

The Lushai Hills

Annexation, Resistance
and Pacification
(1886-1898)



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C. Lalthlengliana

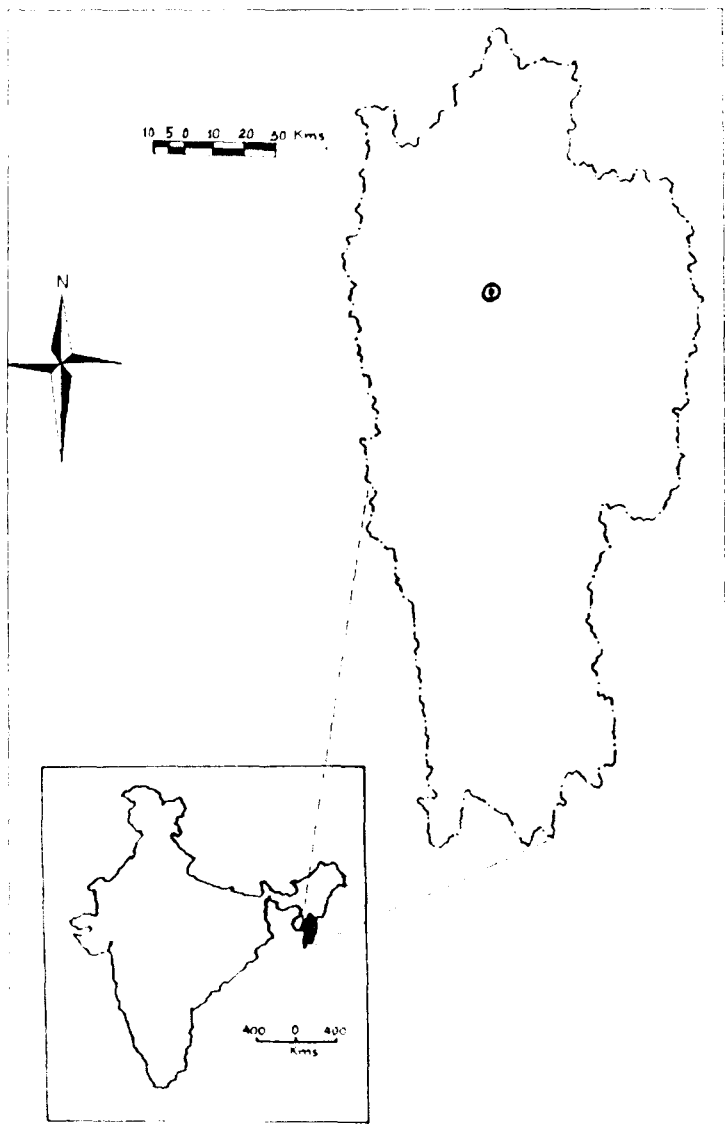
In the last decade of the nineteenth century the Lushai Hills on India's eastern periphery, now the state of Mizoram, was annexed by the British and incorporated into their Indian Empire. This book tells the story of how this was done, bringing into focus the hitherto neglected theme of resistance to the imposition of alien rule. The Lushais, or more accurately the Mizos, like so many other hill people in North East India, took up arms and fought the British for six years before they were finally pacified. This study also highlights their fears of what colonial would mean for their traditional way of life. Hence their decision to resist. The work is rounded off by an account of what came to be called indirect rule, that is, British rule through the medium of the chiefs, the utility of which system was realised during the operations and which the colonial rulers scrupulously followed till the end of their rule.



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LOCATION OF LUSHAI HILLS



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Annexation, Resistance and
Pacification 1886-1898

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INTRODUCTION

The Lushai Hills, later Mizo Hills district of Assam and now the state of Mizoram, lies in the extreme southern corner of North East India. It covers today, an area of 21,081 square kilometres. It lies between 21° 56' - 24° 31' north latitude and 92° 16' - 93° 26' east longitude.¹ The tropic of Cancer runs about 50 kilometres south of Aizawl, the capital city of the hills. It is bounded by Cachar district of Assam on the north, by Manipur on the north-east, and by Tripura on the north-west. It is sandwiched between Myanmar on the east and south-east and Bangladesh on the west and south-west. About seventy five percent of its 573 kilometres long boundaries are international.

The hills consist of small ranges running in the north-south direction in parallel series separated from one another by narrow valleys. The entire area with the exception of a small portion lying in the plains are steep hilly terrain. The ridges of the ranges of hills vary from about 40 to 2000 metres in height. The Blue Mountain, called by the people, 'Phawngpui,' situated in the South Lushai Hills, is the highest point at 2157 metres above sea level.² The valleys are narrow, rugged, and unsuitable for wet rice cultivation. Excluding the

¹ *Mizoram Statistical Handbook*, 1974, (Aizawl, 1974) p.3. see also Rintluanga Pachuau, *Geography of Mizoram*, (Aizawl, 1994), p. 23.

² Rintluanga, *Ibid*.

small portion of the plain areas in the extreme north, the whole area comprises of small hills and narrow valleys. Within the hills the only few small plain areas are mostly located in the eastern region. Champhai valley, 11.27 kilometres in length and 4.83 kilometres in width is one such plain area. Another is Vanlaiphai situated in the south eastern corner. Thenzawl is the third important level area in the middle of the region.³

The rivers are small and almost entirely rain-fed. Hence, a number of them dry up in the winter season. As such water communication is almost impossible during the winter. However, a few rivers such as Tlawng, Tuirial, Chhimituipui and Khawthlangtuipui are navigable for small crafts throughout the year.⁴ But in the rainy season the rivers swell up rapidly making them unfordable. Communications become extremely difficult then.

The Lushai Hills, located in the tropics, enjoyed a fairly pleasant climate. The range of temperature between summer and winter was only slight. The monsoons, which generally prevailed during the months of May, June and July made the summer less hot. The hills enjoyed abundant rainfall. The average recorded in the northern hills was 80 inches in a year, whereas the southern received heavier rainfall and 131 inches annually was usually recorded.

Climatic conditions of these hills, being mild and humid, accounted for the dense forests of evergreen trees and bamboo. Therefore, forest played a vital role for their daily livelihood. The abundant growth of bamboo provided considerable household materials of the inhabitants. Indeed, the life of the inhabitants were largely governed by the bamboo forests. Colonel Thomas Lewin, who for many years was

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Non-Lushai name for these rivers are *Dhaleswari* for Tlawng, *Sonai* for Tuirial, *Kolodyne* for Chhimituipui and *Karnafuli* for Khawthlangtuipui.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Superintendent of Chittagong Hill Tracts and knew the Lushai Hills, thus writes:

The bamboo is literally his staff of life. He builds his house of the bamboo; he fertilises his field with its ashes; of its stems he makes vessels in which to carry water, with two bits bamboo he can produce fire; its young and succulents shoots provide a dainty dinner dish; and he weaves his sleeping mat or finds slips thereof. The instruments with which his women weave their cotton are of bamboo. He makes drinking water cup of it, and his head at night rests on a bamboo pillow; his forts are built of it, he crèches fish, makes baskets and stools, and thatches his house with the help of the bamboo. He smokes from a pipe of bamboo; and from bamboo ashes he obtains potash.⁵

In the lower altitudes the forest was mainly thick groves strewn with wild plantains, whereas dense wooden forests were to be found in its higher region. Among the principal species of trees found in these forests was rubber which became an important item of trade. A number of species of bamboo and orchids of various kind, *Bauhinia variegata*, *rhododendrons*, yellow sunflowers and many other colourful wild flowers were to be seen in abundance.⁶

The Lushai Hills was the home of a variety of wild life: elephants, bison, tigers, leopards, bears, various kinds of deer, wild boars, were found in its jungle.⁷ Birds of various kinds which included rare species like the hornbills, peapheasants, sunbirds, and the like, were also to be found in the jungles.

⁵ T H Lewin, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India*, (London, 1870), pp. 15-16.

⁶ Rintluanga, *op.cit.*, pp.52-53. One peculiar features of the bamboo forest was that at intervals of about fifty years, they flowered, which led to the multiplication of rats which fed on the flowers, and in turn caused famine as they devoured all crops.

Ibid.

PEOPLE

The Lushai Hills, was inhabited by a number of tribes and sub-tribes speaking different dialects of the same language. The major tribes were the Luseis, Pawis, Lakhers, Hmars, Paite, Thangluah, Palian and Zadeng.⁸ All these were actually known by the generic name "Mizo."

For sometime before the British came in contact with these hills, there was a northerly movement of tribes. Colonel Frederick Lister, the Political Agent of the Khasi Hills who led an expedition into the Lushai hills during 1849-50 thus reported:

It would appear that the tribes to the south have been gradually driving one another in a northerly direction; for, first, some Nagas that were located in the Boobun hills and in southern Cachar were obliged by the Tangune Kookies to flit and to take up their abode in the hills north of the Borak, when the Tangunes took possession of their ground, and they having in their turn been driven up by the Chansen and Tadoe tribes, the Tangunes were also afterwards obliged to vacate and to move on into the northern hills.⁹

Lister goes on to say that after them the "Chansens" were obliged to do so likewise; and the "Tadoes," who had been driven up by the "Luchyes," a very powerful tribe, first settled about seven years since within eight and ten miles south of Silchar station, and became Company's riots, and made themselves useful by cutting timber, bamboos, cane, and others, which they used to bring to market. Lister further reported:

⁸ The earliest notice of these tribes is to be found in John Rawlins, "On the Manners, Religion and Laws of the Cucis or Mountaineers of Tipra." *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, 1792. Vol. II, No. XII; John Macrae, "Account of the Kookies or Lunctas." *Asiatic Researches*. Calcutta, 1801, Vol. VII, No. VI; See also C.A. Soppit, *A Short Account of the Kuki Lushai Tribes*. (c. 1893).

⁹ Quoted in Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government With the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal*. (Calcutta, 1884), p. 287.

but after having been located there for some four years, the "Luchye Kookies" in November 1849 attacked them, burnt three of their villages, killed several of the inhabitation, and took away several of them in to slavery, and then the whole of the "Tadoe" tribe flitted, left the south and settled down in the northern hills.¹⁰

Since the British first came into contact with the various sub-tribes of Kookies, the people living in these hills were referred to in the early years as "Kookies". It was Lister's expedition which first established the existence of the Lushais or more correctly the Lusei, as a separate and distinct tribe. From then and until the Expedition of 1871-72 the British both in Cachar and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts dealt only with the Lushais who under the chiefs had firmly established themselves in the hills. Hence the term Lushai gained currently and their land was referred to as the Lushai hills. Major John Shakespear, of whom more later on, thus points out:

The term Lushai as we now understand it, covers a great many clans, it is the result of the incorrect transliteration of the word Lushai, which is the name of the clan, which, under various chiefs of Thangur family, came into prominence in the eighteen century... Among the people themselves the Lusheis are sometimes spoken as Duhlian... and the general population of the hills is spoken as Mizo.¹¹

From the eighteen seventies the British became aware of that the people in the southern hills were different. They were then called Shendus, a term which seemed to have covered all the Pawis and not only the Lakhers.¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushet Kuki Clan*, (London, 1912, reprint, Aizawl, 1975). See Introduction. However as long ago as in 1892, Robert McCabe, Political Officer, North Lushai Hills in a report wrote that "The Lushais call themselves Mizo or Mizau, which term includes the following castes: Ralte, Molbem, Khuangli, Paithe, Taute, Jahau (Yahow) Dulien, Lakher, Fanai (Muallianpui), Poi, Daiang, Tangur, Sukte, Mar, Falam (Tashon), Paukhp, and Lielul. For detail see FEAP December 1892; Nos. 42-46.

¹² N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers*, (Shillong, 1932.), pp. 5-6.

Ethnologically, all these tribes belong to the Mongoloid stock¹³ speaking the Tibeto-Burman family of language.¹⁴ Lusei or Dublian, which is the dialect of the Lusei clan, is now the lingua franca and is understood in many parts of the adjoining districts.¹⁵ However, the Lusei language has been considerably modified as a result of interaction with other groups. The Ralte and number of other clans began to lose their identity in terms of the dialect and became Lusei speaking groups. Few clans, such as Hmar, Pawi, Ralte, Lakher and the Paihte still maintain their own dialects in the remote areas. However, under colonial period, the Lushais dominated. Their numerical superiority and better economic status, accounted for this, a position they maintained in the postcolonial period as well. The term Lushai therefore is applied, in this dissertation to the Lusei as well as to the Pawis and Lakhers in the south.

THE CHIEFS

The Lushais were not governed by any central authority but each village was ruled by a chief. The Sailo chiefs were the most numerous and had emerged as the most dominating ruling clan long before the British entered the Lushai hills.¹⁶ Others like Thangluah, Palian, and Zadeng chiefs ruled over lesser number of villages, whereas the Pawis and Lakhers maintained their rule in the south and south east Lushai hills. The age-old traditional and customary laws largely governed the Lushai chiefs and his village administration. Shakespear thus wrote:

The chief was, in theory at least, a despot, but the nomadic instinct of the people is so strong that any chief whose rule was unduly harsh soon found his subjects leaving him, and he was therefore constrained to govern according to custom.¹⁷

¹³ Rintluanga *op.cit.*, p

¹⁴ G.A.Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. III. Part III.* Reprint, Delhi 1976, p 3

¹⁵ J.Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p 112

¹⁶ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, pp 248-249

¹⁷ J.Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p 13

However, the chief could not misuse his power if he desired to retain his position for custom provided that a villager could transfer his allegiance to another chief at will if dissatisfied with his chief. This is called "*peming*."¹⁸ Hence a chief's village became large or small according to his relations with his villagers.

Every chief ruled his village with the help of elders known as the '*Upas*,' their number varying from village to village depending on their size. They were popularly called by the British as '*mantri*' while their counterparts in the south were referred to as "*Karbaris*". These *Upas* were appointed by the chiefs and were liable to be removed by him. Below them were other village functionaries.¹⁹

The relations between chiefs and his people were governed by well defined customs. A chief was entitled to certain dues in kind: '*Fathang*' a basket of grain due to be paid by the villagers and '*Sachhiah*' a portion of meat due,²⁰ and subsequently, others like '*Chi chhiah*' a share of salt extracted from the salty water, '*Khuai Chhiah*' a share of bee hives or honey, and the like became a sort of contribution existed among the Lushais.²¹ Similarly with regard to the construction of his house, the chief was entitled to call upon the villagers

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, The chief and his officials therefore formed the privilege class of the Lushai society. The first and foremost groups of the privilege class, with the exception of the chief, were the *Upas*. They were exempted from the payment of the paddy due to the chief and enjoyed priority in selecting *jhum* fields. The '*Tlangau*' or the village crier was a privileged person. His duty was to proclaim the chiefs' order to the people by crying all around the village. He was entitled to receive a small amount of paddy from each house. Another was '*Thirdeng*' or the blacksmith, who was to repair and shape up all the working tools of the villagers. For such work he received a basket of paddy from each household per annum. *Thirdeng* also received a small share in every animal killed by the villagers. The '*Puithiam*' or village Priest, performed sacrificial ceremonies and offerings for the villagers. '*Ramhual*' who advised the chiefs where *jhum* should be cut each year were other important village functionaries.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.83.

²¹ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, pp. 248-249.

to do the work without payment. The work, however, remained voluntary as no chief could force his subjects to do the work. Beyond what was permitted by custom no chiefs had the power to levy any tax or impose any other obligations.²² In deed life among the Lushais was governed by a code of conduct known as "*Tlawmngaihna*," this was voluntary services to individuals and to the society without expectation to receive any reward in return.²³

The main occupation of the people was agriculture and they followed shifting cultivation or *jhumming*. Besides rice, other crops that Lushai *jhum* produced were maize, cotton, various fruits and eatable roots. In no village were there any shop-keeper, and, with the exception of the blacksmith, no craftsmen. Fresh meat was obtained by hunting.²⁴ There was hardly any trade except but at the border *hats* or markets forest and hill produce such as rubber was bartered for such items as salt. These *hats* were maintained by people from the plains.

By the 1880's the Lushai Hills was roughly grouped under three distinct geographical areas: the Western Lushais, the Eastern Lushais and the Southern Lushais. The western Lushais were mainly the descendants of Suakpuilala and their dependant chiefs. Their country covered the areas between Tuirial river on the east; district of Cachar in Assam on the north; Hills Tipperah and Chittagong Hill Tracts on the west and an imaginary line east-west through Darlung peak, about the middle of Lushai Hills in the south. The Eastern Lushais were the descendants of three chiefs namely, Vanhnuailiana, Lalphunga and Vuta, all of them from the same clan. However, among the eastern Lushai chiefs, the descendants of the first two chiefs formed a separate group

²² L.B.Thanga, *op.cit.*, p.11.

²³ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, pp 19-21.

²⁴ J.Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

Suakpuilala was the undisputed leader of the Western Lushai chiefs during the first half of the nineteenth century.

and occupied the northern part of the Eastern Lushai Hills, whereas, the sons and grandsons of Vuta formed another group and settled in the southern part of the eastern Lushai Hills. As a whole, the eastern Lushai Hills roughly covered the areas between Tiau river, which flows between Lushai hills and Burma, in the east; the western Lushai country, using Tuirial river as boundary on the west, the Cachar district and Manipur on the north and north-east; and on the south the same imaginary line, with that of the western Lushai southern boundary.

The Southern Lushai Hills contained mixed tribes. On its extreme north and north west was the Haulawng group and their dependants who were the descendants of Tlutpawrha, a Sailo chief. Immediately east and south east was inhabited by the Pawis or Fanais known to the British as "Muallianpuis." The Lakhers or Mara known by the Arakanis as "Shendus" settled in the extreme southern corner, south of Haka subdivision and in the extreme north of the Arakan Hill Tracts.²⁵ However, as earlier pointed both the Pawis and Lakhers were confusedly clubbed together as Shendus as a whole the Southern Lushai Hills was bounded by the Chin hills on the east and South-east, the Chittagong Hill Tract on the west and south-west and the Arakan Hill Tracts in the south. Its northern boundaries, however, was that of the southern boundaries of the North Lushai Hills.

WARFARE

The frequent movement of tribe, both because of their migratory nature as well as because of the exhaustion of *jhum* lands or competition for scarce resources had resulted in frequent inter village or inter-tribal warfare. Village sites were therefore carefully chosen with a view to easy defence. Thus the Lushais built their villages on top of ridges while the Lakhers of the southern Lushais constructed theirs on

²⁵ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

the slopes of the high hills.²⁶ Lakher villages are however more permanent, unlike the Lusei's as Neville Parry points in his study of the Lakhers:

The villages are permanent and are rarely moved as the Lakhers are attached to their village sites and dislike abandoning the graves of their ancestors. While the Lushei moves his village to a new sites as soon as he has worked out the surrounding land, the Lakher prefers to keep a permanent village and to spend the greater part of the cultivating season in a hut built in his field.²⁷

Consequently villages in the south were very large consisting of more than 3000 houses, Selesih village was said to have been constituted of 7000 houses.²⁸

These villages were elaborately stockaded, the fortifications usually encircling a village, except where the ground made it unnecessary.²⁹ The stockades were constructed of stout timber driven into the ground and tied with cane. The ends of each post was sharpened to a point. These were high enough to dissuade escalading. Bamboo defences, though temporary affairs, were used to reinforce the timber.³⁰ Parry thus describes Lakher system of fortifications:

Every village had its fort or "Ku", to which the people retired on news of a raid. This fort was built in the middle of the village, and consisted of a strong stockade of tree-trunks and saplings about ten feet in height. The saplings were planted in two or three rows, so as to make the forts bullet-proof, and the stockade was loop-holed to enable the defenders to fire. All round the

²⁶ *Mizoram District Gazetteers 1989*, Directorate of Art and Culture, (Government of Mizoram), p.63.

²⁷ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p.60.

²⁸ K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute leh An Thlahte Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 1964), p. 21.

²⁹ J. Shakespear, *op.cit.*, p.57. The art of making stockade of the village was started from the Chin Hills and spread to the Lushai Hills.

³⁰ Inmdad Hussain, "Problem of the Frontier, 1822-1860", in H.K.Barpujari, (Ed.) *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. IV*. (Calcutta, 1992), p.336.

stockade a trench was dug and sown with bamboo stakes called "seu," and was crossed by a draw-bridge, which was raised and lowered by cane ropes.³¹

Parry was writing of the Lakher village long after firearms had brought changes in fortifications. But the traditional weapons were spears, bows and arrows, and *daos* or long knives.³² Shields used were made out of the hide of *gayal*, stretched in the sun to dry and then hardened and well polished. These measured more or less two feet by four feet and useful against spears and arrows.³³

Stone chutes known as "Sahbuak" were often used for defensive purposes. As the topography of the Lushai hills was favourable to its use, this was found quite effective. During the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, for instance the expeditionary force under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lewin against the Lushai chief Lalzika had found to its dismay the effectiveness of this type of warfare.³⁴

The first reference to firearms was around 1790. The Pawis in the Chin hills were said to have possessed guns before the Lushais: Thanghlianga, chief of Halkha, was said to possess a gun, called as "*Paranpa*," and so were much feared by the Lushai.³⁵ Mangpawrha, Lushai chief of Reiek, is also said to have a gun around 1812.³⁶ These are the earliest

³¹ N.E. Parry. *op.cit.*, p.63. Bamboo stakes, elsewhere called *panjis*, was a common feature in North Eastern India.

^{*} A small curved knife sharpened on one side and whose shape and size considerably varied was common to all hill tribes in the North East. But the "*Kawlnam*" of the Lushai is said to come from Burma: "*Kawl*" means Burma and "*Hnam*," knife.

³² *Ibid.* p. 48.

³³ Liangkhaia, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

^{*} For the use of stone chutes among the Abors or Adis as they are now called, see *Frontiers and Overseas Expedition From India*, Vol.VII, The Official Account of the Abor Expedition, (Reprint Delhi, 1983), facing p. 38.

³⁴ FPAP August 1872; No 114-126, Dairy of Civil Officer, Right Column Lushai Field Force : Captain T.H.Lewin. 30 December 1871.

³⁵ F.Lalremsiam, *op.cit.*, p.47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

instances of the use of firearms in these hills. But it was only after contact with the British that its use became widespread. Colonel Lister who penetrated deep into the Lushai hills during his 1850-51 expedition thus reported:

The fighting part of the Lushai population are composed, first, of Lushais, who appeared to be a cross between the Kookies and Burmese; secondly, of a certain number of true Burmese, entertained for the purposes of warfare; and, thirdly, of refugees and outlaws from Munipore and our own frontier... The Burmese portions of the force are armed with muskets and *dows* the remainder with spears and *dows*.³⁷

The muskets used by them were flint-locks, the powder being manufactured by themselves out of the local materials.³⁸ The method of manufacturing gunpowder was simple. They collected the saturated soil out of animals' urine and dung which were mixed with soil in a large baskets poured with water. The water, of a red colour, was boiled for two or three hours and then left to cool. The nitrate crystals dried in the sun was mixed with charcoal. The mixture was pounded in a mortar and a little water and spirit were added. When it had been sufficiently pounded and dried in the sun it became ready for use as gunpowder. The powder made by this process was said to be quite powerful, but produced out a good deal of smoke.³⁹

BRITISH EXPEDITIONS : THEIR IMPACT

The British came into contact with these tribes not long after the acquisition of Chittagong in 1760.⁴⁰ Not much was known of them even after many years of occupation of Cachar (1832), except that that district and Sylhet often faced their raids on their border villages.⁴¹ C.E.Buckland thus gives the colonial perception for the disturbances:

³⁷ Colonel F.G.Lister's report, quoted in Alexander Mackenzie, *op.cit.*, p. 293.

³⁸ FPAP April 1873; No. 228-234, Baboo Obhoy Churn Mitter, to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

³⁹ N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, pp.134-136.

⁴⁰ For details, see Imdad Hussain, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

A private quarrel with a neighbouring clan, a scarcity of women and domestic servants, and the consequent necessity of procuring a requisite number of captives to supply the wants of the tribe, the simple desire for plunder, and of obtaining heads to grace the obsequious of some departed chieftains, were the principal causes of raids.⁴²

These increased in frequency and intensity by the 1840's and in 1844, Captain George Blackwood with a party of Sylhet Light Infantry and the armed Civil Police marched into the hills and punished the raiders and captured their chief Lalsutthlaha referred to in the early literature as a "Poitoo" chief.⁴³ The second punitive expedition, against Ngura of Sentlang for his raid on the Thado chief Kaihmunga who had settled in British territory was under Colonel Frederick Lister, referred to earlier, in 4 January 1850.⁴⁴ This expedition brought peace to the Lushai frontier for about twelve years. The third expedition in 1869 was however, sent from Cachar in two columns: one composed principally of Police under Edward Baker, Deputy Inspector General and the other under Brigadier General Nuthall, consisting of the 44th and 7th Native Infantry and artillery. Both the parties failed to punish neither Vanpuilala nor Suakpuilala, who were suspected to have involved in a raid on the Kala Naga stockade.⁴⁵

Throughout the 1860's various methods were tried out to secure the British frontier, but each proved of no avail. Much of the disturbance of the period was due to the extension of tea gardens deep into what the Lushais understood to be tribal territory. The result was that the tea garden became the target for Lushai raids.⁴⁶

⁴² C.E. Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, Vol. I*, (Calcutta, 1901) p.180

⁴³ R.G. Woodthrope, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 13-16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp.11-27.

⁴⁶ FPAP August 1872; No. 69-78.

Lushai raids on tea garden became particularly daring during 1870-'71. Between 22-24 January 1871 the Lushai made one daring raid on the village of Ainerkhal in Hailakandi sub-division and the factory at Alexandrapur where they murdered tea-planter Robert Winchester and carried off several captives including his little child Mary Winchester.⁴⁷

Hence, the government began to take up the matter on a large scale, and resolved to send a larger punitive expedition known as "The Lushai Expedition of 1871-72" to cover up the whole Lushai Hills from North to South. The Northern Column was known as the Cachar Column under Brigadier General G. Bouchier; while the Southern Column called the Chittagong Column was under the Command of Brigadier General C.H. Brownlow.⁴⁸

This expedition achieved in punishing many of the offenders of the late raids and recovered the white captive Mary Winchester from the Haulawng group of the southern Lushais. The expedition further achieved the submission of number of Lushai Chiefs under them.⁴⁹

The Lushai war tactics was greatly revolutionised by the British expeditions. The usual Lushai method of ambush determined only throwing the whole weight to smash the enemy's potentials from certain point of their concealment at single stroke and then rapidly retreated. When the British exposed their military power to the Lushai people, it was clearly exhibited that the concentration in one front and neglecting the others would in no way proved successful but would rather become too ineffective. The British forces came in separate contingents with the detachment of the troops made successively one group after another that may support each other when a particular group was attacked on the way.⁵⁰ In such circumstances, the Lushai method of hit hard and

⁴⁷ H.K.Barpujari, *Problem of Hill Tribes North East Frontier, 1873-1962. Vol.III.* (Gauhati, 1981), p. 29.

⁴⁸ Suhas Chatterjee, *Mizoram Under the British Rule*, (Delhi, 1985) p.67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.71.

⁵⁰ FSEP June 1892; No. 80-100, No.88.

run policy may not be successfully utilised as the British forces could back up each other. Hence, it was necessary for the Lushai to adopt the British system of diplomacy. They began to take careful measure and study the movements of the *sepoys*. Accordingly, they planned the course of action to match up the British style of advance.⁵¹

With the contact of the British and the inter-tribal feud came to its height, the construction of stockades greatly improved. The system of double rows of stockades with earth and stones in between was introduced with the spread of firearms. The dry ditch, filled in with sharp pointed spikes of bamboo or wood, impeded initial attack. In the middle of the village, the Lushais constructed a thick wooden wall stronghold meant for the hiding place especially for women, children, and others to seek refuge when there is danger from raid. This Fort was known as "*Kulhbing*."⁵² It was always supported by the sentry posts where the security guards easily see and attack the enemies as they approached and it was backed up by the thick wooden plank. In addition to this, the whole village was encircled with the thick wooden wall, high enough that raiders may not easily climb through. This fortress was known as "*Khaw Kulh*"⁵³ or outer stockade. If a particular village had no enemy and the situation was peaceful, the "*Khaw Kulh*" was usually made with bamboo. About two metres surrounding the *Khaw Kulh* was cleared off all trees and pointed bamboo spikes had been placed instead.⁵⁴

The village Fort was always associated with the sentry post known as "*Ralven Buk*."⁵⁵ These sentry posts were not necessarily of the same design, some villages planted a thorny and thick trees whereas after the widespread of firearms, a trench were dug outside the stockades, which provided a

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, (Calcutta, 1940), p. 275.

⁵³ Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, (*Kum 1900 Hmalam*), (Aizawl, 2000), p.201.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

protective place to repel the invaders and safeguard from the volley. These 'Ralven Buk' were the inner part of the sentry. However, whenever they needed to retreat, an easy way to retreat inside the stockade was necessary, for that purpose a gateway was created and in fact it was a doorway or a main gate for the whole fort usually opened during day time and closed at night. This was known as "Kulh Kawngka."⁵⁶ Besides the inner *Ralven Buk* the outer defence designs were still created on the branches of the trees, which were carefully watched by the young men turn by turn.⁵⁷

By the time of the expedition of 1871-72 firearms came to be greatly appreciated. Woodthorpe thus records:

It is only within the last fifteen years, or thereabouts, that they have learnt the use of firearms, but now they possess a large number of muskets, most of which are old flint-locks, of English manufacture, bearing the Tower mark of various date, some as far back as the middle of the last century. The stocks of these are highly varnished and ornamented with red paint.⁵⁸

As traffic in arms soon developed and the use of guns became widespread throughout the whole of Lushai Hills. The relative value of a gun can be seen from the fact that the Lushai raids into the plains during the second half of the nineteenth century was mainly to capture slaves, whom they sold to Pawis in exchange of firearms.⁵⁹ At this time, a slave of about four and half feet tall was exchanged for two muskets.⁶⁰ In fact, Lushai regarded a brave patriot in high esteem, and in no way a person without guns could achieve such position. Hence, it became indispensably necessary to procure guns, as each and every male member of the society became anxious to possess muskets of their own.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ R.G.Woodthorpe, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁵⁹ F.Lalremsiamia, *op.cit.*, p.4.

⁶⁰ Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relation of the Government With the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal.* (Calcutta. 1884), p.296.