

War of the Zo Ethnic (Chin-Kuki-Mizo) Group for Protection of their Ancestral Land against British Colonialism with Special Reference to the Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919

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Abstract:

Different tribes of the Zo ethnic group who traced common origin to mythological cave are known as Chin, Kuki, Mizo and Zomi in different territories which they inhabited. Wars were fought eight times against the British Colonialism by different tribes of the Zo ethnic group for protection of their ancestral land and freedom between the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 to Aisan Rebellion of 1910. The Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was the concluding war fought against British Colonialism by the Zo people and the present paper specifically focuses upon the Anglo-Kuki War.

Key words: Zo, Kuki, British Colonialism, Anglo-Kuki War.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Behind every war whether big war or small war, there are lapse of diplomacy, struggle for power, hurting the pride of other people and mis-governance. The outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was mainly due to mis-management of diplomacy, mis-governance and irresponsibility of the British Administrator (Political Agent of Manipur) and hurting the sentiment of Kuki people by the British Political Agent in Manipur. In fact, the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was not the beginning but the concluding war of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (Zo ethnic group) people against British colonialism. The Anglo-Kuki War has been officially recorded by the British colonial administration as Kuki-Rebellion because the British Empire which proudly proclaimed itself as "the Sun never sets in the English Empire" and whose authority extended both in the Southern Hemisphere and Northern Hemisphere was challenged by the Kuki people whose settlement extended in Hill Areas of Manipur, Assam, Naga Hills in India and in Thaugdut State and Somra Tract of Burma. The British colonialism regarded the Kuki people as disobedient to the administrative authority for not obliging to go to France as Labour Corp. However, the Kuki people regarded it as open challenge to their dignity and they felt that they were inflicted maximum humiliation in their ancestral land by the outsiders. Though the colonial official record listed it as rebellion, indeed, it was a war to protect their ancestral land and their dignity against the mighty British Empire to the Kuki people. The war was not confined only with the Thadou-Kuki but it was also fought by other kindred tribes, such as, Zou in Southern part of Manipur and the Lai (Pawi) Halkha (Haka) people of Chin Hills. As such, it was also known as Zougal and Haka uprising, However, even before the outbreak of Anglo-Kuki War, Zougal or Haka Uprising, many wars were fought by other kindred tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (Zo ethnic group) in Chin Hills, Lushai Hills and in other territories, inhabited by them. The main reason for the outbreak of Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 were mainly due to diplomatic failure, administrative lapse and hurting the sentiment and the pride of the Kuki people by the local administrators of the British Indian Government, namely, the Political Agent of Manipur and other local officers.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RESISTANCE OF BRITISH COLONIALISM BY ZO ETHNIC GROUP AND EMERGENCE OF THE ANGLO-KUKI WAR

The ethnic group who are classified as Chin-Kuki-Mizo or Zo ethnic group traced common historical origin to mythological cave known by different names such as Chhinlung, Sinlung, Puk, Khul (Khur), Khurtubi-jur, Khurpui, Hurpi and khor. The so-called Chhinlung/Khul or mythological cave is said to have been located

in the present South China. The Chhinlung or Khul origin people are known as Chin by the Burmese, they are known as Kuki by the Bengalese when they came into contact with them in CHT of Eastern Bengal and the term 'Mizo' is popularly used in Mizoram. Other nomenclature such as, Zomi and Chikim have also been advocated by some tribes of the ethnic group. Whatever be the case, people of the said ethnic group were independent in their own way in pre-colonial era and they inherited traditional administrative system of chieftainship. Chieftainship was abolished in Mizoram and some other places after independence but it is still retained in Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. Some of the wars, fought by Zo ethnic tribes against British colonialism before the Anglo-Kuki War were the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872, war fought by Raja Goukthang Guite for sovereignty and his arrest in 1871, Declaration of sovereignty and uprising by the Chahssad in 1877, Chin - Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890, Sukte-Sihzang Rebellion of 1892-1893, Rebellion by Khai Kam, Chief of Khuasak, (1892-1894) and War fought by the Chief of Aisan known as Aisan Rebellion of 1910.

The Lushai⁵ expedition of 1871-72 was necessitated due to frequent attacks of tea gardens in plain areas by the Sailo Chiefs of Lushai Hills. On 23rd January 1871, Alexandrapore tea garden was attacked by Sailo Chiefs, Bengkhuaia Sailo and Savunga Sailo who were also brothers. Bengkhuaia Sailo was Chief of Sailam and Savunga Sailo was Chief of Buarpu. The Lusei raiders under Sailo Chiefs killed Mr James Winchester, the planter and captured his daughter, Mary Winchester. Many other tea gardens in Cachar, Chittagong and Tripura were also simultaneously attacked which inflicted heavy casualties to the British subjects. As a result of the raids in Alexandrapole tea garden and other places, Lushai Hills was attacked from Cachar and Chittagong by the British forces in the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872. The column from Cachar or Left Column was commanded by Brigadier-General G. Bouchier which comprised of 1500 soldiers (500 each from 22nd Punjab Native Infantry under Col. Stafford, 42nd Assam Light Infantry under Col. Rattray and 44th Assam Light Infantry under Col. Hicks) 100 police under Mr. Daly and there were also 500 Manipuri forces under Major-General Nuthall. Thus, the strength of the British Force from the Northern Column comprised of 2600 soldiers, 2764 coolies from Labour corps and 178 elephants. Tipaimukh and Barak Rivers were fixed as the starting points for the attack. The Southern Column or Right Column was commanded by Brigadier-General C.A. Brownlow which comprised of 1500 soldiers (500 each from 27th Punjab Native Infantry, 2nd Gurkhas Native Infantry and 4th Gurkhas Native Infantry). There were also Half Peshawar Mountain Battery and No. 3 Company, Sappers and Miners. Mackenzie described that the Maharaja of Manipur supplied a contingent of about 2000 men to assist in the operation under the command of Major-General Nuthall who was also the Officiating Political Agent of Manipur. Capt. Th. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) was to act as Political Officer in the Southern Column under the command of Brigadier-General C.A. Brownlow and Me Edger, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was to act as Political Officer in the Northern Column under the command of Brigadier-General G. Bouchier. The starting point of the Southern Column was Demagiri and the starting points of the Northern Column was Barack and Tipaimukh.⁶ The military operation of both columns took about five months and skirmishes took place in different places. The main intention of the military expedition was to freed Mary Winchester and other captives who were in the hands of the Luseis and they wanted to avoid military action as far as practicable, however, the stubbornness of the Lusei Chiefs compelled them to use military forces. TH. Lewin (Thangliana)⁷ played a great role in Southern Column and although it was written as Lushai expedition, it was a full-scale war. Under the initiative of Th. Lewin, Rothangpuia and Subedar Muhamad Azim rescued Mary Winchester from the captivity of Bengkhuaia Sailo, Chief of Sailam. She was delivered to Col. Tytler of 4 Gurkha Regiment and she was sent to Calcutta via Chittagong and was delivered to her father's relative in Scotland. After 10 years her name appeared among the successful candidates of the Royal Moray College. Thus, the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 came to an end with the rescue of Mary Winchester from the captivity of Bengkhuaia Sailo. In fact, it was described as Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 but when the number of soldiers, weapons and artilleries, used in the military exercise were taken into account; it was more of a full-scale war than expedition.

The Sukte (Sootie) and Kamhau (Kamhow) also frequently attacked the territory of Manipur since 1856. The Meitei Forces of 1500 soldiers led by Maharaja Chadrakirti Singh attacked the Kamhaus and marched as far as Tiddim. The Kamhaus allowed the Manipuri Forces to move forward but the Kamhau Chief, Raja Goukthang Guite invited his sister tribes, Sukte and Sihzang to help him in the war against the Meiteis which they readily complied. The Kamhau forces surprised the Meiteis and they fled in different direction, as such, humiliating retreat was made by the Meiteis and they returned back with shame. The Political Agent reported two serious aggressions of the Kamhau in Manipur in 1859 and there were seven raids of the Kamhau in Manipur from 1857 to 1871. People of Kamhau tribe were so suspicious of the Meitei King because their Chief, Goukthang or Raja Goukthang (kokutang) was arrested along with 957 people and disarmed by Manipur troops in 1871 under the command of Major-General Nuthall during the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 when he was on peace initiative. Raja Goukthang Guite was another powerful chief who fought bravely for protection of his ancestral land. He was captured mercilessly and imprisoned in Imphal Jail. In fact, his people repeatedly pleaded for his release but it was not consented by the British Officer and the Meitei King of Manipur and he subsequently died at Imphal Jail in 1872. The British authority fragmented the ancestral land of

Raja Goukthang Guite⁸ which extended up to Loktak Lake as per the treaty of Sanjenthong, 1873 and the treaty of Kaparang, 1873 which was signed between Chandrakirti Singh, the Maharaja of Manipur and Sumkam Guite, son of Raja Goukthang Guite. The Sukte and Kamhau could no longer trust the integrity of the Meiteis due to merciless capture and death of Raja Goukthang in the hands of the Meiteis at Imphal Jail. Thus, Kamhau attacked two villages in Manipur in 1874 and inflicted heavy casualties upon Manipur. Likewise, Sukte also frequently raided Manipur from 1876-1878. In fact, the King of Manipur could not do much about containing the Kamhau and Sukte, but, they could be disciplined only with the involvement of the British forces and the British Political Agent in Manipur.

Tonglhu Haokip, the Chief of Chahsad was so suspicious of the Manipuri (Meitei) and the Manipuri Royal Family because his father, Nehlam Haokip, who was invited on safe conduct by Raja Nur, King of Manipur and Colonel McCulloch, Political Agent of Manipur at Imphal, was treacherously assassinated by the brother-in-law of the Raja. As a matter of fact, Tonglhu Haokip looked for an opportunity to avenge the merciless assassination of his father, so, he wanted to wage war against the Manipur Royal family and to free himself from unnecessary political control of the King of Manipur. Tonglhu was determined to do anything which could trouble the Meitei King of Manipur. At this juncture, the Raja of Sumjok who was at loggerheads with the King of Manipur due to boundary dispute and land issue, was so eager to provide necessary military and diplomatic assistances to the Chief of Chahsad. Tonglhu Haokip ordered his 12 tributary Chiefs of the Haokip clan under him to prepare for the war against Manipur. Thus, the Chahsads (Haokip) led by their Chief, Tonglhu Haokip and their 12 tributary villages challenged the sovereignty of Manipur in alliance with the king of Sumjok in 1877. In 1878, Tonglhu and his men arrested 6 Manipuri sepoys at Kongal Thana to exchange with his subjects in Manipuri Prison. After 9 days of arrest, the Manipuri sepoys were taken to Sumjok Raja and were detained for another 26 days, then, they (prisoners) were handed over to Manipuri Subedar with a letter to Major Thangal to also release the Chahssad prisoners at Manipuri prison. Tonglhu and his men along with 5 Chattik Tangkhuls attacked Chingsao village on 17th February, 1880 and killed about 45 persons and took away 3 persons as captives. Thus, the Chahssad under Tonglhu Haokip gallantly fought against the Meitei king of Manipur but the Chahsads were defeated with the help of the British troops. One of the Chahsad chiefs, Tonghao (Tonglhu) Haokip submitted himself immediately, however, the other chief, Chungjang Haokip stayed aloof from the presence of the British authority. The Political Agent and the Manipuri troops entered the village of Chungjang but the Political Agent mindfully did not allow the troops to burn the village. Then, Chungjang Haokip met the Political Agent and told him that if the Kukis were managed by him (the Political Agent), they would submit at once but they didn't do so because they were suspicious of the Manipuri Durba.⁹ Thus, the Chahsads (Haokips) were subdued with the help of the colonial British forces.

Chin-Lushai Expedition was conducted again by the British troops in 1889-90 because many British subjects of the hills and plains were attacked by the chiefs of Lushai Hills and Chin Hills. Chiefs of Chin Hills frequently raided Burmese Plains for plunders and slaves, and inflicted psychological fears among the British subjects in the Burmese Plains. Likewise, Chiefs of Lushai Hills too frequently raided British territories in Chittagong, Tripura and Cachar and their main targets being the tea gardens in the foothills. As a result of the frequent raids in Chittagong by chiefs of Lushai Hills, British revenue collection in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) declined from Rs,89,109 to Rs. 83,222 in 1888 and it was expected to go further down if the raids continued on without control. On 3rd February, 1888, Hausata and his men killed Lieutenant J.F. Stewart of Leinster Regiment, two other Europeans and other sepoys. The heads of those killed were chopped off and taken by the attackers. The double-barrel guns, pistol and other personal things of Lieutenant Stewart were also taken by the attackers. Besides the head hunting of Lieutenant Stewart and his team, there were also frequent raids and disturbances in Chittagong, Cachar and in Burmese Plains by the Chiefs of Lushai Hills and Chin Hills. The British Authority felt that Chiefs of Lushai Hills and Chin Hills would not be disciplined without undertaking military operation against them. In such away, plan was made for attacking Chin Hills and Lushai Hills from four different directions which was known as Chin-Lushai Expedition, 1889-1890. Three provincial governments of British India, namely, Government of Bengal, Government of Assam and Government of Burma faced common problems in the menace of the Chiefs of different tribes of the Zo ethnic group of Chin Hills and Lushai Hills. Attacks were planned from Chittagong and Cachar in Lushai Hills and from Southern Chin Hills and Northern Chin Hills in Chin Hills. The result of 1889-90 expedition was total subjugation of Chin Hills and Lushai Hills under British Administration and many chiefs were punished. Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 was operated from four different directions, namely, Chittagong, Silchar, Northern Chin Hills and Southern Chin Hills.¹⁰ Though the Luseis and Chins were defeated, direct control of the British administration was not yet introduced till 1891. Orders for expedition were issued from army Headquarters on 5 September, 1889 and expedition was planned to begin on 11th September, 1889. The southern column which advanced from Southern Chin Hills comprised of 1869 soldiers and 1300 coolies under Col. Skene and this column targeted Halkha (Haka) and Zokhua (Yokwa). The Northern column with 1700 soldiers and 2700 coolies advanced towards Falam under Brigadier Gen. W.P. Symons and he commanded both the columns. The Southern Lushai Hills was attacked under the command of Colonel V.W. Tregear with 850 soldiers but was

repulsed by the Luseis. Brigadier-General Tregear again commanded 3400 men in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 in 1889.

The Southern Lushai Hills Column had a strength of 3380 fighting men which comprised of 177 men from No. 2 Co. Bengal Sappers and Miners, 821 men 3rd Bengal Infantry, 301 men from 2nd Bengal Infantry, 779 men 2nd Gurkha Rifle, 369 men from Half Battalion 2nd -4th Battalion Gurkha Rifle, 731 men from 28th Bombay Infantry and 202 men from Chittagong Frontier Police. The Southern Column of Lushai Hills also comprised of 1000 coolies and the main target of the Southern Column was to attack Hausata village of Lungtian, the Chief who killed and beheaded Lieutenant Stewart. Whereas, the whole fighting force of the Northern Column comprised of 702 soldiers from 3rd Bengal Infantry, 2nd Battalion Gurkha Rifle, 28th Bombay Pioneers and 400 men of Cachar Military Frontier Police under the command. The Northern Column was under the command of Brigadier-General V.W. Treager but military operation was commanded by Colonel Skinner. As Hausata Village of Lungtian was the main target of Southern Lushai Hills Column, 100 British soldiers under A.S. Murray, Assistant Political Officer reached Lungtian on 20th March, 1889 and examined Hausata grave from which Lieutenant Stewart's gun was found. The village was burnt and after which, Hausata's two brothers, namely, Vantura and Dokhulha submitted themselves to the British authority. Captain J. Shakespeare was attached as Field Intelligence Officer and there were also 400 soldiers of the Surma Valley Battalion of Military Police under the command of W.W. Daly. Despite giving stiff resistance, the Chiefs of Chin Hills and Lushai Hills were subdued and they were brought under the colonial rule. Thus, the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 was concluded in 1890. Capt. Shakespeare had already written in 1890 that the two systems would not work smoothly and law and order would not be maintained unless both the parts were placed under a single administration. To consider this question, the Chin-Lushai conference was held at Calcutta on 29 January, 1892, and it was deliberated that the whole tract of the Chin-Lushai Hills should be amalgamated into a single administrative unit as inhabitants were from the same ethnic stock but decision could not be taken which was left pending to be decided and pursued afterwards. However, as some British administrator particularly Alexander Mackenzie was against the proposal, it could not be materialised. Therefore, Chin Hills remained under the administrative jurisdiction of Burma and Lushai Hills under the administrative jurisdiction of Assam.¹¹ The conference also deliberated about the amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills with such portion of the Arakan Hills Tracts and Chittagong Division to be transferred to Assam but it was not materialised.

Sukte-Sihzang Rebellion or Gungal Rebellion of 1892-1893 was a rebellion against British colonialism by the Sihzang and Sukte tribes. Sihzang was known and recorded in corrupted name as Sizin by the British administrators. The raising of forced labourers for construction of new roads and imposition of heavy fines upon the people angered the different tribes of Zo ethnic group of Chin Hills in general and the Sihzang (Sizin) and Sukte tribes in particular. Over and above that, the disarmament policy of the British Government also seriously disturbed them as they were parted with their traditional weapons. Thuam Thong (Twum Tung), Chief of Kaptel and Khai Kam (Kaikam), son of Khuppau, Chief of Khuasak were the two prominent leaders of the revolt.¹² Khai Kam mobilized the Siyin (Sihyang) chiefs to resist the British rule and Thuam Tong along with the chiefs of Sukte, Zahau, Hualngo and Lusei attacked the British military post at Boutung (Boucung). He also sent envoy to chiefs of other kindred tribes to join in the fight against the colonial forces for protection of the ancestral land and other Zo ethnic tribes also willingly participated in the uprising and the war became so intensified. The British Government immediately started offensive military action and all Sihzang villages, involved in the rebellion were completely destroyed and army posts were established at Dimlou, Phunom, Pimpi and Montak. The British authority disarmed all the rebellious tribes and ten thousand guns were said to be collected, out of which 4302 guns were from Chin Hills.

Khai Kam (Kaikam) was the son of Khuppau, Chief of Khuasak and he became Chief afterwards. He played a leading role in the fight against British colonial forces in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 and the Sihzang-Sukte Rebellion or Gungal Rebellion of 1892-1893. He mobilized the Sihzangs and bravely fought against the British Forces. He continued the resistance against the British Forces even after the surrender of other Chin tribes of Chin Hills. Khai Kam started resisting the British Forces even before the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 began. He mobilized the Sihzang forces and attacked the British construction workers who tried to construct road to connect Chin Hills with Burmese plains on 7th December, 1888. However, the Chins were defeated in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 and Chin Hills began to be occupied by the British Empire. Even other Chiefs, such as the most powerful Chiefs of Chin Hills, Falam Chief bowed down to the British Authority, Khai Kam still gave fierce resistance to the British colonial power. He went underground and fought against the British colonialism for five years. The British Forces tried to contain him but he still got economic and military assistance from his fellow Sihzang Chiefs. Khai Kam was really trouble shooter to the British Authority in Burma, therefore as a measure to contain Khai Kam, Sihzang Chiefs and Gungal Forces, the British authority of Burma sent a large force of 2500 rifles with two mountain guns under the command of Brigadier General Arthur Power Palmer to crush the rebels. By the end of 1892, the British Forces burnt all the rebellious villages as punishment for rebellion and the British Forces focused their attention in Gungal area in

1893. In 1893 all Sihzang Chiefs surrendered except Khai Kam and he continued his resistance by hiding in jungle. The British intelligence report highlighted that in 1893, Khai Kam was followed by 127 armed men from Sihzang and Thuklai clans but the resistance could not be contained. As a matter of fact, Brigadier General Arthur Power Palmer was replaced by Major General Richard Campbell Stewart, the Commander-In-Chief of the British Forces in Burma to supervise the military operation against Khai Kam. However, the British Forces did not have much headway, as such, Sukte Chief, Do Thang who was suspicious to have helped Khai Kam was arrested by the British Forces and asked his villagers to either capture the rebels or take initiative for their surrender to release their chiefs. As such, many rebels surrendered and only four person, namely, Khai Kam, Khup Pau (his father), Mang Pum (his brother) and Kam Suak remained but they still fought the British Forces. The British forces then arrested all male relatives of Khai Kam as hostages and after knowing the risky lives of their relatives, they reluctantly surrendered on 16th May, 1894. Khai Kam was given life sentence and he was imprisoned in Andaman Jail and he was released from prison on 14th May, 1894. He returned to Chin Hills after his release and he died on 15th September, 1919. As a mark of his sacrifice for protection of his ancestral land, the University of Kale at Sagaing Division was known as Khai Kam University in the initial stage and the Best sports arena at Halkha, Chin State was also known as Khai Kam Sports Centre. Further, the part near 9 miles at Kalemoy is also named Bo Khai Kam Park in honour of Pu Khai Kam.

Aisan Rebellion of 1910 broke out due to limitation, imposed upon Chengjapao DOUNGEL, the Chief of Aisan for restricting him to collect taxes and tributes from neighbouring villages by the British authority. The British authority received report that Aishan Kuki (Aisan Kuki) or DOUNGEL harassed Naga settlers who did not pay tributes to the Chief of Aisan and this action of the Aisan Kuki disturbed peace in Somra Tract and Chindwyn (Chindwin) Valley. Subsequently, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills sent 150 soldiers under the command of Captain Bliss and fierce fighting took place between the Aisan Kuki and the British forces. Thus, Aisan Kukis were defeated by the British forces after fierce military encounter. Aisan Chief, Chengjapao DOUNGEL was defeated and subdued but he could not forget the humiliation he suffered in the hands of British Colonialism, as such, he master minded the mobilization of his people from different clans to fight against the British colonialism which automatically led to the outbreak of Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919. The territorial jurisdiction of Chengjapao DOUNGEL extended from Chingai Sub-Division of present Ukhrul District to Somra Tract in Burma and Pochri Region of present Nagaland.¹³ He collected tributes known as “Samal and Changseo” which consisted of a “Longkai (Long basket full of paddy)” annually per household and the hind leg of animal killed in hunting.

The Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was the last and concluding war of the Zo ethnic group or Kuki Chin group against British Colonialism. The Lusei had fought against the British in the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872. In the meantime, Raja Goukthang Guite too valiantly fought for protection of his ancestral land but he was mercilessly captured and died in Imphal jail during his imprisonment. The imprisonment and death of Raja Goukthang in Imphal Jail by Meitei King with the help of British authority inculcated the feeling of insecurity and suspicion against the Meitei King of Manipur by his kindred tribes which led to the revolt and declaration of sovereignty by the Chief of Chahssad in 1877. The Luseis and different Zo ethnic tribes of Chin Hills fought against the British in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890, so they knew how tough and difficult it was to engage in war with the British Forces. Therefore, different tribes of Chin Hills had bitter experiences in fighting against the mighty British Empire in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 and in the Sukte-Sihzang Rebellion or Gungal Rebellion of 1892-1893. As such, they knew how futile it was to fight against the mighty British Empire, so, they maintained good relationship with them and accepted the terms and conditions of the British Empire. Yet, Khai Kam, Chief of Khuasak bravely fought against the British colonialism by himself for five years but he too could not withstand for a long time. Finally, Chengjapao DOUNGEL, the Chief of Aisan too fought against the British colonialism which was recorded as Aisan Rebellion of 1910. Thus, the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was the final countdown of the Zo ethnic tribe or Kuki Chin tribes against British colonialism. It should be noted that different Zo ethnic tribes in Assam (India), Burma and Bengal (Bangladesh) did not resist the British Forces during the Anglo-Kuki War because they had already experienced the might and undefeatable strength of the British Empire in their military encounter with them earlier. Thus, it should be noted that Anglo-Kuki War was not the only war fought by Kuki-Chin ethnic group or Zo ethnic group against the British colonialism but it was the last and final war against British colonialism.

III. ANGLO-KUKI WAR AS A WAR FOR PROTECTION OF ANCESTRAL LAND

The root cause for the outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was the struggle for protection of ancestral land against colonial power. It was known for sure that Anglo-Kuki War, Zou Gal or Halkha (Halkha) uprising seemed to be undefeatable war fought against the mighty British Empire, however, what inspired the Kuki-Chin/Zo ethnic tribes, particularly, the Thadou-Kuki, Zou and the Halkha (Halkha)/ Lai to fight the mighty enemy is a serious question which should be pondered? It could also be said that some of the kindred tribes in Lushai Hills, Chin Hills and Chittagong Hill Tracts had already experienced the difficulty of fighting against the

might of the British forces, as such, they obediently sent their men as Labour Corps to France without any hesitation, yet, the Lai tribe of Halkha (Hakha) and their tributaries still fought against the British colonialism in 1917-1919, although, the Lai people already experienced the might of the British forces in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. Thus, the participation of Lai people of Halkha in the war against British colonialism signified that they kept protection of their ancestral land and living with dignity as more significant than living with fear under colonial discrimination.

The attack upon Ithai toll station was said to be the beginning of an armed resistance by Government of Assam but the Government of Burma fixed 21st December 1917 as the day when the revolt broke out. It was, however, agreed that the war ended on 31st March, 1919 when the military operation was officially closed. In the early month of 1917, when the War Office called on 50,000 Indian labourers for France, the Government of Assam promised to supply 6000 to 8000 men. The Maharaja of Manipur also promised to supply 4000 men. The announcement was followed by a widely spreaded rumour which said that any one going to France never return alive. Because of the highly fear rumour, the Political Agent could not convince any hill men to join the Labour Corps even after promise of liberal pay, exemption from house tax and pothang. At that juncture, Chengjapao Doungel, Chief of Aisan, killed mithun and sent around the flesh to other Kuki villages, inciting them to swear an oath, sealed by eating the flesh of mithun, not to go to France and to resist recruitment of labourers. Aishan announcement was followed by a series of meetings held at Chahsad, Jampi, Taloulong, Lonpi(Mombi), Ukha etc. Col. H.W. Cole reported that some Kuki Chiefs were on rebellious path not to obey the order of government but Kuki chiefs met the Political Agent for peaceful negotiation. Chengjapao Doungel met the Political Agent in May 1917 but he was imprisoned and he managed to escape by pretending to parley with other Kuki Chiefs. Ngulkhup Haokip, Chief of Lonpi also met the Political agent at Kakching in July 1917. Lhukhomang Haokip (Pache), Chief of Chahsaad also met the Political Agent at Imphal in August 1917 but he was also arrested and he managed to escape. After that, 40 Kuki Chiefs met the J.C. Higgins, the Political Agent at Oktan, 26 miles from Imphal from 10-11 October, 1917 but no agreement could be arrived. The Political Agent did not listen to the plea of Kuki Chiefs and he did not accept a sum of Rs 1500, three gongs and one mithun from the Kuki Chiefs; likewise, the Kuki Chiefs also refused to drink the rum which was offered to them by him (Higgins). The Kuki Chiefs told the Political Agent that they could not contribute men for Labour Corps but the Political Agent told them to surrender their guns, pay house tax of Rs 10 per house and another meeting would be called again. However, instead of calling another meeting, J.C. Higgins left for Lonpi (Mombi) with 50 soldiers on 14th October, 1917 and burnt down the village on 17th October, 1917. The burning of Lonpi village by J.C. Higgins really angered the Kuki Chiefs in general and head of the Haokip clan, Lhukhomang Haokip (Pache), head of the Haokip clan in particular.¹⁴ Pache convened Kuki War Council in December, 1917 which was attended by 150 Kuki Chiefs from all parts of Kuki Hills in Burma, Assam and Manipur. On 7th February, 1918, when the British Forces under the command of Coote set out to punish Mombi (Lonpi) chiefs and surrounding villages, the Kuki warriors ambushed them in the jungle and killed one of the leaders. Gun battle took place and even Higgins received bullet injury in his shoulder. As the Kuki warriors applied hit and run tactics, it was difficult for the British troops to effectively counter act the attack.

Different British forces were engaged in the military operation against the Kuki Villages, such as, Buma Military Police from Chin Hills, Kabaw Valley, Somra Tract and Thaugdut State; and Assam Military Police from Silchar, Naga Hills and Lushai Hills. Som (Bachelor Dormitory) which functioned in every Kuki village was a good training ground for administration, social behavior and warfare. Som was also practised by the kindred tribe in Lushai Hills as Zawlbuk. The Kuki war strategists knew that they were fighting with more powerful enemy with sophisticated weapons, as such, they did not fight offensive war. Instead, they applied the war tactics of hit and run or guerilla warfare. The most potent weapons of the Kukis during the war was indeed muzzle-loaded rifles, old tower muskets and flintlocks. They also used leather cannon (Pumpi), gunpowder (meilou), stone trap (songkhai) and panjies (soutul) as effective weapons which took the lives of many British soldiers. It should also be noted that the Kukis affirmed all war and peace resolutions with sathin-salung-neh which means to eat the liver and heart of animal as oath which should not be violated. Besides these, the Kukis also used Thingkho leh malcha (charred wood tied with chilli) for spreading war message during war time and particularly during the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919.¹⁵ Besides thingkho leh melcha, the Kukis also used other materials for spreading emergency message during war time, such as, meichang (bullet), khichang (beads). Chem (swords) and they used dah (gong) and ivory in the battlefield.

The British Forces classified its military operation in the Anglo-Kuki War into two as the first punitive measure 1917-1918 and the second punitive measure 1918-1919. Whereas the Kukis divided their operational areas into five such as, Manipur Western and Northeastern hills, including North Cachar Hills, the war was commanded by five chiefs Khotinthang (Jampi), Tintong Haokip (Laijang), Lunkholal (Chongjang), Khupkho (Langkhong) and Heljashon Haokip (Loibol). In the Southwestern Hills, Pakang Haokip (Henglep), Semchung Haokip (Ukha), Haoneh Haokip (Nabil) and Paosum (Songphu) led the war. In the Southern hills, it was commanded by Ngulbul (Longya), Ngulkhup (Lonpi) and Tongjang of Mualtam. In the Eastern Hills, including Upper Burma, Lhukhomang Haokip (Pache) (Chahssad), Paokholen (Bongbal) and Paboi (Sita)

commanded the war and in some parts of Naga Hills, it was commanded by Chengjapao Doungel (Aisan).¹⁶The Kuki fighters were in the upper hand in the first punitive measures because there were many casualties of British soldiers from the traditional war technology of the Kukis. However, the British forces learnt some of the techniques and changed the strategy in the second punitive action and the Kuki fighters could no longer withstand sophisticated weapons of the British force in the second punitive action. Over and above that, the Government of Assam came up with a proposal to treat the Kuki Chiefs under Bengal Regulation II of 1818. As their villages were burnt down, their granaries were destroyed and food scarcity started, the Kuki fighters could no longer resist; therefore, the chiefs surrendered one after another and the war came to an end.

An extract from the Chief Commissioner of Assam described the Kuki uprising of 1917-1919 as the most formidable war which Assam had faced for at least a generation and it covered an area of over 6000 square miles of rugged hills surrounding the Manipur Valley and extending to the Somra Tract and the Thaugdut State in Burma. The military operation started in December 1917 and it ended in May, 1919. The military operation was carried out by the combined forces of Assam Military Police (Assam Rifle) and Burma Military Police which comprised of 6234 combatants, 696 non-combatants, 7650 transport carriers. It was the largest military operation, undertaken by the British Forces in eastern frontier of India before the Second World War and the war expenditure of the British Indian Government also amounted to Rs. 28 Lakhs which was really a good amount at that time. Casualties on British troops were 60 dead, 142 wounded and 97 dead due to disease. Whereas, only 7 coolies were killed by the Kukis which signified that coolies were not the target of the Kukis. The official record estimated that British troops killed 120 people, 126 Kuki villages were burnt, 16 villages were permanently deserted and 140 villages were coerced to surrender. The colonial writers tried to portray the Anglo-Kuki War as the war of the Chiefs against the British Empire but it could be ascertained that it was not only the war of the Chiefs but it was the war of the people against British Colonialism.

It was surprising to know that 1158 guns were confiscated from the Kukis after the war though some British officers did not believe them to possess not more than 100 guns before the war started. It should also be noted that the Thadou-Kukis were not alone in the struggle against British colonialism. Some old Kuki tribes, such as, Anal, Lamkang etc helped the Thadou-Kuki in the fight against British colonialism. When Higgins attacked Ukha Kuki, fighters of Ukha were helped by Manlun-Mansong (Zou) fighters with many guns from Chin Hills. The Haokip fighters and Manlun-Mansong fighters had meeting at Tuidam and decided certain war strategies in their fight against the British forces. The Zou fighters were the one who attacked the Nepali settlement in Khuga Valley who were allowed to settle by the colonial ruler. The Zou fighters continued to fight till the Chiefs of Hengtam and Thirdang were captured on 17th January 1919 in an encounter with the British force. In such away, the Zou tribe also took part in the fight against British colonialism from December 1917 to May 1919. Hingtam and Gotengkot Forts were the two main centers of resistance in the Zou inhabited territory. Besides Captain Steadman who led the operation from Burma Column, Captain Doodall and Captain H.B. Fox were responsible for suppressing Gotengkot, Hingtam, Bungmual and Manlung during the cold season of from December 1918 to January 1919. Ningmuanching states that all the Kuki tribes had joined in the Anglo-Kuki War in different capacities.¹⁷ So, the Zous of Southern Manipur also joined the war in large number and bravely fought against the British colonialism.

Like the Thadou Gal or Zou Gal in Manipur, the Haka uprising in Chin Hills was also known as Lai Ral. The uprising in Chin Hills had certain link with the Anglo-Kuki War because its outbreak was also due to resistance against recruitment in Labour Corps. Other Chiefs of Chin Hills supplied coolies for Labour Corps but the Halkha chiefs refused to oblige the dictate of the British authority. Besides the Burma Military Police, contingent of Assam Military Police (Assam Rifle) from Aizawl and Kohima were also used in the military operation against the Halkha fighters. The war extended in many parts of Chin Hills though many chiefs did not take part in the uprising. In early January 1919, the revolt at Hakha was suppressed and leaders were brought to trial. 61 persons were sentenced under section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. Many leaders were imprisoned in Haka, Tiddim, Falam and Mingyan Jail. 14 chiefs who were imprisoned in Mingyan Jail were shifted Taungyi and Lashio. Fines amounting to Rs. 13,000 was imposed upon villages which participated in the rebellion.

IV. IMPACT OF ANGLO-KUKI WAR

The Chief Commissioner of Assam was so sympathetic to the cause of the Kuki Chiefs because he knew that the uprising could be averted had J.C. Higgins been diplomatic and mature in his dealing with the Kuki Chiefs. Two decades after the end of the war, Robert Reid observed that had there been no recruitment for the Labour Corps there would have been no rebellion from the Kukis. The Chief Commissioner also recommended to the Government of India that the Kukis were more sinned against than sinning. He also clarified that the Kukis were wrongly coerced to supply men for Labour Corps but they were not properly informed of the Government policy. Thinking on the recommendation of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, the Government of India felt that grave injustice was done to the Kukis in recruitment for Labour Corps. Thus, the Government of India decided that Kuki State Prisoners should be placed under personal restraint at Sadiya

within a radius of 2 miles from the office of Political Officer and lessened the terms of their sentences also. Out of the 15 persons on the special list, Ngulbul died while fighting, whereas, Semchung and Lunkholal died at Kohima Jail. While Ngulkhokhai, Enjakhup and Chingkhamba Sanachaoba were kept in Dibrugarh Jail; remaining 9 Chiefs, namely, Chengjapao, Khotinthang, Pakang, Ngulkhup, Leothang, Pache, Tintong, Heljashon and Mangkhon were kept under restraint at Sadiya in open space. Likewise 13 other Chiefs, namely, Vumngul, Nohjang, Haokhopao, Kamjahan, Tongkholun, Letkthothang, Semkholun, Jalhun, Sonkhopao, Tukik, Kondem, Letjahao and Nomjahan were detained at Taungyi, Burma under Chin Hills Regulation, 1896. Sir Nicholas Beatson, the Chief Commissioner of Assam was so concerned with the Kuki Chiefs that he visited them in Saddiya too.¹⁸

The Government continued its repressive measures against the Kuki population and they were compelled to work on different government road projects on communal penal labour. This was besides the war reparation amounting to Rs. 1,75,000/- imposed upon them which they paid partly in money and partly in labour. The Kukis were directed to cut the bridle paths and other roads connecting all important places in the hills with the valley of Manipur, Burma and Assam. They were also directed to build new buildings and other official establishment in the hills which came up after the war. The Kukis worked as penal labour for five years after the Anglo-Kuki War and the post Anglo-Kuki War witnessed development of better communication between Manipur, Assam and Burma. The Chief Commissioner of Assam instructed the Manipur Darbar to arrange administrative set up in such a way that the Kukis would be weakened and they would not rise in rebellion again. Subsequently, four administrative divisions came up but none of them were allocated in Kuki dominated area except Churachandpur. Thus, Kuki population paid a heavy price in their fight for protection of their ancestral land.¹⁹

V. CONCLUSION

Anglo-Kuki War was the last and concluding war fought by the Kuki-Chin tribes against British colonialism. The Anglo-Kuki War was fought by the Thadou-Kuki and Zou as Zou Gal in Manipur and it was also fought by the Halkha known as Hakha (Halkha) uprising in Chin Hills. The immediate cause for the outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki War was resistance to recruitment in Labour Corps to be sent to France. The Thadou Kuki, Zou and Lai people of Halkha resisted recruitment in Labour Corps and the sudden outbreak of the war was due to diplomatic failure and administrative inefficiency of J.C. Higgins because of burning Lonpi village. The local British administrators underestimated the fighting spirit of the Kuki people and they did not believe the Kuki people to possess even 100 guns. However, when the war broke out, the British troops suffered heavy casualty due to the hit and run tactics and guerilla warfare of the Kukis. Thus, the Kukis under the leadership of their Chiefs could be subdued only by the joint military operation of Assam Military Police and Burma Military Police with sophisticated weapons and good firearms from Burma, Assam and Manipur. Thus, local British Authority were surprised when they confiscated 1158 guns from the Kuki fighter after the war because they did not believe the Kuki to possess even 100 guns. The Kuki Chiefs and the Kuki population knew that they fought against mighty enemy but the urge for freedom and the protection of their ancestral land compelled them to take up arms against the superior enemy. The British troops burnt down Kuki villages and some villages were also deserted, Over and above that, the granaries were also burnt down and their supply line was cut. As the Kuki population suffered too much, the Chiefs surrendered one after another due to promise of leniency by the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The Chief Commissioner of Assam was so concerned with justice of the Kuki Chiefs that he recommended for them to the Government of India which was readily accepted. Thus, the war which started in 1917 came to an end in 1919, however, Kuki people suffered in the form of imposition of heavy fine and penal labour after the war. The Anglo-Kuki War was not only a war but it was also a political movement which destined and viewed the status of future generation of people for preservation and protection of their ancestral land. Thus, it is undoubtedly clear that the all the wars fought by different Zo ethnic tribes from the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 to the Anglo-Kuki War (Kuki Rebellion) of 1917 – 1919 were fought for protection of freedom and ancestral land. In such away, the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919 was also fought mainly for protection of freedom and ancestral land.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Lai tribe was earlier called as Pawi by the Lusei, as such, the tribe began to be known and identified with the imposed name as 'Pawi'
- [2]. Halkha was corruptedly pronounced as Haka by the colonial rulers and colonial writers.
- [3]. The Zo (Chin-Kuki-Mizo) ethnic group of people traced common origin to mythological cave known as Chhinlung, Sinlung, Puk, Khul (Khur), Khurtu-bi-jur, Khurpui, Hurpi and khor. The mythological cave was believed to be located in South China and the Zo people are known as Chin by the Burmese and as Kuki by the Bengalese of Eastern Bengal. Subsequently, the Zo people began to be known as Chin in Burma, Kuki in Manipur and many states of India and Mizo in Mizoram. Other than the mentioned

- nomenclatures, terms, such as, Chikim and Zomi also began to be popularized by certain group within the ethnic group but Zo is regarded as the most inclusive term which is also accepted and affirmed by the Zo Reunification Organisation(ZORO) which is the largest ethnic organization of the whole Zo ethnic group.
- [4]. Different tribes of the Zo ethnic group fought against British colonialism in different periods before the outbreak of the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919, namely, Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872, war fought by Raja Goukthang Guite for sovereignty in and his arrest in 1871, Declaration of sovereignty and uprising by the Chahssad in 1877, Chin - Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890, Sukte-Sihzang Rebellion of 1892-1893, Rebellion by Khai Kam, Chief of Khuasak, (1892-1894) and War fought by the Chief of Aisan known as Aisan Rebellion of 1910. For detail see Vumson, Elly (1978), Mackenzie (1976), Reid (1978), Ngaihte & Vungzamawi (2005) & Doungel, (2010).
 - [5]. Lusei was corrupted pronounced and written as Lushai by colonial writers. See Elly, (1978).
 - [6]. The River, Tuivai was misspelt by Britishers as 'Tipai' from which the name Tipaimuhk was derived in the confluence of Tuivai and Barak. (See Woodthorpe, (1978), p. 114.
 - [7]. Th Lewin was known as Thangliana by the Luseis. See Lewin, (1976).
 - [8]. Raja Goukthang Guite was corruptedly written as Kokutang by colonial writers. He was arrested by Meitei troops with the backing of Major General Nuthall and he was imprisoned and died in Imphal Jail in 1872. For details see Mackenzie (1976) pp. 163-166 & Ngaihte & Vungzamawi (2005).
 - [9]. Tonghlu Haokip, Chief of Chahsad was wrongly written as Tonghao by some colonial writers. People of the whole Haokip clan was recorded as Chahsad by colonial writers because the Chief of Chahsad was the Clan Elder of the Haokips. The Chahsad people fought against the Meitei King of Manipur because of the treacherous assassination of Nehlam who was the the father of Tonghlu was assassinated in the royal palace though he visited the Palace on safe passage by the Political Agent and the Maharaj. For details see Haokip (2017), 103-110 & Mackenzie (1976).
 - [10]. Three provincial governments of British India, namely, Government of Bengal, Government of Assam and Government of Burma were involved in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. Chin Hills and Lushai Hills were attacked from four different directions, namely, Chittagong and Cachar in Lushai Hills and from Southern Chin Hills and Northern Chin Hills in Chin Hills. For details see Reid (1978) pp.1-2 & 14 & Carey & Tuck (1975), 13 & 33-40).
 - [11]. Chin Lushai Conference which was held on 29th January, 1892 was regarded as the divider of different tribes of the Zo ethnic group into India, Burma (Myanmar) and Bangladesh. The reason being, the conference decided to divide the Zo ethnic tribes into Assam, Bengal and Burma for administrative convenience of the colonial rulers which later on were separated into three sovereign countries. For details see Doungel (2015) pp. 112-117.
 - [12]. Sihyang was corruptedly written as Siyin and Suhte was also corruptedly written as Sootie by the colonial writers. Khai Kam, Chief of Khuasak was also corruptedly written as Kai Kam and Thuam Thong, Chief of Kaptel was also corruptedly written as Twum Tung by the colonial writers. For details see Carey & Tuck (1976).
 - [13]. Aisan Rebellion, 1910, was the war fought against British colonialism by Chenjapao Doungel, Chief of Aisan as he was restricted to collect tax and tribute from the territories from which he collected earlier. See Shakespeare (1977) and Doungel, 2010.
 - [14]. The burning of Lonpi was said to be due to lack of diplomatic skill by Higgins and his underestimation of the Kuki Chiefs. See Guite (2019) and Documents of Anglo-Kuki War, Higgings to CS Assam, 24 November 1917.
 - [15]. The Kuki used some traditional weapons in fighting the colonial power, such as, Leather canon (Pumpi), gunpowder (meilou), stone trap (songkhai) and panjies (soutul) as effective weapons which took the lives of many British soldiers. The Kukis also used Thingkho leh malcha (charred wood tied with chilli) for spreading war message during war time and particularly during the Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919. Haokip (2019).
 - [16]. Documents of Anglo-Kuki War, copy of a confidential D.O. No. 5. C. dated the 17th March 1917 from Lt. Col. H.W. Cole I.A. C.S.I., Political Agent, Manipur to the Hon'ble Mr B.C. Allen, I.C.S. Special Officer, Shillong.
 - [17]. MSA Congrave Diary- 24 January, 1918; 4 February, 1918 & 7 February 1918.
 - [18]. See the official Notes in ASA, Governor's Secretariat, Pol. B, August 1921, Nos. 263-314.
 - [19]. MSL, Cabin No. 32, 'Khongjai Lal Result, 1919-1920.

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