On 1 April 1898, the North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated into one administrative unit known as the Lushai "ill District under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The executive head of the new district was the Superintendent, who was aided in his duties by an Assistant Superintendent. The term Superintendent was used as the designation of the Officer in charge of the Lushai Hills, because the expression, Political Officer, was not appropriate, as his duties were widely different from those of Political Officer employed under Foreign Department.

Under the Assam Frontier Tract Regulations the Superintendent was vested with extra judicial powers to settle disputes between different chiefs, villages and the tribes. He was to prevent raidings and public breaches of the peace, but not to interfere with the administration of chief except in serious cases when called on to interfere. In this connection, it is relevant to point out that in Naga Hills, the district head had already enjoyed those powers. Not only the Superintendent was vested with extra judicial powers, but he had the upper hand in the Police administration. He enjoyed the power to issue orders to the Commandant in all matters. The social condition of Lushai Hills being materially different, and the law and order...
problem was of being utmost importance, Superintendent needed such powers. The Lushais soon accustomed themselves to this type of executive. So profound was the effect of this experience that it bore its marks on the Indian Constitution.

**Circle Officers : Powers and Responsibilities**

Reference has already been made of the Circle system which was introduced in the hills in 1901-2. The whole district was divided into eighteen circles, twelve in Aijal and six in Lunglei. A Circle Interpreter was appointed in each circle as a channel of communication between the Subdivisional Officers and the Chiefs and their people. These officials had the duties of assessment of house taxes, preparation of vital statistics and maintenance of circle books, both permanent and temporary. He was aided in his duties by the village writer or Khawchbiar. The Interpreter maintained birth and death Register of each village. Permanent books contained copies of Boundary Papers of each village and a copy of each order which was of permanent importance. Temporary records consisted of a record of all parwanas received, any orders related to jhuming, the creation of Thlawhbawks, Khawpers, road side cultivation etc.

3. Robert, R., History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, p.44.
It was never intended that the Circle Interpreter should usurp the authority of the hereditary chiefs. Experiences showed however that the system discredited the hereditary chiefs whose influence it had been the policy of the government to uphold. Cole, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills, was of the view that the soundest policy was to deal directly with the chiefs. The Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, agreed with Cole's opinion. Therefore certain changes in the aforesaid system, proposed by Cole, was approved by him. Accordingly, the responsibility for reporting all cases of homicide, accident or unnatural deaths and serious crimes would rest entirely with the chiefs. Circle Interpreters would ordinarily reside in Aijal and visit their circles every three months for inspection of vital statistic returns etc. At other times they would serve processes and convey orders as might be required.

Besides the Circle Interpreter there existed the Lushai Clerk who was usually filled from the ranks of Circle Interpreters. He was responsible for the smooth working of the administration of impressment and supplies. He was an ex-officio President or member of the Panchayat and exercised the functions of chief. The Lushai Clerk at Lungleh was also the President Panchayat and was responsible

6. Ibid., Commissioner's, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, letter 6 July 1908.
* There were two Lushai Clerks, one stationed at Thakthing Veng or street, Aijal, and the other at Rahsivang or street, Lungleh.
for the control and for the assessing and collection of Personal Residence Surcharge in Lungleh station. The clerk was to issue a routine parwanas, and make arrangements for an issue of Lushai rice when its supply was required. He was also responsible for the compilation of Circle Registers and monthly statistics from Circle Interpreters.7 These officials were really the link between the chiefs, the people and the Superintendent.

Conferences of Circle Chiefs

The introduction of one administrative unit developed the sense of unity among the Lushai tribes. In 1935-6, there had begun the chiefs' conference and three such meetings were held in the cold weather and were attended by several chiefs in the south on each occasion and various subjects of general interests were discussed. The Commissioner of Assam expressed pleasure at the unity shown between the representatives of the different tribes of the Subdivision.8 Before long Conferences of Circle chiefs became a regular feature both in the North and the South. This provided a machinery by which chiefs might be consulted on important matters and afforded the Superintendent an opportunity to discuss subjects near to the hearts of the chiefs without any formality. It mitigated against the dangers of isolation which was inherent in running administration of district like Lushai Hills.9

The Circle chiefs' Conference was a great success. Encouraged by this the local authorities were in favour of proceeding a step further. It was realized that chiefs be provided with a machinery by which their rule would include the needs of the whole district as a composite Lushai land so that the basis for Lushai unity might be laid. The Commissioner of Divisions was strongly in favour of having a Lushai Durbar where the Lushais could have an effective say in the administration of the hills. This would stop the need for calling outside pleaders and any one feeling aggrieved by the Superintendent's order might refer the case to such Durbar. Besides, whenever the Durbar disagreed with the Superintendent, the question at issue might be referable to the Commissioner and to government. In March 1940, A.G.McCall, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills, submitted a detailed proposal for the scheme to the government of Assam. In a subsequent note he pointed out that in the matter of this nature nothing at this stage could be final. Much depended on how the chiefs responded. The scheme if passed should be experimental for the first three

10. GSR., Excluded B, 1940; A.G.McCall's, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to Commissioner of Divisions, letter 12 August 1940.
years and if found necessary, it might be extended for another three years and so on. Unless the Lushai chiefs were given the lead, he added, they would be picked off in turns as a result of the artificial and unequal advantages enjoyed by these under Mission's spiritual and financial influences. The chiefs had no idea of administration beyond the village. Therefore, without driving them with vitality towards some goal of a united and not individual Lushai that any constitutional change or cultural threats would easily cause entire havoc with Lushai social ties.\(^\text{13}\)

McCall further pointed out that in the seclusion of these land the people had literally no machinery for redress of their grievances. There was therefore every need to devise some machinery which would remove from the people any feeling that they were totally in the hands of European, Anglo-Indian or Indian Officers. Such a machinery would create some channel by which the people's feelings could find expression in a honourable manner dis-associated from the subversive agitation. Already there had been a change from the old world of enforced fortresses to a world of unlimited space. In view of this fact, the government should give an active lead to the people to aim at attaining some sense of communal unity on all district basis. A Durbar composed of chiefs from all over the hills would be a positive start. The people had a traditional understanding of rule by chiefs. The creation

\(^\text{13. GSR., McCall to the Commissioner of Divisions, 12 July.}\)
of an all district Durbar would help to perpetrate a very good system. Moreover, it would serve a useful counter to the disintegration inseparable from a religion which aimed so strongly to the individual. Besides, the Durbar would enable Lushais to seek legal redress at the bar of the Durbar's court rather than at the hands of plainsmen who carried no responsibility either towards the Lushais or their future on the administration on which the well being of Lushai society was based.14

In regard to the composition of the Durbar, McCall suggested that the Superintendent and the Subdivisional Officer of Lungleh should be President and Vice-President; the Civil Surgeon of Lushai Hills and Lushai Clerks of Aijal and Lungleh to be Ex.Officio member and Ex-Officio Non-Voting members. Including the Lushai Clerks and one member from Zongling area, there should be twenty eight chief members in total. The chief functions of the Durbar would be to consider and discuss all administrative measures which involve any changes in the Lushai Hills District. It would bring for discussion which may be calculated to promote the well-being of the people of the land, such as taxation, provision of amenities, education, communications, medical or other needs.15

The chiefs were to be selected by a secret ballot. Under this system each chief of the circles would vote for their first, second and third choices.14 & 15. Ibid.
The District or Sub-Divisional Officer would be the returning officer. The chief securing the highest aggregate would be appointed as Circle Spokesman for his fellow circle chiefs for a term of three years. Each elected member to the Durbar would have to sign a document consisting of terms of acceptance of membership. Accordingly, he must be willing to serve His Majesty loyally and that membership of the Durbar he should take as an opportunity for the service and the advancement of all things Lushais. He should accept responsibility for constantly studying the condition and lives of all the people committed to his charge, as well as problems which were being encountered by his fellow Chiefs. He should acknowledge that his main and first task should be to aim at the unity and well-being of the Lushai people and recognise that all Lushai chiefs holding boundary papers in their names were equal in status. As regards finance, McCall recommended that 12½ percent house tax collections be credited into a separate fund kept in the Treasury, Aijal. The Superintendent would be a drawing Officer.

The Governor of Assam considered that progress should be made decidedly slowly and as a first step, a District Conference of chiefs in an informal sort of way should be organised and observed how it worked.

and what they thought of it. Accordingly, the Chief's Conference of selected chiefs from the whole district became an annual feature till a District Conference was constituted.

The Durbar was a great success. The status of chiefs was raised as the Head of Rural Administration. Although it could never constitute a means of interference in the Superintendent's day-to-day executive duties, under the statutory rules, but the importance of the provision lied in the fact that it supported the principle of rule of the people by the chiefs. It afforded a much required safety valve to any Lushai who has been so imbued with a sense of grievance at his treatment by the Superintendent, that he would risk publicity at the hands of his people. The chiefs came closer and closer together and realized the advantages of union and cooperated actions. They gained experience to a large measure as to the working of representative form of government. The chiefs, hitherto obsessed with narrow local interests began to think in terms of the whole Lushai Hills District. This was indeed a new development and the chiefs were educated into the responsibilities of leadership.

**District Conference**

The Chiefs' Conference paved way for the District Conference consisting of twenty representatives elected by the chiefs and twenty commoners elected by the

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18. GSR., Excluded B, 1940; No. Ex/270/42, dated 9-4-41. Extract from His Excellency general note date the 24 March 1941 on the Lushai Hills.
electoral college. Macdonald (1943-7) constituted the District Conference in the same manner as the Chiefs' Conference. But trouble started, unfortunately, from the very beginning. The first District Conference decided to curtail the chiefs' power by laying down a principle that no one should be expelled from the village by the chiefs. The power to do this was vested in the District Conference. Again in 1947, the basis of election was changed and joint electorate was introduced, though twenty seats were reserved for the chiefs in the conference. The commons, under the leadership of the newly formed premier political party, the Mizo Union, reacted against the move mainly because of the "Chief dominated body". Since then no cooperated actions could be taken between the two groups, and each took different line of approach in making demands for their future position. The chiefs demanded that "the existing ruling families as they have been before, and that to whichever part of dominions the Lushai Hills might form a part in future, the hereditary rights and privileges of Lushai chiefs might not be overlooked." The Mizo Union did not specifically mention the future position of the chiefs in their memorandum, but demanded "full self-determination within the province of Assam". With the National Council having the supreme legislative authority and executive body and judiciary within the district the composition and function which will be prescribed by rules, and any legislation may be applied to the

20. The Lushai Chiefs' Council, Durtlang, Aijal, 24 June 1947 to Governor of Assam, Shillong.
district only with the sanction of the National Council with any modification. 21

The government of India accepted a new scheme of Administration of the Hill District based on the recommendations of the North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, known as the Bardoloi Committee. Thus was formed a District Council under the Sixth Schedule in all the Hill Districts. In 1952, the District Council was constituted in Lushai Hills and the first general election was held in the same year. The Mizo Union captured most of the twenty four seats of the Council, and thereby commanded absolute majority in the District Council. 22 The Mizo Union, holding the rein of the District Administration, abolished chiefship along with its special privileges in 1953. * However, existing chiefs were compensated in cash for the loss of their tributes and power. 23

Local Advisory Board.

After the British occupation of the Lushai Hills for several decades the administrative work had been growing far more complex. The District Officers required more staff to assist them, as a result of

the splitting up of administration into several departments. Owing to limited number of posts and fear of influx of foreigners (Plainsmen) who were much more civilised and educated, the authorities strictly reserved posts mentioned above for local persons and did not entertain outsiders. It was, therefore, desired that more talented and suitable youth should be appointed to fill up the vacancies as early as possible. McCall considered it worthwhile to form a local "Lushai Board" for the purpose of 'priority grading'. Subsequently, he recommended that, applications received from Lushais by the appointing authority or by the Superintendent, be taken by the latter before a proposed local "Lushai Board" for 'priority grading'. The appointing authority might call those they desired to interview if they deemed it necessary. McCall pointed out in June 1940 that its object was much the same as the object underlying the making of appointments by Public Service Commission. It would ensure that proper notification of an appointment be made and also help to eliminate the plausible applicant with known failures of debit, and ensure a close examination productive of authoritative grading. Further, much harm was done by casual Lushais with no local status walking the streets in the hope of ready selection. The appointing authority did not always get the best. Therefore, unless authoritative priority grading was introduced, it might serve as
encouragements for Lushais towards wonderlust and rot.  

McCall said that selections for scholarship and appointments were made in Lushai by appropriate boards, and improvement in the selection of personnel was noticeable. Such a board declined to make any recommendations for a scholarship due to inferiority and unsuitability of the type of applicant. In other circumstances, a random selection would have made to government's loss. In order to make the scheme permanent and effective, McCall requested Heads of all government and Local Self Government Department be notified to this effect, as that appointing executives would support this procedure.

J.P. Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, said in July 1940 that he did not very clearly understand the proposal of the Superintendent. He wanted to know whether the term "Lushai appointments" meant all appointments, other than those made by the Public Service Commission, to posts in the Lushai Hills or meant all appointments anywhere in the Province to which Lushais were appointed. He further pointed out that if appointments to ministerial and menial posts in a district were usually made by the District Officer, who was at liberty to make such enquiries as he saw fit regarding any candidate.

24. GSR., Excluded B, March, 1941. Nos. 212-33; Copy of letter 22 June, Aijal 1940; McCall to Commissioner of Division, Assam. Proposal for constituting a local "Lushai Board".

25. Ibid.
Why the services of a Lushai Board were required? The Commissioner was, therefore, asked to submit the proposal in clear form in order that it might be laid before His Excellency for orders.26

In his letter on 23 July 1940, the Superintendent explained that "Lushai appointment" was to cover firstly all Lushai appointments not coming within the purview of the Public-Service Commission. This included midwife, scholarship awardable by the Inspector of Civil Hospitals, or by the Director of Public Instruction, candidatures for appointments by Veterinary Department and local authorities like local boards or funds as in the case of Haflong or elsewhere, or appointments in the plains Armed Police etc. Second, the local board would hold a meeting to grade applicants, and the appointing authority could permit any or all to appear interview if deemed necessary. Third, this scheme would encourage selection of the real and genuine Lushai worker. Moreover, it was ancillary to the orthodox desire and practice in maintaining integrity in the face of the glamour of culture contacts. Fourth, as regards the Police, the Superintendent should indent, once a year, on the Governor's Secretary for so many fixed hills men's vacancies. Then the hills should hold boards, in which the Commandant might be the technical adviser to the Civil Officer, to ensure selection of the most suitable material. Fifth, a strong line of vision and planning by the executive would at once caused a reorientation of hill people's

26. AS., Excluded B, March 1941, No.214; J.P.Mills to Governor of Assam, 31 July 1940.
attention towards their own land and society, rather than towards the glamourous unknown of distant lands. He said that this would be a step towards consolidation against the menace of disintegration. Sixth, much of the bad name that had attacked to Lushai was due to routing classes, "who are not prepared to look upon their mother country as their own if they can pick up any job, any how, anywhere", getting employment on plausible grounds and then letting down their employers.  

Finally, the Governor informed the Superintendent that there was no objection to his setting up the proposed Board for the benefit of those who desired to use it. But no department could be compelled to make use of the Board. Accordingly, McCall notified that there would be a Board for the purpose of filling up posts in the staff of Circle Chaprasis and grading three applicants for Chaprasi or Civil Police in case of any vacancies within the year to 31 March 1942. The Board would consist of Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Lushai Clerk and one non-official. This was a significant in administrative developments in Lushai Hills.

Revenue Measures

In the former days the Lushai chiefs received tribute or revenue from their subjects in kind or labour. Each family of a village paid 'Fathang' or a basketful of paddy to the chief for the services

27. Ibid., No.216; Copy of letter 25 July 1940, Superintendent, Lushai Hills to Commissioner of Divisions, Shillong.
28. Ibid., No.252; Secretary to Governor of Assam, to Superintendent, Lushai Hills, 14 January 1941.
29. Ibid., No. 233.
rendered by the latter. The chief was also entitled to a substantial share of all collection made from salt wells known as Chikhurs. The villagers were bound to obey and render help to their respective chiefs in all possible ways. This system continued even after the British annexed the District. The local authorities realised that the Lushai Hills District suffered from economic disability. Though there might be resources of man power and staple crops which militate against starvation, yet there was no means to transfer the resources into currency. The result was that occasionally the District was only sustained on its invisible imports in the shape of Public Works Department's payment, salaries and battalion disbursements. Therefore, instead of currency levy, the local authorities adopted a system of labour by impressment as a part of the people's reasonable contributions to the government in turn for services rendered by the government.

The Superintendent of Lushai Hills and his Assistants were authorised to levy tribute and exact labour on the Lushais. The tribute was to be paid either in rice or in rupees. When paid in rice, it should be at the rate of twenty seers of cleaned rice or one mound of unhusked rice per house. The Superintendent was to decide the matter. When rice was not taken, the rate of commutation should be Rs.2 per hour. The rate to be allowed for the carriage of tribute rice should be four annas for twenty seers for each

30. Perry, N.E., A Monograph on Lushai Custom and Ceremonies, Reprint, Aizawl, 1976, Ch.1, p.3. Also see Shakespear, J., The Lushai Kuki Clans, Part 1, CH.111, p.44.
day's journey. Besides each house should be liable to supply one coolie to work for ten days only irrespective of the days occupied in coming and going. However, this liability should be enforced only when the Superintendent considered its enforcement was absolutely necessary. The rate of wage should be eight annas a day, and the days occupied in coming and going should be paid at half rates. 31

In Aijal Subdivision twenty-five of the houses taxed belonged to Gurkha settlers near Aijal and cultivators in North Vanlaiphai. While forty-seven of the houses were taxed at Rs. 3, thirty-one were assessed only at Rs. 1 owing to bad harvest. Part of the revenue was paid in rice at Rs. 4 a mound for the use of the police and others. No income tax was realised in the district in 1902-3, with the exception of deductions from the salaries of government officers. 32 In 1904-5, the system of realizing house-tax in kind was discontinued as supply of currency had been very much increased. Cash payment was no longer a problem. Moreover, payment of tribute in kind had caused extra burden to the people. 33 From the very beginning it had been the policy of the government to prohibit outsiders from settling in the district yet from early part of present century there was a rapid increase in the number of non-Lushai settlers in the vicinity of Aijal. Shakespear, then Superintendent of Lushai Hills.'

32. AS., Home B, August,1903, Nos.351-370, File No.G.
33. Ibid., Home B,1905; July, Nos.1601-16.
was of the view that settlement of undesirable aliens from the plains should be discouraged. Accordingly, foreign settlers were restricted to the five miles radius. Thirty six houses of foreigners at Aijal and 104 at Lungleh paid house tax at the rate of Rs.3 per house. The remainder paid Rs.2 only. The table below showed, the detail of house-tax in 1905-6 in the Lushai Hills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Number of houses</th>
<th>Number of taxed</th>
<th>Demand.</th>
<th>Collection.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aijal</td>
<td>11,966</td>
<td>10,711</td>
<td>21,458</td>
<td>19,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lungleh</td>
<td>4,583</td>
<td>4,018</td>
<td>8,140</td>
<td>6,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of 1905-6</td>
<td>16,549</td>
<td>14,729</td>
<td>29,598</td>
<td>26,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of previous year</td>
<td>16,271</td>
<td>14,631</td>
<td>29,423</td>
<td>28,051-8.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 1907-8, house-tax was raised on all foreigners to Rs.5, the rate paid at Kohima. As a result the assessment stood at Rs.32,371 in 1908-9. The increase was due partly to increase in population and partly to certain amount of Land Revenue being taken to house-tax by mistake. The amount collected and credited to Treasury before the close of the year 1932-3 stood at Rs.37,999.

34. Ibid.
38. Ibid., Pet B, Deptt.1933, Nos.862-74.
Certain persons were exempted from payment of house-tax i.e. cripples, widows and old men having none to look after them. But no exemption was permitted if the total number of inmates of the house in the aggregate should be able to pay the small tax of Rs.2. Besides these exemptions were made in cases of village Khawchhiar, men of the Lushai Labour Corps, Army Bearer Corps who served in the war and the wives of Lushais serving Burma Rifles. 39

Land Revenue and Shop-Tax.

No land could be exclusively owned by any party in these hills. It belonged to government and the chief had no right in the land. 40 Any revenue derived from holdings other than these covered by house-tax was really a holding tax. The only revenue paying bodies were the Welsh Mission at Aijal, London Baptist Mission at Lungleh and Lakher Pioneer Mission at Serkawn in the South Lushai Hills. 41 In the year 1902-3 rupees thirty three was realised from thirty three acres and seventeen poles leased to the Welsh Mission. 42 The land revenue from Missionaries and shopkeepers marked a decreased in the year 1932-3, and this was due to certain amount of Land Revenue being taken to house tax by mistake. 43

40. AS., Pol B, December, 1930, Nos.651-662; Rules regarding succession of Saile chiefs and clans in the Lushai Hills. See Notes and Orders.
42. AS., Home B, August, 1903, Nos.351-70; File No.G.
43. Ibid., Pol B, September, 1933, Nos.362-74.
The government permitted to open shops from time to time in areas where a real demand existed. They were assessed according to the area they occupied subject to a maximum. Opening of new shops were not permitted except in every special cases because these proved a failure and provided a large house for many non-trading inmates. Shops established within town area in Aijal and Lungleh were assessed higher than those in the interior. Trade in Aijal was chiefly in the hands of Hindu Shopkeepers from Sylhet, Arrah and elsewhere. The shops were generally branches of shops in Silchar and sold cloth, salt and ornaments to the Lushais. In 1903 sixteen shops at Lungleh and Demagiri were reported to have sold goods to the value of Rs. 53,375 or about Rs. 300 per shop per month.

The procedure of assessment of shops was that the Circle Interpreter concerned would visit the assesses. He would compile a list in the Village Register showing names of the house-tax assessment. He would take the list, on completion, to the chief upon whose land the parties were settled. The chief was to give his signature for the correctness of the assessment after checking carefully, and then the Circle Interpreter was also to sign the list. The list finally signed by both the person would be returned to the Superintendent not later than December annually. On receipt of this list a Tauzi (amount to be paid) would be made in office in exact detail.

45. AS., Home B, August, 1933, Nos. 351-70; File No. G.
The chief concerned would receive the money due as Land Revenue from the assesses, and pay into the office of the House Tax Clerk showing details of the names on account of which the payment was being made. 47

Grazing tax were realised from Nepali grazier. The amount realised and credited to Treasury Officer before the close of the year 1932-3 was Rs.420. 48

Impressed labour was exacted from the inhabitants of the Lushai Hills as part payment of taxation by government. The scale of impressed labour was a maximum of ten days per year per house. J. Needham, then Subdivisional Officer, Lungleh felt that ten days labour per year per house might appear not a heavy load, but in actual practice, it was a very big burden to the poor villagers. These ten days labour did not merely meant ten days absence from home. When it was taken into account the great distance coolies have to travel to and from their villages to complete their days work, it was very heavy imposition indeed. He was of the view that this very seriously affected the crop outturn, because villagers were called away during important periods of jhum work. 49

47. Ibid.
48. AS., Pol B, September, 1933, Nos.862-74.
49. AS., Pol B, August 1921, Nos.15-6. XIV.—Impressed Coolies.