

CHIN-LUSHAI LAND

INCLUDING

A DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIOUS EXPEDITIONS INTO THE
CHIN-LUSHAI HILLS AND THE FINAL ANNEXATION
OF THE COUNTRY

BY

SURG.-LIEUT.-COL. A. S. REID, M.B.

*Indian Medical Service: Medical Officer in charge 2nd Battalion
4th Gurkha Rifles.*

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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A NOTE

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Dr. (Mrs.) N. Chatterji
Senior Research Officer
Tribal Research Institute
Aizwal

PREFACE.

IN a campaign or expedition into a new country, it can easily be understood that the matters regarding military operations, political negotiations, or characteristics of the people concerned, which come within the personal observation of a medical officer, must, from the nature of his duties, be of very limited extent, and that he is usually debarred, by his position, from acquiring an accurate knowledge of the undertaking as a whole.

It is therefore almost entirely owing to the kindness of Colonel W. P. Symons, C.B., of the South Wales Borderers, Colonel V. W. Tregear, C.B., of the 9th Bengal Infantry, and Colonel G. J. Skinner, D.S.O., of the 3rd Bengal Infantry, who commanded the Chin Force, Lushai Force, and Northern Column of the latter respectively in the expedition of 1889-90, and who placed the information in their possession at my disposal, as well as to that of Mr. G. M. Chesney, Editor of the *Allahabad Pioneer*, who allowed me to search the files of his paper for former records of the Chin-Lushai Country, that I am enabled to place the following volume before the public.

I have also to thank Colonel R. M. Clifford, I.S.C., Lieutenant E. W. M. Norie, Intelligence Officer, Lieutenant M. E. Willoughby, 2nd Bengal Lancers, and Surgeon-Captain A. G. E. Newland, of the Indian Medical Service, for generously furnishing me with information, etchings and photographs.

A. SCOTT REID.

CALCUTTA,

October 1893.

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CHIN-LUSHAI LAND.

CHAPTER I.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNOLOGICAL.

PRIOR to 1889, the interior of the tract of country known as the Chin-Lushai Hills, was a *terra incognita*, and, even now, there are probably many members of the general public included in the class of well-educated to whom the title conveys but little meaning, and in whom it arouses still less interest.

Consisting of parallel mountain ranges rising to heights of over 9,000 feet, this, the most recent acquisition to Her Majesty's dominions, embraces every variety of physical feature and climate, from the dense and deadly jungles below, through the tangled mazes of which the ponderous elephant and rhinoceros push

their way, to the invigorating summits, crowned with pines, where the sheen of the pheasant's wing catches the eye, as, with lightning speed, he skims down the mountain side.

People this region with dusky tribes, almost as numerous in dialect and designation as the villages in which they live, owning no central authority, possessing no written language, obeying but the verbal mandates of their chiefs, hospitable and affectionate in their homes, unsparing of age and sex while on the warpath, untutored as the remotest races in Central Africa, and yet endowed with an intelligence which has enabled them to discover for themselves the manufacture of gun-powder.

Such in general outline is the Chin-Lushai country, and such were its inhabitants until some three years ago they were touched by the transforming wand of civilization. The world moves rapidly in these times, and, before many decades shall have passed, the descendants of Lienpunga and Jahuta may perhaps be seen peacefully wending their way along roads, formerly the lines of "Kuki" paths, and used principally for murderous raids, but now leading to trim railway stations, whence the powerful engine and pioneer of progress conveys them to Rangoon or Calcutta as candidates for University degrees and Government appointments.

No less strange things have happened within comparatively recent years. In the words of a writer in the *Englishman* : "The future of Lushai-land may be fore-

seen from what we know of the Khasia Hills that lie to the north of it. Sixty years ago the Khasias, who are the bravest and most warlike of all the wild tribes of India, were more bloodthirsty than the Lushais. On the 4th of April 1829, they rose in arms, and murdered Lieutenants Bedingfield and Burlton and some sepoy. That led to the inevitable military expedition which was protracted through several cold seasons, and the accounts of which differ from the accounts of the present Lushai Expedition chiefly in the determined resistance offered by the brave hill-men armed only with bows and arrows and *dhas*. The last of the Khasia chiefs did not tender his submission till 1833, and for the next twenty years Colonel Lister was Political Agent with the tribes. In his time Welsh missionaries entered the hills, learned the strange language, and reduced it to writing, prepared a grammar and vocabulary, introduced a printing press and opened schools.

“Now the Khasias are running the Bengalis a close race as clerks and accountants in the *cutcheries* (Government offices) at Shillong; they have beaten them in both the high schools there; their foremost youths are aspiring to University degrees; and in female education they are officially stated to take the lead of all the Indian races. There can be no doubt that the future of the Lushais will be similar, whichever missionary denomination enters the field. A few years will see the hillsides dotted with schools, while the garrisons at Haka,

Sangal Klang and Fort Tregear will be asked for subscriptions to build churches."

The above reads like a page from Mark Twain's "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur," but is none the less true as to facts and probable as to speculation.

The Chin-Lushai country is said to extend generally between latitudes 21° and 24° north, and longitudes 92° and 94° east; to be bounded 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 two hundred and sixty miles in length, with a maximum breadth of about one hundred and twenty.

Since beginning this work, however, I have received a note from Lieutenant E. W. M. Norie, of the Middlesex Regiment, late Intelligence Officer with the Southern Chin Column, in which he says, referring to the Chins: "They extend very far to the north—to parallels 28° or 29°, or further. Since I saw you, I made a trip up the Chindwin, about 150 miles beyond where any white man had been before, and they were there and to the north, living quite distinct from the Kachins and entirely in the hills. The Kachins called them by the Burmese name of 'Chins,' and say they extend north as far as they know anything of the country. Of course they are distinct tribes, but of the same stock, I fancy.

"The women wear a different style of dress from the Baungshès, and very little of it. In many parts men and women tattoo their faces."

Considerable confusion arises from the various names under which the inhabitants of the Chin-Lushai Hills have been described.

Previous to the Expedition of 1871-72, the wild tribes which had been in the habit of raiding our North-Eastern Frontier, were generally spoken of as "Kukis"—a Bergali word meaning hill-men or highlanders. Since that event, however, the term "Lushai" has come into more common use; and although originally applied to the tribe or tribes occupying the tract immediately to the south of Cachar, is now employed, in a comprehensive sense, to indicate all those living to the west of the Koladyne river, while those to the east are designated Shendús. On the other hand, to any one approaching them from the Burma side, the Shendús would be known as Chins, and I think it would therefore be better to drop the term Shendú, and divide the people with whom I am going to deal in the following pages into the two broad classes of Lushais and Chins, the course of the Koladyne river forming the line of demarcation. Various derivations have been suggested for the word "Lushai," among which are "Lu" meaning head, and "Shai," to cut, or "Shai," long-haired, and I leave it to philologists to decide the question. I believe the Lushais call themselves "Zao." "Chin" is a Burmese term, and, on the authority of Colonel Woodthorpe, synonymous with Khyen (pronounced "Chin.")

That officer states that when surveying the Chindwin

river, he was informed that it was so called from the fact of its forming the eastern limit of Chin raids in Burmese territory. The Chins call themselves "Lai." While exhibiting distinctive characteristics in dress and dialect, there can be little doubt that the Chins and Lushais are practically one race; although it is true that the language of the latter is not understood by the people living east of the Koladyne. On the other hand, tribes are found among the Chins themselves, separated by only a few miles, whose dialects are so dissimilar as to be mutually unintelligible. As regards dress, one of the most conspicuous distinctions exists in the manner of arranging the hair. The Lushais and Northern Chins gather it in a knot on the nape of the neck, and the Baungshès on to the forehead. This remark applies only to the males. The Paitès or Suktès wear their hair short and standing out like the tresses of Medusa.

It is only since the annexation of Upper Burma in 1885 that we have come into practical contact with the Chins, and been forced, much against our inclinations, to cultivate their acquaintance. Until the extension of the British rule to the banks of the Maw and Myittha, their name, if it even penetrated to English territory, excited little interest.

Not so with the Lushais. Since the days of Warren Hastings the various tribes whom we now include under this term have, at long and uncertain intervals, reminded us of their presence in a manner not calculated to

inspire mutual regard or confidence. The first record of the raids of these savages dates from 1777, when the chief of Chittagong, a district which had been ceded to the British under Clive by Mir Kasim in 1760, applied for a detachment of sepoys to protect the inhabitants against the incursions of the Kukis as they were then called.

In December 1844, a party of the Sylhet Light Infantry under Captain Blackwood, and assisted by a Kuki chief Lalmi Sing, attacked Lalchokla, another chief and cousin of the latter, in reprisal for a raid committed during the preceding April on a Manipur colony settled in Pertabghar in British territory. The motive of the outrage committed by Lalchokla was, as we shall also see in some succeeding instances, to obtain heads to place on the tomb of his father Lassu, who had died a short time before.

Lalchokla on this occasion took twenty heads and six captives, but paid dearly for his temporary triumph, as his village was surrounded, and he himself transported under circumstances, which, in the minds of the Lushais, appear to have implied a breach of faith, a promise of life having been interpreted by them to mean free pardon.

Cachar had been taken possession of by the British in 1830, the pretext being the death by assassination of the last of the native rulers without heir, and, twenty years after, a second expedition was rendered necessary on account of a raid which had been committed

by the Lushais, the victims in this instance being a tribe of their own kinsmen, who had settled within our territory.

Colonel Lister, Political Agent in the Khasia Hills, assisted by one subaltern, led the force of six native officers and two hundred and twenty-nine rank and file which, in the month of January 1850, was sent out to exact retribution. He destroyed the village of a chief named Mullah, about eighty miles south from Cachar. Following this military operation a powerful chief Sukpial, whose name will become more familiar as we proceed, paid a friendly visit to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, and more amicable relations than had formerly existed were established between our people and the Lushais.

Peace reigned until 1862 when Sylhet was disturbed, three villages being attacked and burned, and their inhabitants as usual either killed or carried into captivity. On this occasion Sukpial was appealed to, and his friendship strengthened by a small annual subsidy.

Meanwhile it had been discovered in 1855 that the tea plant was indigenous to Cachar, and soon after gardens, for the cultivation and production of this important article of commerce, began to be opened out in the southern part of the district, with rather a disquieting effect upon the neighbouring tribes, who fancied they saw possible encroachments upon their hereditary hunting grounds. The suspicion found expression in a

raid upon the tea gardens of Loharband and Monierkhal in the beginning of 1869. The usual military demonstration followed, but on this occasion, owing to delay in the despatch of the force, lateness of the season and other causes, the troops employed were obliged to retire with the object in view unattained, and, as a result, our prestige with the wild tribes on our frontier considerably diminished.

A weak policy of concession and conciliation was then tried, and between December 1869 and March 1870, Mr. Edgar, then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, and Major MacDonald visited Sukpila at his home, and between them fixed a new boundary, which, as after events will show, was not recognised by the tribes whom the chief represented.

The outrages which soon followed exceeded in magnitude and ferocity all that had gone before. Raids, almost simultaneous in date but emanating from different tribes, were made on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the semi-independent state of Hill Tipperah, Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur.

The first raid occurred in the Chittagong Hill Tracts near the Chima outpost, and was supposed by Captain Lewin, Political Officer of that district, to have been effected by a party of Shendús or Eastern Lushais two hundred strong.

Poyakookie in Hill Tipperah was burnt on the 21st January 1871.

Alexandrapore, a tea garden in Cachar, shared the same fate on the 23rd January, when Mr. Winchester, a planter on a visit from a neighbouring estate, was killed, and his daughter Mary, a little girl of six, carried off by the Howlongs. On the same day the adjoining garden of Katli Chura was attacked, but the assailants were driven off.

The village of Ainakhal, in Western Cachar, fared worse, twenty-five persons being killed, thirty-seven taken captive, and the houses burned.

The Lushais attacked the garden of Monierkhal on the 26th January, and afterwards the stockade and coolie lines at the same place, the loss on our side being seven killed and about as many wounded. The fight lasted for seventeen hours, and from the vigorous and sustained nature of the attack, it was supposed that the raiders had old mutineers among them. They were finally driven off with a loss of fifty-seven killed and wounded.

On the following day Nugdigram was raided, eleven persons killed and three carried off.

On the 28th a party of eight sepoy were attacked, and all but one killed; not, however, before they had accounted for twenty-five Lushais.

The last place attacked in Cachar was the Jalnacherra tea estate, where, on the 23rd February, seven coolies were killed and wounded.

Outrages continued to occur in Sylhet, Tipperah and Manipur until well on in March.

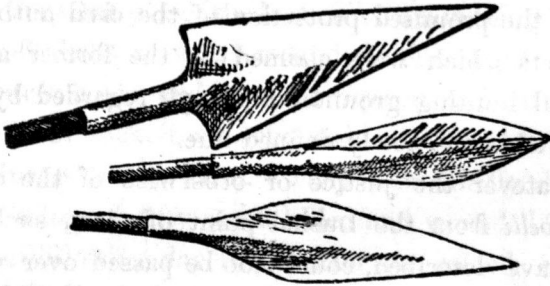
At the beginning of the incidents which I have related, Mr. Edgar was paying Sukpilal a second visit, but apparently neither his presence in the country nor the efforts of the friendly chief had any effect in checking the intended raids, and for a time considerable anxiety was felt regarding the safety of the representative of the British Government. As I have already said, the theoretical frontier laid down by Mr. Edgar a few months before and acquiesced in by Sukpilal, was not recognised even by the subjects of that chief, and, on the present occasion, the alleged grievance of the Lushais was that the tea planters cleared forests on the Cachar frontier, under the promised protection of the civil authorities, in tracts which were claimed by the former as their rightful hunting grounds, although regarded by us as well within the newly defined line.

Whatever the justice or otherwise of the original *casus belli* from the Lushai point of view, such deeds as I have described, could not be passed over without further and more effectual steps being taken to punish the offenders and put a stop to future possible raids. The season was, however, now too far advanced for extensive military operations, and all that could be done in the meantime was to summon troops from the garrisons of Shillong and Dacca for the protection of the frontier, and to make preparations on a larger scale than had even hitherto been done for the despatch of a force into the enemy's country, when, with the return

of the cold weather, the climate should again become safe for our troops, and the paths practicable.

The plan formed was that two columns should start as early as possible in November 1871—one from Cachar, and the other from Chittagong.

Brigadier-General G. Bouchier, C.B., was selected for the command of the former force, and Brigadier-General C. Brownlow for that of the latter.



LUSHAI SPEAR HEADS.