aspects related to tribal communities in India. And today we are going to look at one of the very important topics in the context of tribes, which is the colonial encounter or colonialism and tribes in India, particularly the history of resistance movements.

And for this, we will be doing a case study specifically on the Mizo communities who now inhabit much of the present-day state of Mizoram as well as significant parts of the state of Manipur, including Tripura and the Chittagong Hills tract in Bangladesh, and also parts of the Chin Hills and Sagang Division in Myanmar. But then in this lecture what we will essentially try to do is to really understand the way in which the the encounter between the colonial state and the tribal communities, particularly the Lushais, was defined by a very violent one. And the way in which the colonial state enforced violence in the context of subjugating tribal communities. Even though we are going to talk only about the Lushai communities or the Mizo communities, what I'm going to present today is just a case study in the sense that it's not only something which is specific to the Lushais or the Mizos, but also to the larger tribal communities in India. And this is also an important topic so as to understand the contemporary political situation of tribes.

And many a times the experience of tribal communities in relation to colonialism is something, you know, which is a topic which at times tends to be understudied or tends to be erased in the larger mainstream national historiography. Now, the issue of erasing or the issue of understudying is particularly more relevant in the context of tribal communities in Northeast India. And it is for this reason that today we will try to understand the history of colonial encounters with tribal

communities, particularly in the context of the Mizos. And like I said, it is not something which is only specific to the Mesos, but there is a lot of commonalities in terms of their experience, in terms of the way in which the colonial state, the British, has violently subjugated the tribes in the past. Now, we will start with trying to understand the community, the reason and context, and then gradually we will proceed the way in which the colonial encounter took place.

Now, one of the reasons why the British East India Company, when they first arrived in India, took a long time to actually expand itself or gain a foothold in the northeastern part of India. Over a period of time, one can say that there was a gradual expansion of the colonial state, not only in the context of mainland India, but also in Northeast India. And there can be two very important specific reasons as to why the British took interest in subjugating the Northeastern part of India. One is for the strategic reasons and second is the economic factors. Now, in terms of strategic reasons, you will see that much of the states that we now call North East India, they were very important for the colonial state, particularly in terms of accessing Myanmar or even accessing China.

So it is a region which has a lot of geostrategic significance for the colonial state in terms of their imperial interest to expand themselves much further east. Now, the second reason is the economic factors. Now, all of us know that one of the primary reasons for colonial rule was primarily for economic benefits. Now, the expansion of the colonial state, the expansion of the British in North East India, also has strong economic roots, particularly with the discovery of tea and rubber. So it was for this reason that the colonial state began to encounter several tribes in the North East.

Now, geographically, one can say that, you know, the North East India comprises of three different regions. One is the Brahmaputra Valley, which is an extension of the Indo-Gangetic trough. The second is the Shillong Plateau, and the third is the Assam-Burma borderlands, which have the Lushai Hills, the present-day Mizoram, and the Naga-Patkoi ranges; sometimes it is known as the Patkoi borderlands. Now, if you look at, you know, the geographical map of Northeast India today, you will see that India's Northeast in general is a borderland. And it is connected to the mainland part of India by a mere 22 kilometres, which is also known as the Siliguri Corridor.

98% of Northeastern borders are international borders, you know, and Northeast India shares borders with Bangladesh, with China, with Myanmar, Bhutan, and, you know, as well as Nepal. So the region that we are going to discuss today, that is the Lushai Hills, which is present-day Mizoram, falls within the third zone, that is the larger Indo-Myanmar borderlands. Now, the Lushais inhabited the hilly region between Burma and Southeast Bengal, Chittagong and Tripura, which constituted the western border of the Lushai homeland. The upper and lower Chindwin districts and the Arakan district of Burma lay on the east and south. On the north, Lushai land was bounded by Sylhet and Cachar districts of Assam.

Now, later on I'll be explaining these two terms, Lushai and Mizo, which I'm at the moment using, you know, more or less interchangeably. Now, if you look at the map of Mizoram, you will see that Mizoram is a landlocked state in the sense that it is more or less bounded quite heavily by different states. And it shares borders, international borders with Bangladesh. It shares international border with Myanmar as well. Now, who are the Lushais?

Now, they are one of the most predominant tribe who inhabit present-day Mizoram. But like I said, they are a trans-border community in the sense that you will have a significant Mizo population or Lushai population in Manipur, in Tripura, in Assam. And like I said, you know, you also have a significant population of Lushai in neighboring countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. Now, what is this term Lushai? Now, it is an Anglo word for Lusei, which constitutes several clans and sub-clans such as the Sailo, the Pachuau, and the Chhakchhuak, among others.

Now, Lushai, therefore, is an Anglo word for Lusei. And, you know, if you go to Mizoram today, if you ask the people who they are, they might say that they are Mizo. But then, for a long period of time, they were identified by the colonial status Lushai. And the term Lushai is just an Anglo word for the term Lusei, which is the vernacular term which is being used by the community to self-identify themselves. Now, up until the colonial rule, the Lushai society was organized around chiefs and clans, and the entire Lushai hills were under different chiefdoms that ruled and reigned over the hills.

Who are the Lushais?

- A predominant tribe inhabiting present-day Mizoram, but also lived in other parts of northeast India such as Manipur, Tripura, and Assam.
- Lushai is an Anglo word for *Lusei*, which constitutes several clans and sub-clans, such as the Sailo, Pachuau, and Chhakchhuak, among others.
- Pre-colonial Lusei society was organised around chiefs and clans, and the entire Lushai hills were under different chiefdoms, who ruled and reigned over the hills.



Colonial rule popularized the term Lushai by naming the region as Lushai Hills using the name of the dominant tribe who ruled the hills who were in contact with them. One of the most significant aspects of colonial rule was that they had a tendency to name people and places. Now, in the Nordics, you know, in the context of Mizoram, they first named the region as Lushai Hills because the Lushai or the Lushai were the dominant tribe. Now, when they went to present state like Nagaland, they renamed it as Naga Hills. Likewise, Mikir Hills, Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, so on and so forth.

However, the term Lushai does not necessarily capture the internal differentiation within the community in the sense that, even though the Lushai were the dominant tribe, there were several other tribes and clans within Mizoram. Now, the Lushai were particularly important in the sense that they were the chiefs who ruled much of the present-day Mizoram during the colonial encounter. It was essentially for this reason that the British have used and adopted the term Lushai. However, over a period of time, there was a strong feeling among the communities living in today's Mizoram that the term Lushai does not capture or is exclusive because it does not include everyone who is inhabiting Mizoram. Therefore, there was a move to rename the term Lushai and subsequently replace it with Mizo.

And the first move was made in the post-colonial period by renaming Lushai Hills into Mizo Hills in 1954, Chonek of Parliament, and then subsequently renaming Mizo Hills into Mizoram, which is the present-day name for the region. And the name of the tribe, which was recognized by the colonial status Lushai, was renamed to Mizo. So this is a little bit of context about the history of identity as

well as the way in which the community has been identified by the colonial state. Many times, particularly people who are not so much acquainted with the history of the Mizos, often equate Lushai with Mizo. Actually, these are not exactly the same, in the sense that Lushai was specifically referring to one single dominant tribe.

And the reason as to why the people choose or seek its replacement to Mizo was essentially because there was a strong feeling that the term Lushai was not actually capturing the vast majority of other tribes who belong to the non-Lushai communities. Now, again, a little bit about the social, economic and political life of the Lushai in the pre-colonial period. So, mostly the Mizos live in villages, which in vernacular terms it is known as Kwa, mostly inhabited by 500 to 700 people. And there is a tradition because the communities follow a chieftainship where the youngest son in the family has to migrate and move out seeking new habitat. Therefore, it is a practice that over a certain period of time, when the son in the family is ready to take over and settle in a new place away from his parents.

So, there will be a group of people who will actually look out for a potential village and this will be done by considering a variety of factors like abundance of land for 'jhooming'. I hope by this time you understand what is 'jhooming', proximity to drinking water, and protection from enemies. Now, protection from enemies in the sense that, in the pre-colonial period, there was a lot of inter-tribal warfare. There was a lot of inter-tribal competitions, you know, for supremacy. Therefore, most villages, if you look at most Lushai villages, even till today, if you go to Mizoram today, you will see that the communities will settle at the top of the mountains, essentially so that it protects them from potential attacks.

So this was a tradition which was followed in the pre-colonial period and to some extent you can see that still visible even in contemporary Mizoram society. Now, in terms of the economic life, the Mizos mostly live by rice cultivation and hunting. The method of their cultivation was a slash-and-burn that is called jhooming, right, in the sense that, you know, the community will select an area of land, which they will cultivate for a period of years, maybe three to five years, and then they will continually move to a new place. So this is a practice which is not only specific to the Mizos, but you will see that many tribal communities, not only in

India, but elsewhere also, practice the slash and burn cultivation. Now, the political life of the Mizos centred around the village chief.

Again, chieftainship is something which is very, very common across tribal communities. And in the Mizos as well, the entire political organization revolves around the chief. So strong and powerful chiefs are not only highly revered, but they are also quite feared in a sense that, like I said, inter-tribal warfare was something which is very, very common. And many times you will see that there are several clans who will form alliances. And in the pre-colonial period, the Mizo communities saw many very successful chiefs who expanded their territory far beyond Mizoram as well.

So mostly the Lal, which is the chief, was the head of the clan and the most important functionary in the Mizo political system. He was assisted by the village elders, that is the Upas. So there will be several village elders who will advise the chief in terms of selecting sites for jhoom cultivation in terms of several rituals associated with their belief systems, also in terms of finding new settlements for the sons, if at all the chief had a son. So, every chief had his separate cantonment with a number of dependent villages attached to it. These cantonments consisted of strongmen who could be mobilized into fighting a garrison under the order of a chief.

Now, like I said, you know, in here, we use the term Cantonment, but then, you know, in the Mizo language, it is known as a Zolbu. It is like the male dormitory system where, you know, mostly once a Mizo man attains the age of 18, they are compelled to live in the, you know, Zolbu. So, there are several reasons as to why, you know, this is being done. One is to pass on much of the traditions associated with Mizo social life. But on the other hand, because of the inter-tribal, you know, kind of competition that they have, there is always this fear that, you know, there can be any surprise attacks.

So, in that kind of event, it becomes very easy for, you know, a village to organize themselves, you know, and respond, you know, in case of any attacks from, you know, a rival chiefs. Now, how did this encounter with the colonial state took place and what are its implications? So, in a nutshell, before I go into the details of this encounter, the encounter of the Mizos with the colonial state, one can simply say that it was one that was defined by violence. So, it was something

which was very, very violent. And the way the nature of the subjugation of the entire Mizo chiefs was also an experience which was essentially defined by an excess of violence.

Now, the expansion of the colonial state in the North-East, particularly for commercial interests, brought them into close contact with several tribal communities. Now, it was not that, you know, the British went to subjugate and rule over the tribes. Now, if you look at the present day in North-East, you will see that Assam is one of the largest states. And it was the discovery of tea in Assam that began to receive a lot of interest among colonial administrators as well as colonial entrepreneurs. Now, the discovery of tea and rubber has led to the entrenchment of colonial expansion in the region.

Now, if you look at the map of Assam, you will see that, beyond Assam, it is mostly these regions like Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, as well as Mizoram. And these are areas which were inhabited predominantly by tribes. Now, the plains and the foothills provided the tribes their natural outlets and they would come down to the foothills to barter their forests, agriculture and handicraft products for salt, iron, etc., which were not available in the hills. So, up until the colonial rule, it was not that tribal communities such as in Nagaland or Manipur or Arunachal Pradesh or even Mizoram were living in complete isolation. They do have an interaction with the plain.

They do come down to the plains to trade. They do come down to the plains for hunting and many other things. So the British actually, you know, changed that in a sense that, you know, the colonial expansion, particularly in the context of tea plantation was something which, you know, the tribe, you know, for the tribal communities was something which was economically, socially and politically very, very detrimental. Now, the plains were also a very happy hunting ground for the tribes for the preparation of raids, kidnapping and slave procurement. The advance of the British not only halted this migratory movement, but also encroached on its suzerain areas.

Mizos had self-assumed authority over the foothill plains and villages where they committed regular raids. They not only considered raids as a display of their authority, but they also imposed tributary levies on these villages, which the terror-stricken villagers paid. Now, if you look at, you know, all these, you know,

hill states in northeast India, which are predominantly inhabited by tribes, you will see that, you know, they are connected, and there is a very important buffer-like zone between the plains and the hills, and those were known as the foothills. Now, many times, tribals belonging to different communities will come down to the foothills. For trade, even for raids, even for, you know, hunting, slaves.

Now, the expansion of the colonial state, particularly in the foothill regions, for example, in the context of Assam and Mizoram, particularly in the Kachar region, was something, you know, that surprised the Mizos. They started seeing new actors coming into the scene and in many ways that disrupted the migratory movement of the people because they were no longer allowed to access the plains like before. So that disrupted the socio-economic and political life of the people. Now the advance of the British in the valleys of Surma and Barak and their attempt to de-recognize and assert the authority of the tribals were resented by the Mizos. So, from the 18th to the 19th century onwards, the Mizos, you know, realized that the situation had changed with the advent of the pale people.

That is how the, you know, Mizos referred to the British and woke up to the fact that the plains, which were the natural outlets for them, were not the same anymore. It had a new breed of people who not only objected to their acts, which were natural, but even sent armed expeditions into the hills and threatened their very survival. Now, many times, if you look at the pre-colonial life of the Mizo communities or any other tribal communities, you will see that they were very, very migratory in the sense that they moved from one place to the other place. It is not to say that, you know, they have a nomadic life. You know, there is this sense of freedom in moving from one place to the other.

And there was no idea of, you know, fixing oneself in a particular territory. Now, with the coming of the British, what they have realized is that, you know, their access to the foothills was no longer made possible. That is one. On the other hand, you know, that disrupted, you know, the migratory movement of the people. And that affected their socio-economic life.

Now, there was this very interesting observation by a Fact Finding Commission, which gave a report about the people, about the new actors who were coming into the scene. So the delegation reported that these enemies, that is the British, were different from the other people we have never seen. They are as white as

goats. They clothe themselves from head to foot. They cover their feet with leather.

And we believe they will not be able to climb the slopes of hills unlike us. Now, many times when we talk about the colonial history or colonialism, if you look at the writings about the Mizos as well, you will see that these writings are essentially from the perspectives of the colonial state or the British, maybe the missionaries, maybe the administrators, so on and so forth, or even the military officers. Very rarely we come across the perspective of the community themselves in terms of what is their view about the British. What do they have to say about these people who have just come and disrupt their lives. Now, for the Mizos, these British were not entirely different in the sense that in terms of how they look.

That is why they call them their "as white as goats". They clothed themselves from head to foot. Now, if you look at, you know, the colonial perspectives in the Mizos, you will see that, you know, they were portrayed as savages, they were portrayed as wild, portrayed as primitive, portrayed as barbaric. Now, these are the kind of very terrifying stereotypes that were being used, you know, by the British to, you know, refer to the Mizos. But then what gets erased is that, you know, how do the Mizos, for instance, define the British?

What is their perspective? How do they look at, you know, the incursion of the colonial state into their territory? So tribal life was associated with complete freedom, unrestricted movement and action, exclusiveness and insularity, and trespassers were aggressively retaliated against. Like I said, the communities are very, very migratory. In the sense that, you know, there was this strong sense of freedom in terms of moving from one place to the other place.

Now, the colonial state from the time the British began to expand and gain foothold in the Northeast, particularly in Assam. It entirely changed the socio-political life of the community. The tribal communities realized that they were no longer allowed to access these foothills freely. The movement of the community became restricted. So in a blatant display of authority of the tribals, the British often sent expeditions in the hills.

Now, the encounter with the colonial state began with this expansion of tea plantations, particularly in Assam. So over a period of time, from the early 19th

century onwards, what happened is that there was a lot of small-scale as well as large-scale military expeditions that were sent inside the hills with an attempt to subjugate the tribal communities. Now, British interests, specifically in the Northeast and the Lushai Hills. The British expedition into the Lushai Hills was motivated by security concerns, trade interests and the need to assert political dominance over a region perceived as lawless and hostile. The rising power of the Awa kingdom, that is, you know, the Burmese kingdom in the early 19th century, forced the British to establish a secure frontier along the northeastern boundaries of Bengal; further trade routes to Burma and China passed through Kachar, Assam, and Manipur.

So this was where we're just coming back to where we started off in the sense that definitely the economic interest was very, very strong in terms of bringing the entire northeastern region and its communities together within the ambit of the colonial rule. But beyond that, there were also these very, you know, strategic, you know, reasons as to why the British were interested in expanding themselves, you know, in the East. The East India Company saw the limestone mines in the Khasi Hills north of Sylhet was another profitable venture. A similar economic incentive for the British was the spread of tea cultivation in Assam. Northeast India is bounded by Tibet in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south.

So, India's northeast is also a region which is very, very rich in terms of mineral resources. So, the British were attracted by the limestone mines in the Khasi hills. And it was during the colonial period that tea plantations actually began to take shape, right? So, to protect the continuing raids, to protect the continuing expanse of the colonial state, it was necessary that, you know, the tribal communities in the hills be subjugated. The hills of the India-Burma border were inhabited by communities who had migrated from the plains of Burma and India to escape the state-building projects in the river valleys by political entrepreneurs.

The Indo-Tibetan and Indo-Burman groups, in order to preserve their freedom, made the hilly fastness their home. Now, if you look at these entire hilly regions in the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, you will see that these are communities who have actually fled being ruled by any external authorities. Now, the hills, for a long time, you know, are a refuge for these communities. Therefore, there is

something which is quite common across the Indo-Mema borderlands, irrespective of on which side of the border the communities live. One thing which is quite common is, you know, this idea of freedom in a sense that, you know, the communities does not want to be ruled by any external agents.

So it was this that compelled many communities to migrate and seek refuge in the hills. The British attempt to impose a frontier arbitrarily took away the hunting ground for all the tribes. The forest provided the tribesmen with animal protein, medicines, and fruits. Moreover, forest lands constituted the tribes' first line of defense against any probable attack from the plains. Now, the moment, you know, the colonial states stepped into the northeast, the first thing that they did was, you know, to try to, you know, divide the region into different administrative zones.

On the contrary, the perspective of the tribes in relation to territory is something which is not necessarily the way in which the British or the colonial state look at it. For them, you know, boundaries are very, very fluid and very, very fuzzy. What the colonial state tried to do was that they were trying to draw boundaries that would divide where they are. to determine their authority and sovereignty while at the same time impose their rule over communities irrespective of whether they accept the colonial rule or not. So it is for this reason that you will see that many communities in the North East today are divided across national and international boundaries. The clearing of the forest for tea cultivation by the British was indeed military and economically threatening to the border tribes of the hills.

Hence, they launched repeated raids on the plains to send a message that such a colonial state-making which chipped away their autonomy was unacceptable to them. One of the primary reasons as to why many tribes in the northeast conducted what the colonial state termed as race was essentially because they did not agree to the colonial, they did not agree to the expansion of the colonial state in their region. So because there was a strong sense of awareness that the more the colonial state was gaining a foothold in this part of the country, there was a strong realization that they were going to lose their autonomy or independent existence. It was for this reason that, you know, from the early 19th century onwards, there were more than, you know, 100 raids which were being conducted by the tribes, you know, on the British. In order to combat these raids,

subdue and control the Lushais, the British used two measures, one known as the small wars and the second, pacification.

Small wars here refer to the several sudden and small attacks on the tribe, whereas pacification refers to the act of making a place or people peaceful or the state of being peaceful after a period of conflict. Now, there were a number of military expeditions that were sent into the Lushai Hills. And for the purpose of this lecture, we will talk only about two major expeditions. One was known as the Chin-Lushai Expedition, which was launched from 1870 to 1871. And the second expedition was launched in 1890 to 1891 under the same name, that is, the Chin-Lushai Expedition.

Now, likewise, in many parts of Northeast India, in their attempt to subjugate and subdue the tribes and bring them under the rule of the colonial state, the British have sent numerous expeditions into the hills. And over a period of time, for close to a century, the subjugation of the tribes did not happen in one, two years. The subjugation of tribes happened after prolonged attempt by the British, also after a long history of glorious resistance by the tribes themselves. Now, with the discovery and expansion of tea plantation in Assam, the planters soon came into conflict with the tribals because the expanding network of tea gardens were threatening and encroached upon tribal land. Now, for the tribal communities, the foothills belongs to them.

The foothills were their hunting ground. But the colonial state viewed differently by expanding the tea plantations. So it resulted in a class of perception about space and territory. This resulted in a vast amount of land which was grabbed for the purpose of tea plantations in Brahmaputra Valley, which affected the Nagas, while in Kachar and Sylhet, it affected the Lushais. Now, if you look at the Brahmaputra Valley, states like Nagaland also share long borders with Assam.

Now, one of the ways in which the colonial state came in conflict with the Nagas is essentially after the expansion of the tea plantations. Likewise, if you look at today's Mizoram and Sambora, you will see that it was after the expansion of the colonial state, particularly the tea plantations, its introduction, and the subsequent land grabbing for the tea plantation, particularly in Kachar and Sylhet, which adversely affected the Lushai or the Mizos. Initially, the pale people objected to the raids and kidnapping in the areas which the tribal considered their

domain and even sent punitive expeditions, thereby trespassing on their freedom and usurping their authority over the foothills. So between 1826 and 1844 about 150 persons were killed in the Lushai raids. In 1849, a violent raid was committed in Roop Chera in which 30 persons were killed and 42 kidnapped.

The tea merchants and newspapers in England raise a hue and cry over the situation. With the discovery and expansion of tea plantations in Assam, the planters soon came into conflict with the tribals because the expanding network of tea gardens was threatening and encroaching upon the tribal land. Now, let us look at, you know, let us look at the process in which, you know, several expeditions were sent into the hills and their subsequent impact. So, the failure to maintain peace in the frontier through indirect rule resulted in the transition to direct rule in the Lushai Hills. Now, it was not that, you know, the British had a lot of interest in subjugating the tribal communities.

They don't see a lot of economic promise by ruling over them because these are to them too hilly, they were unproductive, there is no economic incentive to bring them under the colonial state. Therefore, for a long time, despite the fact that the British came into close contact with these tribes, there was no real intention to subjugate them. But over a period of time, it became, from the perspective of the colonial state, necessary to maintain peace and protect the commercial interests of the colonial state. It became imperative that these tribes be subdued and put under the colonial state. So, the process of trying to subjugate the tribes entailed several small wars against the Lushai, and it lasted a maximum of one to four months between 1850 and 1859.

As a response to the frequent small-scale Lushai raids along the Kachar-Silchar region, the East India Company decided to act aggressively. The British launched military expeditions in response to the persistent Lushai raids, starting with Lt. Col. Lister's 1850s campaign, which revealed the strength of the Lushai resistance and the challenges of securing lasting control. Definitely, you know, the British were far superior in terms of their military, in terms of their military might, in terms of, you know, the kind of resources they were capable of amassing. But then it was not very swift; it was not very easy for them to entirely subjugate the Lushais at one go. It took them almost a century to entirely subjugate, you know, this Mizoram and other parts of tribal lands in northeast India.

So, a defensive strategy emerged, leading to the subsequent establishment of military outposts along the frontier to monitor and deter future incursions, as the counter to Lushai raids on the British territories increased in frequency and intensity, especially along the Chittagong frontier. In 1869, the British attempted to follow a soft policy against the Lushai. It was decided to station an officer in the Lushai hills to engage the chiefs. However, nothing much was achieved. So, like I said, you know, for a long time, the British definitely thought that the tribes were creating a lot of economic loss.

They are nuisance to the colonial state. But then they also were not very keen to entirely subjugate and rule over the hill tribes because they see the region, they see the people as economically unproductive. So, they will actually be spending more money to administer them. So, for a long time, you know, there was this attempt or what they call the soft policy where the British were more interested to have a kind of peaceful agreement with the Lushais and that would serve their, you know, commercial as well as political interests. However, from the perspective of the tribe, this was, you know, something that was almost impossible until and unless the British withdrew themselves from the foothills.

Now, as a result, since the soft policy of the colonial state did not work out, as a result, there was the first Chin Lushai expedition which was launched in 1871 to 1872. Now, the Lushai expedition was a major military effort involving two columns of British troops advancing into Lushai territory with artillery and supply chains. The Lushai resisted using guerrilla tactics, targeting British supply lines, ambushing troops and leveraging their knowledge of the terrain. So, the British responded with the scorched-earth policy, destroying villages and food supplies to weaken resistance while also taking hostages to pressure Lushai chiefs into submission. Now, why did the British launch, why did the British change their mind, particularly in relation to the Mizos, was essentially because of the killing of James Winchester, and also the Lushais took away his daughter Mary Winchester as a slave.

So that actually greatly upset and create a lot of uproar back in England. So, it was for this reason that the British decided to launch the first Chin Lushai expedition. Now, one of the intention was, you know, these military expeditions were termed as punitive expeditions. Now, if you look at the term punitive,

basically it means punishment, right? You are launching a military expedition essentially to punish some people.

Now, the intention of the colonial state was very, very clear. That was to punish the Lushais. So how do they wanted to punish the Lushais? One was that entire villages were burned down, and the second was that the entire jhoom crops, including the rice barns, were also burned down and destroyed. So basically, it was an attempt to make the entire Mizo society crippled.

So even though not aimed at extermination, British campaigns focused on securing strategic control through a sustained military presence in the Lushai hills. The expedition had an enormous impact in terms of devastation and deaths for the Lushais on a scale that they were unable to withstand. Now, the Mizos might have been engaged in inter-tribal warfare, they might have engaged in different kinds of raids in the past, but it was for the first time that they experienced a huge loss on their side. As a result, many chiefs such as Lengura, Vanlula, Vanhuaya and Vanhuna were followed by another base of chiefs, Savunga Lalngura, who actually decided to accept the terms and conditions of the British. Now, Laljika and Benghuaya, who were mainly responsible for the killing of James Winchester, surrendered to the British.

As a result of this surrender, there was 16 years of peace between the British and the Lushais. During this period, with the death or aging of the chiefs, the younger leaders who took over were resentful of the restrictions imposed on them by the British. They realized that the only way to get back their earlier freedom was to overthrow the British. Now, basically, like I said, Mizos follow a chief-to-chief system. Almost all chiefs, irrespective of the size of the villages, irrespective of the number of people who live in the villages, are more or less independent chiefs.

Now, the moment, you know, their parents, the moment the chiefs die, you know, and their sons took over. So, they began to assert themselves again. And they were quite resentful of the fact that the British restricted their mobility, restricted their movement, and denied them access to the foothills. And from the 80s onwards, what we see again is that there was a resumption of violence in the Assam-Mizoram border regions, particularly in the foothills. So, in that context, you know, the Lushais began to renew raids, you know, in the 1880s that

threatened British economic interests, leading to stronger frontier security and a proactive territorial strategy.

The British also exploited the inter-tribal conflicts, arming rival groups like the Kukis to weaken Lushai resistance and reduce British military burden. In 1883, the political legend reported that the Kuki villages located south of Manipur road functioned as the first line of defense against the Lushai inroads. Now, when the Chin Lushai expedition was launched, it was not launched only from one column. There was always two columns of the British chiefs. Because even among the Lushai chiefs, it was not like all the chiefs were up in arms against the British.

Definitely they were up in arms against the British, but many a times they were not fighting as one. So, in the sense that they had their own interests, you know, and there was not necessarily a united kind of resistance against the British. In that kind of scenario, it was very easy for the British, to exploit inter-tribal differences. Survey parties escorted by military units mapped the region, accessed resources, and established clear boundaries for governance. Despite these efforts, British failures to protect allied villages led to periodic punitive expeditions, reinforcing imperial control over the region.

Now, the British or the colonial state had put in a persistent effort to try to make sure that the colonial interests, particularly the commercial interests, were protected. But then the Lushais continued to engage in raids, particularly in the foothills. And this resulted into, you know, periodic punitive expeditions from the colonial state. And subsequently, the second Chin-Lushai expedition was launched in 1889 to 1890. And unlike the first Chin Lushai expedition, the major objective or the main intent of the British had changed, which was not only to punish the Lushais but also to subjugate them and rule over the Lushais.

Now the military expeditions, the second Chin Lushai expedition, were carried out from Burma in order to cooperate with the Chittagong column to subdue the Chin Lushai hills. Now we are also talking about the Chin Lushai here and I don't want you to get confused because this expedition was not only to subjugate the Lushais but also you know there was an intention to subjugate you know the larger tribal communities as well including you know the Chin Hills. So during the period 1880 to 95 the British were busy suppressing tribal uprisings one after

another. Now if you look at you know colonial writings. You will constantly come across Lushai, Kuki, Chin.

And these communities definitely have their own specific identities, they have their own specific histories, but then the common understanding is that they more or less belong to the larger Zhou communities. So sometimes you will see that the British are also loosely using the term Chin, sometimes loosely using the term Kuki, Lushai, to refer to these communities. But in the context of Mizoram, or in the context of present-day Indian side of the border, particularly in Mizoram and its adjoining areas, you will see that the term Lushai was something which was more popularly and widely used. Whereas Chin, the term Chin was mostly used in the context of Myanmar. And definitely I am not saying that the Mizos and the Chins are exactly the same.

That is not the point that I am saying. So the British see some kind of similarities between these communities. Therefore they often put them in hyphenated. Chin-Lushai, Chin-Kuki, so on and so forth. So in their attempt to subjugate these tribal communities, such as the Mizo, the Lushais in Mizoram, there were also a lot of similar efforts that were being undertaken across the Indo-Myanmar borderlands.

And one of the communities who also faced similar experience and similar encounters were also the Chins, who now inhabit the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, which is on the Myanmar side of the border. Now, so these small wars, in the case of the British Northeast India, allowed the imperialists to project power across the territory at will, at least temporarily; with greater resources, both human and material, at their disposal, the imperial power could launch such campaigns frequently. Faced with loss of prestige and material losses, the Lushai chiefs understood that the odds were against them. Now, if you look at, you know, the colonial state, you know, if you look at the British in particular, you will see that during the heyday of the colonial state, the British, as a colonial empire, were ruling at least 30-35% of the entire landmass in the world. Now, for a community like the Mizos, whose population is very, very small, whose method of warfare is considered to be something which is still very, very primitive, fighting or resisting the colonial state definitely was very, very glorious in some sense.

But at the same time, sooner the Lushais, the Mizos realized that the odds were entirely against them, because in terms of military strength, in terms of military

technology, in terms of the ability of the colonial state to amass different kinds of resources, they were not just at par. So, the massive attack by the British and the counter-offensive by the Lusai tribes reached the scale of a prolonged war. It finally succeeded in getting most of the chiefs to submit to British authority. Now, one of the difficult things about subjugating the tribes in the northeast was also that, like I said, every chief in the Lusai hills was independent. There may be some kind of alliances between kins.

There may be some kind of alliances between clans. But then subjugating one chief does not mean that, you know, the entire hill is subjugated. So subjugation necessitates, you know, that every chief in the Lushai Hills, whether they are 100, their number is 100, their number is 50, every chief needs to be individually subjugated. So that makes it, you know, far more difficult for the British to send an expedition not only in the foothills, but also to send an expedition in the interior of the Lushai Hills. So the second Chin-Lushai expedition from the colonial perspective was very successful because it finally succeeded in getting most of the chiefs, most of the Lushai chiefs, to submit and accept the British authority.

Now what did the British do immediately after expanding their inroads into Lushai hills? It first built a road connection between Chitagong and Kale and set up outposts at Aizawal and Lungleh. Now, these were the colonial spelling which was being used by, you know, the British. Today, we call it Aizawal. The other one is Lungleh, which is the two most important places, you know, when it comes to Mizoram.

Aizawal is, you know, the center to control the northern part in particular. On the southern side, you know, Lungleh is one of the most important regions in the southern region of Mizoram. However, despite the fact that the expedition was started in 1890 to 1891, the expedition definitely was something which is very, very violent, like I said. However, it took almost close to six to seven years for the entire region in Lushai Hills to be pacified. So it was only after 1896 that, you know, different chiefs across Lushai Hills agreed to come under the supervision of the British.

And this led to the establishment of direct rule over the Lushais. So, the glorious history of Lushai resistance, which spanned over seven violent decades, came to

an end in 1898, specifically on 27th January, when the whole of Lushai Hills was placed under the charge of a superintendent with headquarters at Aizawal. Now, what you see is that, you know, the entire 19th century for the Lusais, which is definitely true for other tribal communities such as Nagas in particular, is that the entire 19th century was defined by a history of violent encounter with the colonial state. And it was only in 1898 that the entire Lushai Hills was brought under colonial rule after a long history of resistance against the expansion of the colonial state. The Lushai chiefs were just, you know, not agreeing to accept any other agent to rule over them.

It was this that brought in a lot of violence. It was this that have brought in a lot of deaths and destruction, particularly, you know, for the Lushais. And in 1898, the entire Lushai Hills, the chiefs, you know, were brought under the colonial state and they were put under a political superintendent who was ruling over the entire Lushai region. Now, what did it do? What were the impacts?

Now, one of the impacts was that, you know, these tribal communities in the northeast, like I said, were being projected and portrayed, you know, with several terrifying stereotypes like wild, barbarous. Now, an attempt to subjugate them was also an attempt to pacify them. Ironically, colonialism hints on violence. But then for the colonial state, it was the people whom they subjugated, to whom they, you know, referred as violent. So, this is something that is ironic about colonialism.

However, you know, this portrayal of tribal communities as violent, uncultured, and backward. Now, with the entrancement of the colonial state in Lushai Hills, one of the attempts was to actually pacify these people. So, administratively, the Lushai region was divided into North and South Lushai Hills. It's governed separately under Assam and Bengal administration. The complex governance system extended into Chin Hills and Arakan, reflecting British efforts to consolidate control over tribal areas.

Now, for the first time, we begin to have a distinct administrative zones in the form of North and South Lushai Hills. Now, the North Lushai Hills was administered separately from Assam. Whereas the South Lushai Hills was administered from Bengal, particularly from East Bengal. Now, likewise, similar

form of administrative structures were being imposed elsewhere. In Naga Hills, Nagaland was also an amalgamation of two districts, right?

Likewise, you know, in Chin Hills as well. So, the British employed indirect rule in the Lushai Hills, allowing traditional chiefs to retain their authority while embedding them within the colonial administration. This created a dual system of governance that served British interests while maintaining local power structures. Now, all over the world, there is something which is very, very crucial about the experience of colonial states in terms of administering whom they refer to as tribal communities, that all over the world, in some or the other sense, they have used something known as indirect rule. Now, indirect rule is mostly implemented in areas, particularly in the context of India, where the British designate these regions and spaces as excluded areas.

Now, what is the meaning is essentially that, you know, administration of these areas is vested with the political superintendent, and these regions have no political representation. And customary norms prevail in this kind of spaces in a sense that no laws, you know, are made applicable in areas which are declared as excluded areas. So, in other words, these regions were ruled by a system of administration that came to be known as the indirect rule. So, through the indirect rule, the chiefs were, you know, not just disempowered. The chiefs are not just, you know, done away with, despite the fact that, you know, it was the chiefs who have, you know, who have resisted, you know, against the British.

Rather, what the colonial state did was integrate the chiefs into the colonial administrative systems. And later on, what happened is that, you know, the chiefs themselves becomes the eyes and ears of the colonial state. British political officers regularly toured Lushai villages, reinforcing imperial presence, monitoring chiefs and assessing military outposts. They made frequent interventions in local disputes and forced collaboration, eroded the prestige of traditional chiefs, centralizing power under British rule. British pacification efforts heavily prioritized military spending over medical and educational services, revealing the British Raj's focus on control rather than development.

Now, if you look at one part of the history of the Mizos and the British, it was defined by violence. But the moment that these communities or these regions were brought under the ambit of the colonial state, what happened is that there

was a change in terms of the attitude in which the British were trying to rule these communities. So, British political officers who were posted in the side hills regularly went on tour to really understand the social life, the customs, and the traditions of the communities. And in many ways they become a central part of the everyday life of the community by intervening themselves in local disputes. And also ensuring that the authority of the chiefs is being controlled to an extent that they look up to the British political superintendent for any kind of political advice.

Now, what we see is that there was no real effort in terms of providing welfare to the communities. There was no real effort in terms of trying to uplift the community socially and economically. What was the colonial interest was to keep the tribe as they are in a sense that as long as the tribes are prevented from mobilizing themselves and revolting against the colonial state. What the British actually did was make sure that, you know, their rule was unquestioned and undisturbed, and these hills, you know, remained peaceful, you know, as long as the British stayed in India. Now, by 1898, British policies had altered the society, traditional practices declined, wage labour expanded and Western economic integration continued.

Now, if you look at the larger Mizo history, you will see that the colonial state or the colonial agents in the form of political administrators, in the form of missionaries, or, for what it matters, anyone associated with the colonial state, they were the ones who have actually produced, you know, enormous writings about the Mizos. Now, to go back, you know, and really understand, you know, this period, you will see that, you know, many a times, these monographs were not only written from the perspective of the communities, but they actually become expert on the communities that they were governing. Now, even in the case of the Mizos, in many ways, you know, continue to rely on the kind of documents, the kind of, you know, customary rules and norms that were being written by the colonial rulers. They were being written by the British, you know, by the British political officers. So, in that context, you know, in many senses the British became paternalistic agents, in a sense that, you know, in terms of how to bring about, you know, socio-economic change in the life of middle society.

And over a period of time, what happened is that, you know, new ideas, you know, new ideas begin to take root, whether these ideas are positive or negative,

that is a different matter. But what we see is that, you know, different forms, different identities, you know, different way of, you know, organizing social life, you know, also begin to take root, particularly with the coming of Christian missionaries in this region. Now, overall, what we did in this lecture was to really try to understand the history of colonial expansion in the northeast through a case study of the Mizos. And like I said, you know, the Mizos today are a trans-border community. Of course, maybe 80% of the entire Mizo population lives in Mizoram today.

But you will see that, you know, these communities are quite, you know, administratively divided within northeast India. You will have, you know, some Mizo population in Manipur, in Tripura, in Assam, actually in Meghalaya. So what the colonial state did was that, was not only about ruling the people. Colonialism was also about, you know, how different kind of new identities were enforced, different administrative structures were introduced. Now, for many people, you will see that the coming of the colonial state was something which was very, very traumatic because it divided communities, it divided families across borders.

And today, these borders are more or less accepted as borders as if they exist in time immemorial. But if you look at the history of the Northeast, you will realize that these borders are very, very recent. And it is for this reason that there are a lot of resentments against colonial imposed borders because many communities will say that these are artificial borders. But that is entirely a different story. Now, what I wanted to really convey is that despite the fact that the North is the historiography of the region, the communities living therein have been understudied, but if you look at the history of the region particularly, you will see that there is a long history of resistance against the colonial state, and this is despite the kind of administrative isolation that the communities were put under.

Now, even after the coming of the colonial state and the entrenchment of colonial rule, even in the context of Mizoram, different new kinds of resistance emerged, particularly at the dawn of India's independence. In the context of Mizo society, what we see is that there was a lot of resentment against colonial exclusion policy, in a sense that educated Mizos began to demand political representations. Educated Mizos rose up and revolted against the institution of the chief because the chiefs were more or less becoming agents of the colonial state in a sense that the colonial state transformed the institution of chieftainship

in Mizo society during their 60 to 70 years of rule in Mizoram. So this long history is important to really understand the contemporary situation of tribes in many ways. But at the same time, it is also about educating oneself about communities and histories which often are neglected in mainstream historiography.

So, in the next lectures, we will continue to learn about, you know, different forms of colonialism, colonial history, particularly the condition of tribes in the post-colonial period, what changes, you know, positive in terms of negative as well. We will try to understand and how tribes responded to the kind of changes that were happening at the national level. Thank you so much.