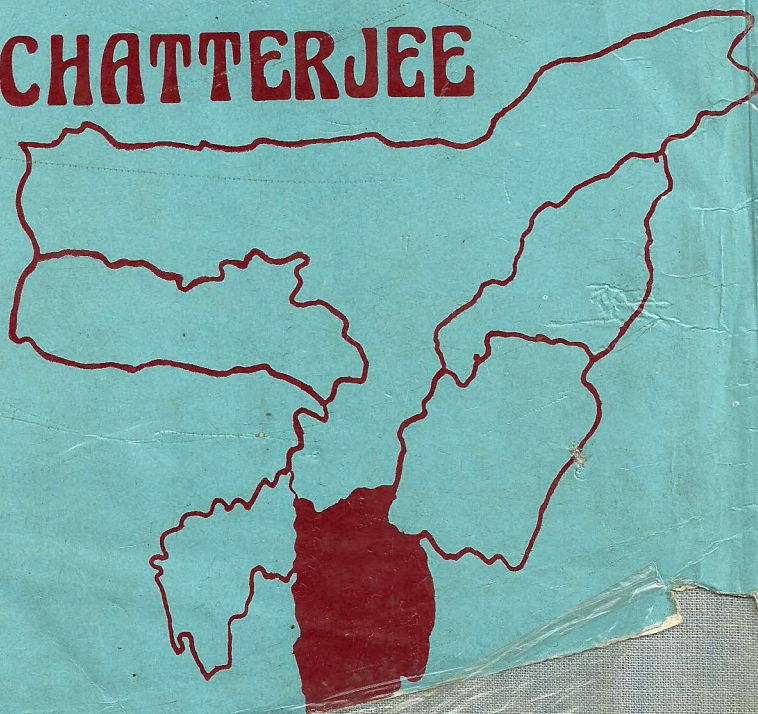


*Mizoram
Under
The British
Rule*

SUHAS CHATTERJEE



'Mizoram under the English' is the adaptation of the author's doctoral thesis *THE ENGLISH AND THE LUSHAIS*. The book describes in simple language the history of the different Mizo clans living in Mizoram before and after they came in contact with the English. Head-hunting campaigns of the Mizo-Chiefs compelled the East-India Company to send expeditions to Mizo hills. These military expeditions opened up Mizoram to the world. The trial of the Mizo-Chief Lalchukla disclosed many facts hitherto unknown to the authorities of Fort William.

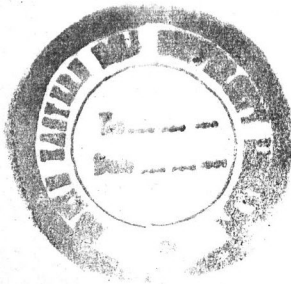
Energetic Frontier Officers Captain Lewin and John Edgar did their best to study the Mizo-Problem. These pioneer civil servants rendered yeoman's service in conciliating the Mizo tribes. Abduction of Miss Mary Winchester from Moiner Khal Tea Estate in Cachar set the British army into motion. The Mizos did not accept the British rule happily. After the annexation of Upper Burma, the Chin tribes, an analogous Mizo tribes, made depredations complicating the Mizo Problem. Settlement of the Mizo Chiefs and allotment of their territorial jurisdiction had to be tackled carefully. More than law and order was the question of demarcation of the boundaries of the Lushai Chiefs living within the administration of India and Burma. Christian Missionaries Savidge and Lorrain brought in the civilising influences into the Mizo hills. Conversion to Christianity and adoption of Western culture transformed the hillmen into a modern community. The author, having the experience of extensive field work, has narrated all these events systematically in his book. Administrators, Military officers, Research scholars and the Social scientists will find in the book a veritable mine of information of historic importance. For scholars conducting research on Mizo tribes, the book is likely to prove as a reference tool of inestimable value.

Dr. Suhas Chatterjee (B. 1935) is a distinguished scholar in Tribal History. He assisted Dr. H. K. Barpujari in his PROBLEM OF THE HILL TRIBES OF NORTH EAST FRONTIER; A Bose in her DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHICS OF THE BENGALIES and edited the centenary volume of the Seminar Papers (1969) GANDHIJI AND NON-VIOLENCE. As social worker, conducted relief in the Mizo Famine, 1968. He was one of the conveners of the Cachar-Mizo Convention (1968) to focus the Mizo Problem. He had been a member of the Mizoram Peace Mission (May, 1975) and met the cross-sections of the Mizo people. He was the prime mover through Mizoram Congress and Himalayan Seva Sangh to convince the government to start dialogue with Lal Denga, the M.N.F. leader.

A former President of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, Cachar, the author is a writer in Assamese. A product of Missionary College, Dr. Chatterjee was the Senior Lecturer in History in the P.G. Department of the D.M. College, Imphal, Manipur. He is now the Head of the Department of History and Principal-in-charge, Cachar College, Assam.

MIZORAM UNDER THE BRITISH RULE

Mizoram Under the British Rule



SUHAS CHATTERJEE



MITTAL PUBLICATIONS
DELHI-110035 (INDIA)

gen

3/10-11

F242
1573

NE
954.16603
CHA;2

1985

© Dr. Suhas Chatterjee (1935-)

Published by

K.M. Mittal
MITTAL PUBLICATIONS,
B-2/19-B, Lawrence Road
Delhi - 110035

Distributed by

MITTAL PUBLISHERS' DISTRIBUTORS
1856, Trinagar,
Delhi - 110035

Printed at

SONU TYPOPRINTERS
W.P. 303, Wazirpur, Delhi - 110052

SONU, LIBRARY
199452
mi
8/11/95
7/7/98
Date
Printed by
Distributed by

Dedicated

10

my late mother

Smt. INDUMATI DEVI

FOREWORD

I have been requested by Dr. Suhas Chatterjee to write a few words in introducing his book to the reading public. I know Dr. Chatterjee to be a researcher on the hill tribes of north-east India. At this critical juncture of our history when the whole of India's north-east region is in turmoil, the more we understand the tribes, the better. The tribal peoples of the plains and the hills today play an important role in the Indian body polity. It has become imperative for us to know their history, culture and aspirations. We are to shake off our 'big brother' approach or aloofness. Unfortunately, our knowledge about the history of north-east India, especially the history of the hill tribes of erstwhile Assam, is very much limited. So, a scholar, who undertakes the pain to research on the hill people, needs encouragement.

The Mizos are an important hill tribe of the subcontinent. They are racially said to be of Mongoloid origin and they belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. They live in Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and Assam. They also live in Burma and Bangladesh. The separation of Burma in 1935, and later the partition of India in 1947 wrought significant changes in the political life of the Mizos. The Karen Rebellion in Burma in the fifties of the present century and the subsequent Mizo Rebellion in the Mizo Hills in 1966 had drawn international attention. The thinking mind is now curious enough to know the problems of the Mizos. I believe, Dr. Chatterjee's work will satisfy that curiosity of the reader. His approach is purely academic; still his work betrays a deep sympathy and love for the Mizo people.

A cursory glance at the plan of the book reveals that it has a lengthy introduction. Here the author has described in simple language the history and culture of the Mizos preceding their

first contacts with the English. This piece will interest not only the students of Social Sciences but also the laymen. In the main text, the author has described how the English came in contact with the different Mizo tribes in different places and how they gradually annexed their country. In dealing with the subject of annexation and consolidation of British rule the author has consulted laboriously the military materials (notes, maps and the charts). The author also has devoted a modest space in describing the impact of British rule upon the Mizos. His book contains the geneological tables of important Lushai Chiefs which will interest the Mizo scholars in their regional researches.

The author has consulted almost all the available books on the subject written by the British administrators, military officers and the Missioneries. He has also taken great pains in collecting the materials from the National Archives, West Bengal State Archives and Assam Government's Record Office. It is evident from his work that Dr. Chatterjee undertook extensive field study in the Mizo Hills to get a fair grasp of his subject. I admire these qualities of the author and perhaps this is the reason that has goaded me to write about the book with so much enthusiasm.

I hope the administrators, diplomats, statesmen, legislators, social scientists and the curious readers will find the work interesting.

AMALENDU GUHA

Professor of History,

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

[Formerly President, Indian History Congress,

Formerly President, North East India History Association.]

PREFACE

(The treaty of Yandabo (1826) effectively checked the Burmese aggression on India's North East frontier. It made the East India Company not only the master of the valley of the Brahmaputra but also brought them in contact with the petty States and the tribes of the North East Frontier. The unfortunate assassination of Raja Gobinda Chandra of Cachar (1830) within a few years of the aforesaid treaty made the English take the charge of that principality. The annexation of Cachar saddled the Company's administration with new responsibilities. The southern border of Cachar touches the fringes of the Lushai Hills and the incorporation of Cachar into British Empire brought the English in close contact with the Lushai-Kukies inhabiting the immediate neighbourhood of their adjudicated frontier.

No comprehensive and critical analysis has been done so far by any scholar, Indian or foreign, on the history of the Lushais. Alexander Mackenzie's "British connexion with the North East Frontier of Bengal" is the pioneer and authoritative work on the subject. But it is principally a guide book and the learned author has devoted only one chapter to the Lushais. "Lushai Expedition" by Major R.G. Woodthrope gives us a very good account of the Lushai Expeditions but it covers only a fragmentary aspect of Lushai history. A.S. Reid's famous work "The Chin Lushais" covers a wider range but the information supplied here are almost the repetitions of the earlier authors. Colonel J. Shakespear's "Lushai-Kukie Clan" is a very valuable book on the Lushai customs and sociology but it contains very little historical information. L.W. Shakespear's "History of Assam Rifle" like Woodthrope's covers the military expeditions in the Lushai Hills. But the learned author did not pay any

special attention to the Lushais; like Mackenzie he is too-brief. "Chittagong Hill Tract and Dwellers Therein" by T.H. Lewin contains detailed information regarding the language and social customs of the Kukies. In spite of Lewin's unique contribution in framing the Lushai Policy of the British Government the later researches have disclosed many errors of his observations. "British relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam" by Dr. B.C. Chakravorty is indeed a commendable work but he too, has dealt with the Lushais in one chapter only. The above are the works on the Lushais. Although they contain important source materials but they do not depict the real history of the Lushais.

An attempt has been made in the present work to depict the political history of the Anglo-Lushai relationship from 1844-1904. Both official and unofficial records indicate the beginning of the British connexion with the Lushais from 1844. Captain Blackwood headed the punitive expedition against the Lushai Chief, Lalchukla, in that year and his gun hurled the Company into the affairs of the Lushai Hills. Immediately after the Blackwood's Expedition, Colonel Lister headed another Expedition into the Lushai Hills in 1850. Lister apprehended the difficulties of the complete subjugation of the Lushais and recommended a policy of Conciliation which the East India Company and subsequently the Government of India followed till 1870. But the repeated Lushai raids compelled the Viceroy to adopt a Forward Policy. After the Lushai Expedition 1871-72, the spheres of British influence were extended into the Lushai Hills. The annexation of Upper Burma in 1886 wrought a significant change in the politics of North East frontier. From the stand point of military strategy the annexation of Chin-Lushai country became inevitable. The Chin-Lushai Expedition was sent in 1889-1890 and the Lushai Hills was incorporated into the British dominion in 1895. The annexation was followed by serious outbreaks throughout the length and breadth of the Lushai country. The British administration concentrated the whole attention in quelling the rebellion and restored law and order. After that, extension of civilization into the Lushai Hills became the most important task of the Government. This task was crowned with success because of the immense help rendered by the Missionaries. The Lushais

were gradually pacified and civilised.

The work closes in 1904 when the British finally demarcated the boundary of the Lushai Hills district after rescinding the earlier treaty in 1870 made by John Edgar with the Lushai Raja Sukpial. Thus the period under review is the period from the early contact till the consolidation of British rule in the Lushai Hills.

The thesis is primarily based upon the official records available in the National Archives of India, New Delhi and West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta. The materials from the secondary sources have also been exhaustively consulted from the National Library, Calcutta; West Bengal Secretariat Library, Calcutta; Library of the National Archives of India, New Delhi; Map Section of the National Archives of India, New Delhi; Library of the Gauhati University and the State Central Library, Shillong.

In the preparation of this study—which is highly topical because of the recent extraordinary development in the Mizo Hills—assistance of various kinds has been received from the Government and a number of learned men interested in the tribal problem of a North East frontier of India. But the help of Dr. H.K. Barpujari, the Head of the Department of History of the Gauhati University, far exceeds any body's. It was because of his constant help the collection of materials on a highly sensitive topic connected with the frontier became possible by overcoming the insurmountable political difficulties. Thus, in the present work, his function was not merely limited to supervision and guidance but to something more.

—SUHAS CHATTERJEE

LIST OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. INTRODUCTION ...	1
Description of the Lushais—Correlation between the Lushai and Mizo tribes—Topography of the Lushai Hills—Lushai Economy. <u>Political System of the Lushais</u> —Military System of the Lushais. Laws and Customs—Marriage System of the Lushais. Lushai Religion. A short account of the Lushais till the early British Contact.	
2. THE EARLY PHASE ...	13
Kachubari Raid—Official enquiries of the Raid— <i>Raja</i> of Tripura's connexion with the Raid—Mr. Sealy's correspondence with the Tripura administration—Reactions of the correspondence on Sealy. Authorities of the Fort William moved. Government of India decided Punitive Expedition. Blackwood's Expedition. ✓ Tripura <i>Raja's</i> assistance to Blackwood. Advance of the Expeditionary Force—Siege of Lalchukla's <i>punjee</i> . Surrender of Lalchukla and Capture of Botai. Trial of Lulchukla — Consequence of the Trial and the Lushai Policy. Results of Blackwood's Expedition. ✓ Atrocities in the frontier of Sylhet. Official enquiries and the Minute of Lord Dalhousie. Lister's First Investigation. Raid in the frontiers of Cachar. Lister's Second Investigation. Lister's Expedition. Siege of Mulla's <i>punjee</i> . Lister's Report—Recommendations of Lister—Results of the Expedition—Importance of the Expedition.	

2A. CONCILIATION

...

36

Circumstances leading towards the Policy of Conciliation. Effect of Anglo-Burmese relationship. Effect of Sepoy Mutiny. Kukies of Cachar frontier sought the British protection. Naga-Lushai feud and the British intervention. Kuki settlement of Cachar frontier. Sepoy Mutiny and the hill tribes of Cachar frontier. Abolition of Elephant *Kheda*. Futile attempt at conciliation with the Lushai Chief, Sukpial. The Embassy of Vagnoilen. Captain Stewart and the Fortwilliam. Mulla's representation to Stewart. The arrival of Sukpial's Delegation at Silchar.

Lushais and the Chittagong authorities. British ally Rutton Poea. Special advantages of the Chittagong frontier. Captain Lewin and the Lushais. Lewin's proposal for a fair at Kasalong to influence the Lushai Chiefs. Emergence of Kanai Singh: an ominous sign.

3. A FORWARD POLICY

...

56

Expedition 1869—Causes of the delay in the Expedition—Operations of the three columns of the expeditionary force. Results of the futile expedition. Mr. Edgar's bid to conciliate the Lushais. Historic tour of Edgar. Circumstances leading to the '*entente*' with Sukpial. Motive behind the Treaty with Sukpial. A series of border raids—Memorandums—Effect of the Memorandums—New Governor General Lord Mayo. Lushai Expedition 1871-72.—Difficulties of the Expeditionary Force. Advance of the Cachar Column—Advance of the Chittagong Column. Delivery of Mary Winchester—Operations against the Kamhows. The *Raja* of Manipur rewarded. Services of the *Raja* of Tripura acknowledged. Results of the Expedition—Boundary Settlements after the Expedition.

4. ANNEXATION

...

85

Problem of Sungoo Valley. Annual *Durbar* at Demagiri. Difficulties of Lewin. Howlong Menace.

Howlong and the Khumis. Minute of Sir Richard Temple. Effect of the Minute on Burma and Assam Administrations. Death of Sukpial. Gathering storm—Inter-tribal Rivalries—Boyd's Tour. Khalkom, the Problem Chief. Inter-tribal Violence. Ferment after the Lushai Famine. Annexation of Upper Burma. Murder of Lieutenant Stewart—Murder of Pakuma Rani. Reactions of the Tea Planters. Meeting of the Governor General-in-Council. Recommendation of the Chin Lushai Expedition. Chengri Valley Raid. Alteration in the Plan of Attack. The Chin-Lushai Expedition. Operations against the Lushai Chief Lengpunga. Establishment of Fort Aijal and improvement in the communication. Western Lushai Rising—Murder of Captain Browne—Murder of Lieutenant Swinton. Khalkom's conflict with McCabe. Capture of Khalkom. Eastern Lushai Rising. Destruction of the Fort Lal Bura—Suppression of the Rebellion. Revolt in the South. Causes of the Outbreaks. Blunders of Mr. Murray. Captain Hutchinson's Peace Mission.

5. CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE ... 121

Problem of Rani Ropui Leni—Problem of amalgamation of the South and North Lushai Hills, Recommendations of the Chin Lushai Conference. Amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills Districts. Administrative measures—Executive Superintendent and special powers of the Superintendent. Difference of the Lushai Administration with Other District of Assam. Police Administration : Reorganization of Police Force. Introduction of Civil Police. Shakespear's Land-settlement. Legal Measures. Revenue Measures. Defence Measures : Military Posts. Problem of An Unadministered Tract. Demarcation of Boundaries : Manipur Lushai Hills Boundary—Chin-Lushai Hills Boundary—Cachar Lushai Hills Boundary.

6. THE PROBLEM OF THE CHINS ... 144

The Lushais and the Chins. Annexation of Upper

Burma, its effect upon the Anglo-Chin Relationships. Punitive Expedition against the Chins. Formation of Chin Levy. A Forward Policy. Expedition into Northern Chin Hills headed by General Faunce. Chin-Lushai Expedition. Advance to Haka : Establishment of Fort Tregear. Operations of the Southern Column. Yakwa Conference : Peace of Yakwa, 1890. Peace of Haka. Military Position of the Chin Hills, General Military situation in Burma. Scheme of General Stewart. Administration of Chin Hills before the Chin Hills Regulation. Powers of the Superintendent. Collective Responsibility of the tribes. Various Problems facing the Chin Administration before the Formal Annexation. Administrative Measures since 1896. Construction of Roads. Police Measures; Collection of Tribute. Abolition of Slavery. Demarcation of the Boundaries. Problem of the Unadministered Tract. Tyo's Advance to Khurum. Extension of Civilization.

7. THE LUSHAIS UNDER THE ENGLISH

181

A Short Survey of the British Policy. Trade Relations. Trade Connexions before the Lushai Expedition 1871-72. Trade Connexions since 1872. Commodities of Lushai Commerce : Common Salt, India Rubber, Ivory, Tobacco. Links of Communication : Roads—Impact of Roads and Railways. Lushai Famine : Causes of the Famine—Relief Work by the Chittagong Authorities—Relief Work by the Cachar Authorities. Public Health : Hospitals—Water Works. Educational measures. Contribution of the Christian Missionaries—Contribution of the Government—Comparison between the Government and Missionary Works. Missionary activities : Conversion and other Philanthropic Activities. Effect of British Rule upon the Lushais.

APPENDICES

205

GLOSSARY

213

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

217

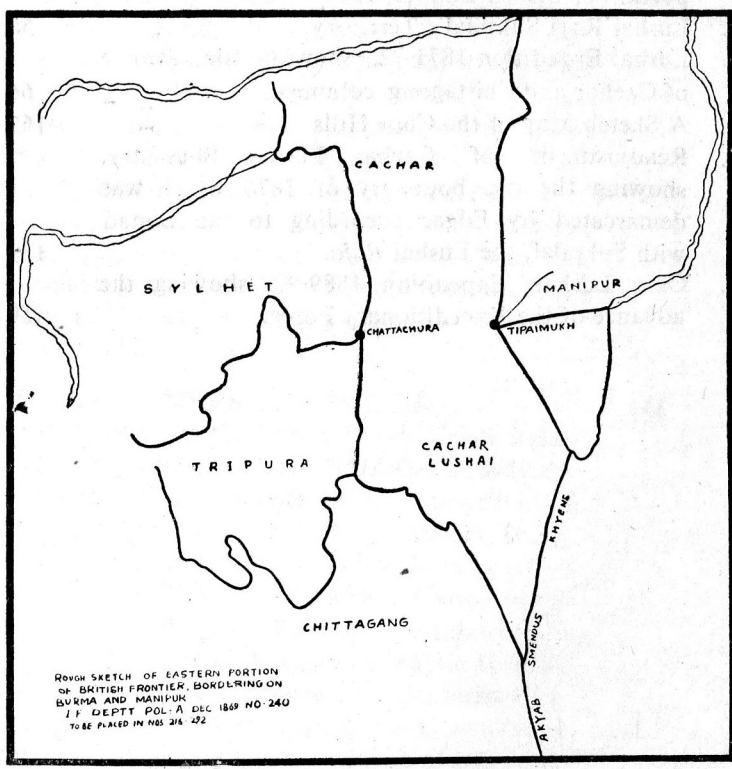
INDEX

221

LIST OF MAPS

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1. | Lushai Hills | 10 |
| 2. | A Rough Sketch Map of Lushai Land before the British undertook any survey operations. Eastern portion of British Empire, 1869 | <i>xiv</i> |
| 3. | Lushai Raja Sukpilal's Territory | 58 |
| 4. | Lushai Expedition 1871-72, showing the advance of Cachar and Chittagong columns. | 66 |
| 5. | A Sketch Map of the Chin Hills | 162 |
| 6. | Readjustment of Cachar Lushai Boundary, showing the old boundary of 1870 which was demarcated by Edgar according to the Sunad with Sukpilal, the Lushai <i>Raja</i> . | 139 |
| 7. | Chin Lushai Expedition 1889-90, showing the advance of the Expeditionary Force. | 150 |

MAP OF EAST INDIA



ROUGH SKETCH OF EASTERN PORTION
OF BRITISH FRONTIER, BORDERING ON
BURMA AND MANIPUR
I F DEPTT POL: A DEC 1869 NO: 240
TO BE PLACED IN NOS 216 222

INTRODUCTION

Mizoram is the abode of the Lushais. Till recently it was known as the Lushai Hills District in Assam. The people of Tripura and Surma Valley earlier called the residents of the Lushai Hills as 'Kukis'. In the official records too the term 'Kuki', appeared till the Expedition of 1871-72. Since that time the records adopted the term 'Lushai'. The term 'Kuki' has assumed a fairly definite meaning. We understand by it certain closely allied clans, with well marked characteristics, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman Stock. On the Chittagong border (Pakistan) the term is loosely applied to most of the inhabitants of the interior hills beyond the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In Cachar it generally means some family of the 'Thado' or 'Khawtlang' clan, locally distinguished as new and old 'Kukis'. In Manipur, near Churachandpur, the inhabitants are still known as 'Kukis'. In Mizo Hills the term 'Kuki' came to disuse since 1871 and it was replaced by the term 'Lushai'. Since 1950 even the term 'Lushai' has been superseded by the generic term 'Mizo'. In the Chin Hills (Burma) all these clans are called 'Chins'.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE MIZO AND LUSHAI TRIBES

The term 'Lushai' is the incorrect transliteration of the word 'Lushai', the name of a clan who drove out the 'Kukis' to Cachar in the eighteenth century. The 'Lushais' came from the Chin Hills, near Falam and entered into the Lushai Hills at the close of the eighteenth century and annexed the territories of

the Kukis, ejecting the original tribesmen. The Lushais, however, did not eject all the clans they came in contact with, many of them they absorbed. In course of time certain intermixture of plains blood also occurred.¹ All these were known as 'Lushais' in a wider sense. But the general population of the Lushai Hills is known among themselves by the generic name of 'Mi-zos' or the children of the hills, which their dialect 'Lushai' or 'Dulien' means. The Kukies, Lushais and Chins, in short, the Mizos resemble each other closely in appearance which is invariably of the Mongolian type. }

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE LUSHAI HILLS

The Lushai country extends between latitude 21° and 24° north and longitude 92° and 94° east, bound on the north by Manipur and Cachar on the east and south by Burma, and on the west by Arakan and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, being some 260 miles in length, with a maximum breadth of about 120 miles. Geographically, this tract may be described as consisting of a series of parallel rivers running from south to north, with the watersheds between them. The principal rivers are the Dhaleswari, the Sonai and the Tipai, on which are situated the trading places of Bepari Bazar, Lushai Hat and Tipai Mukh. To these trading places traders from Cachar and Sylhet habitually resort. In the north, the Lushai Hills is circumscribed by the river Barak and its numerous tributaries, the most important of them are Tipai, and Dhaleswari. On the east, Manipur river runs along with Chindwin (in Chin Hills) to merge with Iravati (Burma). On the south the country is watered by Karnafuli, Kolodyne and their tributaries the most important of them are Mat, Tyao, Sirthe Tlang etc. Because of the salubrity of the soil and heavy rainfall the country is overgrown with dense forests. The tall magnificent trees entwined with thorny bushes of cane and other jungle creepers have made the wild regions almost impenetrable. "The pace at which this jungle grows is incredible; in spite of two clearings annually, paths are often impassable without more labour."² Innumerable small murmuring hilly streams or 'chharas' glide down from the hills to add beauty and grandeur of the cool colonade but they make the hills more inaccessible. A bird's eye view from the

aeroplane reveals the running of six parallel hills from north to the south till they reach the shores of Bay of Bengal. Here, in the hills and dales, ridges and ravines, live the Mizos who fondly call their country, in their Lushai dialect, 'Mizoram'—the land of the hill-men (Mizos).

LUSHAI ECONOMY

The hills breed hardy people who love their freedom. Life is full of toils. The means of livelihood is cultivation and hunting. Because of the scarcity of plain lands the Lushais like the other tribals invented a special type of cultivation known as 'Jhooming'. On the elevated slope of the ridges, the hill men usually clear off the jungle and burn it during the cold season. During the coming season of cultivation they sow paddy and other seeds without the help of plough. After the harvest they give rest to the land for few years and choose another plot for 'Jhooming'. This method of cultivation which is the backbone of the Lushai economy made the Lushais a migratory tribe. The Lushai villages are not stationary; they change places at regular intervals. The Lushai Hills are full of wild animals and beautiful birds. The Lushais are good hunters. Rice is their staple food but they also take meat regularly. The meat of tame bisons (*mithuns*), deer and elephants is very favourite among the Lushais. Formerly, the drinking of milk was forbidden to them like the Nagas but now they are accustomed to it. Although the Lushais were never expert traders, the barter system was known to them. Elephant tusks or '*mithuns*' were the medium of exchange, coming in contact with the English they adopted the Indian rupee as the currency to trade with the plains people. Scarcity of land and food often made the Lushai community economically hardpressed. The clash of economic interest resulted into frequent inter-tribal feuds. Another noticeable feature of the Lushai economy was the system of raids. The Lushai Chiefs indulged in raiding the neighbouring territories for their lust of wealth and procurement of slaves. In the Lushai social system slavery had a unique place. The slaves were generally the conquered tribes, sometimes the captives from the plains.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE LUSHAIS

The political system of the Lushais was somewhat different from the Kukis who were more democratic in nature but the Lushai government was more systematically arranged and closely related to absolute monarchy in a crude form. Because of their strong and well-knit organization they routed the Kuki government from the Lushai Hills. A Lushai '*lal*' or a Chief was the head of his clan; very often he was a man of certain pedigree. He was all in all in the Lushai political system but in diplomacy and matters relating to external relations he was assisted by a set of high officials known as '*upas*' or '*mantris*'. Lushai '*mantris*' were not hereditary ministers. The Lushai Chief was his own Prime Minister. Every Chief had his separate cantonment, a number of dependant villages attached to it. The fighting men used to reside in the cantonment who could be mobilised into a fighting garrison under the order of the Chief. In matters relating to public interests he used to consult his brothers or other subordinate chiefs. All public business was conducted from his '*jowl-book*' or the office which was at once a public house and a protected fortress. In the Lushai political system like the Chiefs, the '*Rains*' or the female Chiefs were also important figures.

Generally the youngest son inherited the Chiefship and the other sons, however, had the right to set up new villages with their own followers. The powerful Chief could afford better protection to his subjects and offer better means of livelihood, so, naturally, he could attract more followers thus absorbing the smaller chiefs into his fold. This system ultimately gave rise to the powerful Chiefs of the Eastern, Western and Southern clans. Though blood is thicker than water the Lushai history is full of inter-tribal rivalries between the clans of same blood.

MILITARY SYSTEM OF THE LUSHAIS : THE ART OF WARFARE

The Lushais were a military race. Every Lushai Chief had his cantonment where every Lushai male of age was a member who received training in guerilla warfare under competent '*Sardars*'. Lushai raids were considered by the population as wars and successful raids elevated the prestige and position of

the Chiefs. Death during fighting was honourable. A Lushai was an expert archer and skilled lancer. A 'dao' (dagger) and a shield was the constant companion of a Lushai fighter. Since the time of the Anglo-Burmese War I, the Lushais got accustomed to the use of artillery. Gun and gunpowder almost became a passion to the Lushai Chiefs. The Lushai soldiers learnt the art of trench warfare from the Burmese soldiers who settled down in the Lushai Hills after their defeat at the hands of the English in the First Anglo-Burmese War. Indeed, the core of the fighting population were composed of Lushais who were a cross between the Kukis and Burmese. The Lushai Chiefs also entertained certain number of true Burmese to train the Lushai fighters.³ The expert workmanship in the trench warfare even astonished the British army officers as late as 1892. In the offensive, the art of Lushai war centred round a surprise attack preferably at night, throwing the whole weight to smash the enemy's fighting potentials.⁴ Speed was also an important factor in the Lushai Offensive. The fighters in many cases followed more than one line of advance and retreat. At the time of Nugdigram, Jhálnacherra and Monierkhal raids, Lushais committed three pronged attacks and stormed upon the British stockades in a most well-organised manner. In the rebellion of 1890-91 the Lushais routed almost all the soldiers of Mr. Mccabe in the yacht on Dhaleswari before the landing of the force at Changsil. In the various Lushai expeditions the English army officers had the opportunity to face the fierce nature of Lushai ambushades. During the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, General Brownlow personally received injury and in 1891 Captain Browne, the first Political Officer of North Lushai Hills met death.⁵ The advancing army of the Lushais consisting of the advance guards was armed with guns, it was followed by archers and lancers; the rear guards were merely the transport *coolies* who carried the booty. For an offensive the Chiefs always made steady preparations. Armament, especially of guns, was the very important part of the preparations. At the time of retreat to prevent a successful chase the Lushais used to place poisonous bamboo spikes on the jungle roads.

On the defensive, the Lushai military machine was very cautious. From strategic hiding points they sought to ward off

the enemy attacks. A Lushai 'jowlbook' was a fort, situated in a strategic position and its walls were built of arrow-proof materials with small holes through which arrows and muskets could be shot in safety. Fall of the 'jowlbook' in most cases indicated the fall of the Chief.

The Lushais also knew the art of camouflage. Although the Lushais were no better than primitive savages in their mode of living, they were well conversant with the canons of peace and surrender and capture. It is true, that they did not strictly adhere to the principle of the immunity of the war messenger but every Chief was ashamed of violating the principle. In times of urgency, when the battle was conducted under the coalition of several Chiefs, they took decisions being assembled in a conference.⁶ Under the instructions of the Chief, the Lushai ryots offered all protection to a subordinate chief fighting for a Lushai cause. It took a considerable time for the British garrison to capture the Lushai Chiefs, Lengpunga and Jacopa. Lushais, like all other hill men, were lovers of freedom and as such, any Chief who betrayed the cause of Lushai patriotism was looked down upon by the Lushai militia.

Another important feature in their military organization was their advanced ideas relating to defence pacts. A savage race, engaged in inter-tribal rivalries, in times not only made pacts *inter se*, but also concluded defence alliances with the neighbouring principalities of Manipur, Cachar and Tripura. In the transaction of the business of war, a Lushai Chief was an opportunist to the highest degree, although the Lushai history is not free from the Chiefs of unflinching courage and valour.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Lushais had no codified law; custom was the source of the law and from the Chiefs down the common ryot of a village were equally subject to the customary law. The cruel Chiefs who were oppressive naturally alienated the sympathy of his followers and invariably invited their own doom. The cruel Chiefs of the Zadeng Clan in this way were annihilated.⁷ The Lushais did not steal except during the raid. In case of stealing the punishment was death. In a community way of living there

was also little scope for amassing private property worth the name so the crimes were few and far between. In case of disputes relating to marriage or other quarrels the decision of the Chief was final. There was no court of appeal. The Chief's house was the asylum of the offenders. If an offender entered the house of a Chief after committing an offence, he was given protection in lieu of his becoming a '*chemsenboi*' or a slave for life.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM OF THE LUSHAIS

The Chiefs were generally persons of royal blood and they married the girls of blue blood. In most cases they kept concubines from inferior clans.⁸ But monogamy was the general rule of Lushai commoners. Polyandry of the Lushai women was unknown. Although the marriage between the near relations were common, the sexual morality was very high among the Lushais.⁹ In the Lushai community, unlike the Chakmas, the women, a virgin, married or widow, had a secured place. Neglect or ill treatment of the female folk was foreign to the Lushais.

LUSHAI RELIGION

The Lushais were pagan in religion. They believed in a supreme being known as 'Pathian'. There were numerous '*Ramhui*' or demons. They also worshipped a spirit less powerful than *pathian* was '*khuarang*'. The Pytoo Kukis who lived a considerable part under the *Rajas* of Tripura, however, adopted certain form of Hindu worship in their religious practices.

The Lushai Kukis buried their dead bodies and followed a horrible funeral. The Lushai Chiefs needed slaves to follow them in the underworld, so it was incumbent on the successors of the deceased to procure certain human heads to be placed on the grave of the Chiefs. Thus, the death of a Chief was invariably followed by a raid. This ecclesiastical custom made the Lushais a race of head-hunters. In fact, such a head-hunting incident was responsible for the British contact with the Lushais in 1844.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE LUSHAIS

All the Lushai Chiefs are the descendants of Thangura who

lived in the earlier part of the eighteenth century at Tlangkna, north of Falam (Chin Hills in Burma). From him sprang six lines of Thangur Chiefs : (1) Rokum (2) Zadeng (3) Thangluah (4) Pallian (5) Rivung and (6) Sailo. Being economically hard pressed all these lines advanced westward, reduced to submission the Kukies of Lushai Hills and became the master of the land curving a slice of the country for each clan. In course of time Rokum, Zadeng and Rivung Chiefs were reduced to insignificance because of inter-tribal rivalries. The Pallian Chiefs who were also known as 'Pytoo' (*Paite*) had once a considerable hold on the adjoining territory on the borders of Sylhet and Tripura. Sibuta, the famous Pytoo Chief, died near Aijal and whose tomb is still to be found near the Aijal-Lungleh road. Sibuta had 25,000 houses at his command and is said to have thrown off the yoke of the '*Tripura Raj*' securing his position as an almost independent vassal. The Pytoos were once very powerful in the present Aijal sub-division but being hard pressed by the 'Sailos' of Lalul's clan gradually ceded the northern hills to them and began to live on the hills adjoining Hill Tripura. The British connexion with the Lushais, in fact, had its starting in 1844 with the famous Pytoo Chief Lalchukla. He was captured by Captain Blackwood and subsequently deported. The Thangluah penetrated into the hearts of the extreme Southern hills and his descendants reached upto Burkhal (Chittagong). '*Rothangpuia*' popularly known as Rutton Poa built his old village in the neighbourhood of present Demagiri. Demagiri was ceded to the English by him in 1872. The Thangluahs were the first to accept the British rule and by the Regulation of 1860 a large tract of territory came under the British. The fighting mettle of the Thangluahs were less than the other Lushai clans and the Shindus of Arakan frontier destroyed them in course of time.

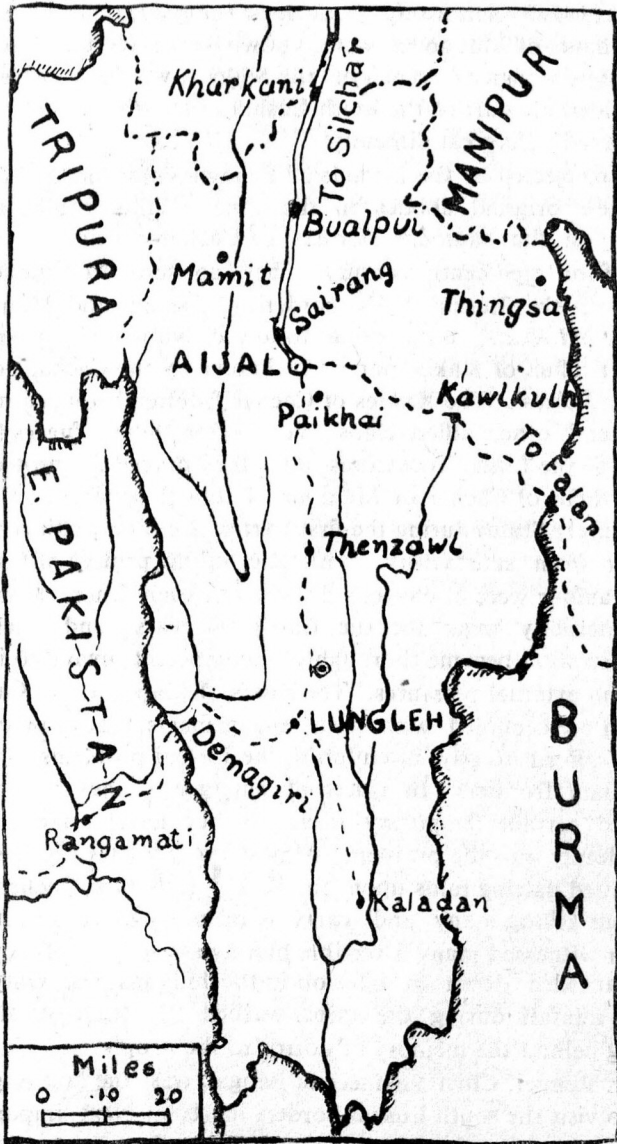
The most important of all the Lushai clans were the Syloos (Sailos). By 1840 Lalulla, the Syloo Chief, established his firm control over the entire north and southern Lushai Hills. He established a dynasty popularly called the Lalull Dynasty which ruled the Lushai Hills till its annexation. Lalulla had four sons, Laling Vhoom, Lalsavhoongh, Mungpira and Bhuta.¹⁰ Bhuta's descendants became very powerful Chiefs of the territory

in between Manipur and Burma and were described by the English as the Chiefs of Eastern Lushai clan. The very famous son of Mungpira was Sukpilal, an illustrious figure in the Anglo Lushai relationship. Because of the geographical location descendants of Mungpira were known as the Western Lushais. *Hawlongs*, a cognate branch of the Sailoos, were the masters of a considerable part of the south Lushai Hills whom the English subjugated with great difficulty.

Being ejected by the Lushais of Thangur clan, the '*old Kukis*' left their original abodes in the Lushai Hills and began to appear on the southern borders of Cachar towards the early part of the eighteenth century. They got settled on the lower ridges of the Lushai Hills bordering Cachar and Manipur. Those '*old Kukis*' were being followed within fifty years by another influx of Kukis, popularly known by the Cachar people as '*new Kukies*'. The Kukies of Cachar frontier belonged to the *Thado* and other allied clans. Very often these refugees fell a victim to the Lushai incursions and they prayed for protection of the *Rajas* of Cachar or Manipur. Political condition of both the princely States during the first part of the nineteenth century was far from satisfactory. Both the ruling princes of Cachar and Manipur were at dagger's drawn with each other. Manipur was internally weak for the fratricidal wars and Cachar's administration became thoroughly incompetent owing to intrigues and external pressures. The rulers of Manipur and Cachar were so pre-occupied with their engagements that they could hardly afford to pay attention to the Lushai problems in their immediate frontiers. In times of emergency they, no doubt, adopted certain temporary measures but never attempted to enter deeply into the problem. Almost every winter the Lushais committed dairing raids upon the Kuki settlers at Cachar and Manipur killing many and carrying off many more. South of Cachar witnessed many a terrible bloody assize year after year; blood trickled down in effusion in the hilly ravines. Only the heavy rainfall during the rains washed the trails of blood, leaving behind the memory of horror to the people.

Mr. Rennel, Chief Engineer in Bengal, was the first English man to visit the south Lushai borders in 1800. Next important move in this direction was the Naaf River Expedition to drive

MAP OF LUSHAI HILLS



FROM THE STATESMAN, CALCUTTA
MARCH 4, 1966

out the Burmese from the island, Shapuri, in 1823.¹¹ In 1827 the Pytoos of Sylhet borders attacked a few wood cutters from Sylhet and Mr. Tucker, the Magistrate of Sylhet, on enquiry, came to know of the cordial relationship of the Pytoos with the *Raja* of Tripura.¹² Cachar was incorporated into British Empire in 1830 and administered by a Superintendent. (For the security of Cachar-Manipur frontiers from the Lushai incursions the English Superintendent set up two Manipuri Princes, Ram Singh and Tribonjit Singh, with an allowance. Those powerful British subjects attacked the Pytoo Chief, Laroo, sometimes in the beginning of the forties of the past century. The attack caused the humiliation and death of the Pytoo Chief. His son and successor Lalchukla invaded a Manipuri village, Kachu Bari, of Sylhet in 1844, to satisfy his revenge. Thus forced the East India Company to send a punitive expedition against him on the same year. Strictly speaking, from the official stand point, this is the beginning of the Anglo-Lushai relationship.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- I.F.Extl. A. is the abbreviation of the Foreign Department, External A, Proceedings of the Government of India.
- B.J.P. is the abbreviation of the Proceedings of the Judicial Department, Government of Bengal.
- B.P.P. is the abbreviation of the Proceedings of the Political Department, Government of Bengal.
1. I.F.Extl. A. October 1884. No. 377. Bengali Captives in the Lushai land. The Deputy Commissioner, Cachar to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Assam. Dated, Silchar, March 10, 1884. *See* also Lewin T.H. 'The Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Dwellers therein, p. 103.
 2. Shakespear L.W.—'History of Assam Rifles', p. 19.
 3. B.J.P. February 27, 1850. No. 36. Listers's Report.
 4. B.J.P. May 27, 1849. No. 103. Mr. Sealy to the Secretary Government of Bengal, Judicial Department, dated May 9, 1844.
 5. I.F.Extl. A. October, 1890. No. 142. Chief Commissioner, Assam to the Secretary, Foreign Department, Government of India.

6. I.F.Ext'l A. May 1891. No 123, p. 7, McCabe, Political Officer, North Lushai Hills, to Quinton, Chief Commissioner, Assam.
7. Shakespear J.—'The Lushai Kukie clan' pp. 2-8.
8. I.F.Ext'l A. May 1841. No. 123. *Supra*.
9. B.P.P. September 1896. Nos 1-4. Case of Mr. C.S. Murray, Assistant Commissioner, Chittagong Hill Tracts.
10. B.J.P. August 1872. No. 220. Edgar's Memorandum to the Commissioner, Dacca, dated April 3, 1872.
11. Shakespear L.W.—'History of Assam Rifles', p. 61.
12. Chaudhury Achyut Cahran—'*Srehatteer Itibritta*' Vol. II, Part V, Chapter III (Miscellaneous), pp. 47-48.