INTRODUCTION.

The Mizo Hills District in Assam is the abode of the Lushais. Till recently it was known as the Lushai Hills District. The people of Tripura and Surma Valley earlier called the residents of the Lushai Hills - 'Kukis'. In the official records, too, the term 'Kuki' appeared till the Expedition 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 Since 1950 even the term 'Lushai' has been superseded by the generic term 'Mizo'.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 'Lushei', the name of a clan who drove out the 'Kukis' to Cachar in the eighteenth century. The 'Lusheis'
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. All these were known as 'Lushais' in a wider sense. But the general population of the Lushai Hills is known among themselves as the 'Mi-zos', the children of the hills, which their dialect 'Lushai' or 'Pulien' 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 Irrawaddy (Burma). On the south the country is watered by Karnafuli, Kolodyne and their tributaries the most important of them are Mat, Tyao, Sirthe Tinang 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; inspite of two clearings annually, paths are often impassable without more labour." 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, 'Mizorum' - the land of the hillmen (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 back-bone 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 bison (mithuna), 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 'mithuna' 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 intertribal 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 Kukie 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 intertribal 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 'Sardara'. 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, 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. 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. 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 Nugdigrum, Jhalnacherra and Monierkhal raids, the Lushais committed three pronged attack 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 yat' on Dhaleswari before the landing of the force at Changail. In the various Lushai expeditions the English army officers had the opportunity to face the fierce nature of Lushai ambuscades. During the Lushai Expedition 1871-72, General Brownlow personally received injury and in 1891 Captain Browne, the first Political Officer of North Lushai Hills, met death. 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 poison 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 adhered 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. 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 intertribal 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 Badeng Clan in this way were annihilated. 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 'chamanhoo' 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. 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. In the Lushai community, unlike the Chakmas, the women, a virgin, married or widow, had a secured place. Neglect or illtreatment 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 'Rambui' or demons. They also worshiped a spirit less powerful than pathian was 'khuwarang'. The Pytoo Kukis who lived a considerable part under the Rajas of Tripura, however, adopted certain form of Hindu worship in their religions 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 intertribal 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 25000 houses at his command and is said to have thrown off the yoke of the 'Tripura Rai' securing his position as an almost independent vassal. The Pytoos were
once very powerful in the present Aijal subdivision 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 Thangluahs penetrated into the hearts of the extreme Southern hills and his descendants reached up to Barkhal (Chittagong). 'Rothangpuis' 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 English. 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 Syloos 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. 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.
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 Salloos, 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 Kukies, 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 dagār'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 preoccupied with their engagements that they could hardly afford to pay attention to the Lushai problems in their immediate frontiers. In
times of emergency they, nodoubt, adopted certain temporary
measures but never attempted to enter deeply into the problem. 
Almost every winter the Lushais committed dairing raids
upon the Kukie 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 Englishman to visit the south Lushai borders in 1800.
Next important move in this direction was the Naaf River
Expedition to drive out the Burmese from the island, Shapuri.
in 1823. 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 relation-
ship of the Pytoos with the Raja of Tripura. 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 Superinten-
dent set up two Manipuri Princes, Ram Singh and Tribonjit
Singh, with an allowance. Those powerful British subjects
attacked the Pytoo Chief, Laroo, some times 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 standpoint, this is the beginning of the Anglo-Lushai relationship.
Notes.

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 Levin T.H. 'The Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Dwellers there in.' p-103.


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. Extl A. May 1891. No. 123. p7, Mc Cabe, Political Officer, North Lushai Hills, to Quinton, Chief Commissioner, Assam.


MAP OF LUSHAI HILLS

FROM THE STATESMAN, CALCUTTA
MARCH 4, 1966