CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE LAND:

The Maras occupy the southern portion of Mizoram and the adjoining area of Myanmar. The whole region inhabited by the Maras is commonly called "Marara" in the local language meaning the "land of the Maras" or "Maraland". In early British period it was known as "Lakherland"¹ as the Maras were then known as "Lakher". In 1924, however, it was constituted into three districts viz., the Lushai Hills, the Chin Hills and the Arakan Hill Tracts². In 1950 the Mara area of the erstwhile Lushai Hills was amalgamated with the Lai area to create an autonomous region known as "Pawi-Lakher Region."³ In 1972, the Mara area was separated

³ Animesh Ray: Mizoram: Dynamics of Changes, 1982, p.76.
to form an autonomous district under the name "Lakkhei District". The name was rechristened into "Mara District" in 1988.

Location:

The Mara area lies in the loop of the Kolodyne river between the Latitude 21°.50' and 20°.36' North and between the Longitude 92°.55' and 93.20' East. Situated in the Chhintuipui District of Mizoram, it covers an area of about 1445 square kilometres. It is flanked on the north and the west by the Lai Autonomous District of Mizoram, and on the east and the south by Myanmar.

Physical Features:

Geographically, the Mara District is isolated from the rest of India both by its distance and its forbidding nature of hill terrains. Steep hill ranges running in different directions plunge the valleys of rushing rivers creating deep gorges and feature. Hill ranges are separated from one


5 The Gazette Of India, December, 1988, p.4.

another by ridges and furrows. The average height of these ranges is about 900-1500 metres.\(^7\) The Mawma with a height of 2050 metres is the highest mountain in the Mara District.\(^8\) There are more prominent mountains like the Tliatlu 1941 metres and the Kahrietla 1918 metres. Numerous summits, valleys and huge precipices of every description are noticed, but there is only one plateau, the Pala-Khaikhy which covers an area of about 180 hectares.\(^9\)

Several rivers run through the land, the more prominent are the Beinö, the Tisi, the Pala, the Ka-ao, the Titlao. The first named river is the biggest and is also known as Chhimituipui which means "the big river of the south". There are also many small rivers and streams, and also lakes, the most important one being the Pala Tipo which has a depth of 12 metres and covers an area of about one square kilometre.\(^10\) Some of these rivers flow towards the east or the west while other rivers drain towards the north-south direction. These rivers are abound with many varieties of

\(^7\) Jungles, p.11.


fish of which the biggest one is the cat fish. These are frequented by crocodiles, a fact indicating their size and connection with the Bay of Bengal.

Climate:

Lying below the striding point of the Tropic of Cancer, the Mara hill area is bestowed with a pleasant climate enjoying cool summer and temperate winter. There is therefore no extreme variation of temperature at any time of the year; the temperature averaging 18°C in winter and 31°C in summer. Due to variation in altitudes and features, some places are subjected to tropical and sub-tropical climate whereas the rest has temperate and sub-temperate climate. Monsoon period from May to September brings heavy rains with violent storm and the average annual rainfall is 240.6 cm. During the Monsoon season, the rain water rushes down the hillsides causing landslides, and some rivers to swell up with great concussion, while in winter they dry up quickly. The most remarkable flood occurred in 1989.

11 Jungles, p.193.
Flora and Fauna:

The Maraland is very rich in forest resources. The entire area is covered with thick forest which is a continuation of Mizoram hills system. About 289 sq.kms of the area is under forest of which Reserved Forest occupies about 82 sq.kms; protected Reserved Forest 20.5 sq.kms. and riverine Reserved Forest 72.5 sq.kms. Three types of forest such as tropical wet evergreen, tropical semi-evergreen and montanne sub-tropical are found in the Mara area. The hills are covered with tropical jungles with evergreen enchanting. Several kinds of trees including flowering ones and variety of bamboos are in great abundance.

The scenery of the jungle throughout the land is very picturesque, the hills and valleys are densely covered with boundless forest. Large areas of the forests have, however, been destroyed by the Maras over the years without any attention to plantation. However, in late years, due to the efforts of the Mara Autonomous District Council, the hills are slowly regaining their old picture with new plantation of many new species of trees.

14 MADC Record File No. 7. 12013/12, 1991-92 Forest and Socal Conservation Branch.
The tropical jungle with its favourable climate make the land an ideal sanctuary for wild animals. Large varieties of wild animals are found in the forest. These include elephant, mithun, tiger, bear, deer, varieties of monkey and ape. Formerly, rhinoceros were found in the Pala area, southern part of Mara District but they are now completely extinct. Besides, several varieties of bird, jungle fowl, black pleasant, patridge, etc. are also found. In the past, wild animals were extremely numerous but their number has been fast decreased due to the devastation of forest and indiscriminate killing.

THE PEOPLE:

The people who called themselves "Mara" constitute a distinct tribal group of the Chhmituipui District of south Mizoram bordering Burma. Today "Mara" is used as a generic term by different tribal groups or clans who inhabit the entire perimeter of the present Mara District and the hill tracts of south Haka Sub-Division of Chin Hills. The culture, traditions, dialects, etc. of these groups being

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15 One was killed in November 1992. At present there are only two living in the Pala-Khaikhy area of the Mara Autonomous District.

16 Several skulls are now untraceable. One skull is seen at the residence of H.C. Lailua of Siaha.

closely similar, they are commonly designated as "Mara".18

**Characteristics:**

The Maras belong to Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto Burman language speaking family19 and are of Mongoloid stock. They resemble each other in appearance, and have strong Mongoloid physiognomy in their physical structure and complexion. Their complexion is generally reddish, and the color of their skin is a dark chocolate brown,20 but darker in their complexion than the Mizos.21 They are physically squat, stout and well built. Their legs are generally short comparing to size of their body and their arms are rather long.

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18 MFP: Memorandum submitted to the Governor of Assam. Jan. 1964, p. 3.
20 Jungles, p. 112.
21 ATI, p. 207.
medium of their height is about five feet and six inches. They are rather a short sturdy race of men with strong developed muscles and shoulders. They are not remarkable for their beauty.

The Maras have high cheek bones. Their faces are generally round and bluff, and their heads too are round and strong. They have medium thick lips, statured necks and blunt nose with broad nostrils. They have black hair with straight clusters. Their eyes are dark brown with thick eyebrow, and their eyelids are generally of two or three folds. The ethnological evidence clearly indicates that the Maras are Mongoloid having "straight, coarse black hair; dark brown eyes, sparse beard, complete and sharp fold of the eyelid across the inner canthus and tendency towards a medial downward slant of the palpebral opening; a frontal and lateral projection of the molars; shovelling or inner scalloping of the incisors; light tawny or yellowish skin colour and round headness".23

The existence of coloured patch called hiavy is very common among infants but it soon disappears when a child becomes four or five years old. The colour of the patch varies from dark brown and dull reddish to pink. It is a distinct mark among the Tibeto - Burman family - Burmese.

22 N.E. Parry : op.cit., p. 25.
Kachins, Chins, etc. and their sub-tribes.24

Ethnic Affinity:

They belong to the central Chin sub-group of the Kuki group of the Assam-Burma branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.25 Some writers26 have classed them as a member of the Kuki section. In Mizoram, the word "Kuki" is not liked by any tribe.27 The Maras do not recognise the term "Kuki" to designate themselves.

Other writers also class the Maras as Chin people.28 The Chins are a group of hill tribes, all speaking various dialects of the same Tibeto-Burman speech and calling themselves by various names.29 According to Lehman30 the Northern Chin comprise nearly all the Chin of the Hakha, Falam and Tiddim areas, and also the Lushai and Lakher on

the Assam side. All are, however, placed in the Kuki-Chin linguistic group. All tribes do not themselves recognise the name Chin but call themselves "Yo" or "Zo" in the north, "Lai" in the centre and "Sho" in the south, besides many other tribal names. However, the Maras do not call themselves "Chin" but as "Mara".

Grierson has linguistically classed the central Chins into several sub-groups such as the Shunkla or Tashon, Shunkla proper, Zahao or Yahow, Lai, Haka, Hlatla (Tlantlang), Yokwa, Lakher (Mara or Tlosai), Lushei or Duliens, Fannai, Ngente, Banjogi and Pankhu. The Maras come under central Chin sub-groups. Several central Chins call themselves "Lai" which basically means "centre" or "middle". In south Falam and north Haka areas people call themselves "Lai". The Maras do not recognise the name "Lai" but call themselves "Mara". The Maras are a distinct ethnic group. The Military Report classifies the Maras as one of the ethnic groups of Mizoram.

SINO - TIBETAN

Tibeto-Burman

Chinese

Tai

Tibeto-Himalayan

North-Assam

Assam-Burmeses

Bodo  Naga  Kachin  Kuki-Chin  Burmese  Lodo-Sal(Mo)

Moso

Old Kuki

Northern Sub-Group  Chin

Central Chin

Southern Chin

Mara  Lai  Lushai or Tashon  Phantlang  Haka  Paung

(Pawi)  Mizo  or Shunkla

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Vidhyarthi has also class the ethnic groups of Mizoram into Mizo, Kuki, Hmar, Mara, etc. The 1961 census report shows that the Maras as a separate ethnic composition in Mizoram. The Census report of 1971 gives us the following figure in Mara District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Mara</th>
<th>12,097</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Pawi</td>
<td>1,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mizo</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Non-tribal</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Others</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,927</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some writers class the Maras as Mizo people. According to N. Chatterjee, the word "Mizo" is a generic term and stands for all tribes of Mizoram. This statement is, however, unacceptable on the following grounds: First, the term was devolved from the word "Lushai" by the Lushai Hills District Act of 1954. Hminga puts the term...

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37 L.P. Vidhyarthi: *Art and Culture of North-East India*, 1986, p. 87.
39 MADC: *Census Record Book*, p. 16.
41 Census, 1961, Assam, Mizo Hills, p. 5.
in chronological order, Lushai-Lushei-Lushai-Mizo. 42
Secondly, the term embraces the Lusei and related clan who were absorbed under the Sailos. 43 J. Shakespear classes the Maras as non-Lushei clans. 44 Lalremsiama says that the major tribes of Mizoram are the Mizo (Lusei and their co-clans), Mara, Lai and Paite. 45 Finally, the Maras do not recognise "Mizo" as their designation but identify themselves separate from the Mizos. 46

The Maras constitute a distinct tribe consisting of several territorial groups such as the Hawthai, Tlosai, Hlaipao and Iana which have a number of sub-groups. The Hawthai sub-group is the Lachei. The Tlosai sub-groups are the Saikao and Siaha. The Hlaipao sub-groups are the Zynho, Heima and Lialai. The Sizō sub-groups are the Mab Chapi, Khihlō, Lialaira, Ratu, Saby, Sosai, Taikua, etc. 47

43 Vumson: op. cit., p. 2.
Distributions:

The Maras inhabit large hill tracts of the Indo-Myanmar bordering areas of south Mizoram and southern part of the Haka Sub-Division of the Chin Hills of Myanmar. But the greater number of people are found in the Mara District of south Mizoram. According to the 1971 census, the total population of the Maras in Mizoram is 11625. The District Census of 1987 puts the figure at 24,365, and the 1993 Record puts it as 37112.

There are 51 Mara villages in the Mara District. In addition, there are some villages on the west of the Kolodyne river. Several villages formerly ceded to the Baptist Missionary Society of South Lushai Hills in the 1936 are now within the Lai District.

The Maras are also found in considerable strength in the South Haka Sub-Division of the Chin Hills. According to

49 MADC : Census Record Book, p. 78.
50 Statistical Handbook of Chhimtuipui District, Economics and Statistics Department, Government of Mizoram, 1993, p. 1.1s2
51 A.B. Lorrain-Foxall : Sequel to Five Years in Unknown Jungles, Ms. p.68.
field investigation, there are seventy Mara villages and the total population as on 1989 is about 16500.  

ORIGIN OF THE MARAS:

The origin of the Maras is veiled in obscurity. They have only oral tradition of their origin and creation of man. Local elders believe that the progenitors of the Maras came out of the bowls of the earth from whence they emerged into this world as humankind. The tradition which has been handed down from time immemorial says:

In the ancient days, before the great darkness called Khazohra fell upon the world, men all (Maras) came out of a hole below the earth. As the founder of each group came out of the earth he called out his name. Accordingly, Khazohra thought that a very large number of Maras had come out and stopped the way.  

In the modern scientific age such statement is hardly accepted as fact and it may be absurd to accept that man could come out of a hole. However, recent writing throw some light on this claim. The Leikhao, which means "hole in the

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52 Field Investigation with the help of John F. Chhalei.

earth", is traditionally regarded as a place from where the Maras originated. Local elders believe that the progenitors of the Maras left the Leikhao areas due to their inability to repulse their enemies. Still some others conjecture that they left place to avoid severe famine or other natural calamities.

Earlier, there had been wide speculations regarding the location of the Leikhao. Some say that it is situated in the south-western part of Chindwin Valley from where the early Maras stepped out. Some others believe that it is located in the south west Kalemyo, west of Myittha river. It is however impossible to bring out the correct location of the Leikhao. The local elders and scholars claim that their ancestral home was in the Chindwin valley, and their original parents stepped out not from a solid rock like the Mizo and the Tashons, but of a hole of the earth, the bowels of the earth in historical period.

This story of the origin of the Maras as handed by tradition has no apparent connection with the chhinlung which literally means "close-stone". The context of the

56 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck: op.cit., p. 142.
57 L.B. Thanga: op.cit., p. 1.
story mentioned by N.E. Parry is thus not acceptable to the Maras on the following grounds. First, each group of the Maras did not come out of the earth as independent unit but as one social unit. Secondly, the more prominent groups such as the Sizo, Hlaipao, etc. are excluded from the story. The sub-groups like the Zyhno, Saby, etc. are rather included as the main group of the Maras. Finally, the story, as has been mentioned, says that God thought that a very large number of the Maras had come out and stopped up the way. Local elders say that originally the story does not cover the Lushais whose progenitors had come out of the Chhinlung. From above discussion it appears that Parry follows a Lushai interpretation of the story of the leikha.

**MIGRATION OF THE MARAS:**

The Maras are not the indigenous inhabitants of the areas which they now occupy but emigrated from the Chin Hills of upper Myanmar in comparatively recent times. When and by what route they made their migration from the Tibet region to the Chin Hills are not known. One thing is, however, certain that they moved southward. The history of their migration is a history of long centuries of struggles against natural hardship and their enemies. It appears

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58 Informant: S. Thabau.

59 J. Shakespear: *op. cit.*, p. 213.
from their account of migration that they did not remain long at any place on their way down except in the south Kalemyo. It seems, "they came in small numbers, but it is possible in a steady stream".60

It is known that the Pyu, a Tibeto-Burman tribe, were the earliest inhabitants of Myanmar who had any records.61 They were followed by the Karens62. Much later the Shans entered the country in the early Christian era from north63. And still later the Chins, Kachins and others entered Myanmar.64 Some scholars think that the area now occupy by the Chins was occupied before by the Burmans.65 The Burmans entered into Burma in the 9th century A.D. probably between 849 and 1044.66

These races and tribes came, owing to various causes, in successive infiltrations. The Tai-Chinese, Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman races entered Burma from the north.67 Most

61 Reginald Le May : The Culture of South-East Asia. Reprint, 1956, p. 34.
62 G.E. Harvey : History of Burma, 1925, p. 3.
64 W.S. Desai : op.cit., p. 2.
of the Tibeto-Burman migrations have been from Szechwan and Yunnan in a South-westerly direction across the high mountain ranges flanking and paralleling the Salween. According to one writer, there are two routes, one runs from Yunnan to Myanmar by way of the Salween into upper part of modern Shan states and the other form Suifu in the western Szechwan to Bhamo in Myanmar on the east of the Irrawaddy.

The hill tribes of the Tibeto-Burman family, collectively designated as Chins, moved from the north, but did not come as social and cultural units. They settled together as one group in the Chindwin Valley in the middle of the first millennium A.D. The drift of migration had taken place in the north and the majority of hill tribes left the Chindwin-Kale-Kabaw-Myittha Valley during the 14th century A.D. In moving towards the present Myanmar, they moved separately following different routes. One group moved southwards between the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy. The others moved south to the west of the Chindwin, and reached the Chin Hills and Arakan before 1000 A.D. The Maras...

70 F.K. Lehman: op.cit., p. 11.
71 Vumson: op.cit., p. 29.
72 Ibid., p. 180.
probably entered the Chin Hills in the middle of the 13th century A.D. 73

The Maras are a migratory tribe who in earlier days had no permanent villages but moved on to new places which were more suitable land for jhum cultivation. According to Stevenson 74 the majority of the migrants were compelled to move due to land shortage in the mother village. Poor land could not produce sufficient food as a result of which frequent severe famine appeared. Another reason is population explosion. 75 Rao says 76 that there was pressure on land because of over-population. The influx of the more powerful tribes or groups contributed to the development of more ramifying political system. Over population might have led to severe famine and the weaker tribes started a rush for the hitherto tenable lands which admitted of easy defence. 77 Finally, the migrants were also prompted by a large scale tribal warfare and innumerable blood feuds. 78 They waged war on each other, and the less numerous m

73 Ibid., p. 29.
75 F.K. Lehman: op.cit., p. 25.
76 CGP, p. 5.
77 H.N.C. Stevenson: op.cit., p. 47.
78 Economics, p. 11.
weaker tribes were brought to their knees. In consequence the weaker tribes moved to other areas where the resistance was the least.

**TRADITIONAL HOME OF THE MARAS:**

The original home of the Maras is still shrouded in obscurity. Prof. D.G.E. Hall is of the view that the earliest known home of the Tibeto-Burmese speaking peoples was somewhere between the Gobi desert and northeast of Tibet, also possibly Kansu. The *Burma Census Report of 1891* which is taken to be the most reliable source, says that the Tibeto-Burmese speaking peoples originally lived in Tibet and are of the same racial stock.

Although the Tibet region is the original abode of the Tibeto-Burman speakers, the migration of the Maras to the Chin Hills of upper Myanmar is shrouded in mystery. A close affinity of the Maras with the hill tribes of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages, mode of living and culture, etc. suggests that they came from a common place and had common ancestors. It is possible that while the Maras were in the Chindwin Valley they had close contact with other hill tribes and as a result there were mutual borrowings of language and culture. It is more likely that:

like other hill tribes, the Maras too moved down the Chindwin Valley from the north.  

It may, therefore, be said that though their original home is not yet identified, it is probable that while the Maras had been living in the Chindwin Valley, they were disturbed by the influx of the Tibeto-Burman speakers. From there they sent off shoots into hills and in wider context, the entire fringe of south Kalemyo may be considered as the original home of the Maras.

The Mara tradition does not go beyond their settlements in the Chin Hills of upper Myanmar. The tradition held by local elders refers a place Sāthlara situated south of Kalemyo. It is probable that the early Maras had been living in this region for a longer period. This place has been identified by some writers as Suntla or Shuntla or Tashon.

**Chin Hills Settlement:**

Down from the south Kalemyo region, the Maras came in

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82 F.K. Lehman: *op.cit.*, p. 11.  
84 Informant: N. Zawto.  
groups to the present Chin Hills of Myanmar seeking food and warmth in tiny homesteads along the fertile hill areas. The infiltration lasted, it seems, several decades. The approximate date of their arrival at the Chin Hills may be put as the middle of the 13th century A.D. because various hill tribes known under the term "Kuki" had been found in the Tripura kingdom during the reign of the Tipperah Raja Chachang who ruled at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. It was only in 1819 that the Burmese king gained control over the present Chin Hills.

In the Chin Hills the Maras settled at Zyutla, Sothla, Marakhiry and Zaokhi at different times. Later they moved south of Thlatla and found villages such as Phiapi, Boly, Chhiera, Fabi, Bopi, Sizo etc. They established other villages in the area of south Haka Sub-Division, and lived in groups. It is mainly due to the nature of hill ranges in the Chin Hills that the Maras lived at scattered village, and this made it inconvenient to build big village. However, the settlement at scattered villages developed clanism or separation leading to disunity among the Maras.

The Present Settlement:

The approximate date of their arrival at the

present settlement could not be later than the 15th century A.D. or in the beginning of the 16th century A.D. for the Kuki are mentioned in connection with the region of Tipperah Raja as already mentioned. Mylai brings the date to the middle of the 16th century A.D.88

The groups such as the Chapi, Hawthai, Iana, Tlosai and Zynho moved westerly direction, crossing the middle part of the Kolodyne river, below 23°.36'/ North Latitude, and settled at the present Mara District of south Mizoram. The other groups, the Heima, Lialai and other sub-groups of the Sizo sub-groups moved southwards, crossed the Kolodyne river below 23°.15'/ N, and settled in the northern Arakan, the present Matupi, Paletwa and Thlatla Townships of Chin state.89 There are other groups who settled in the south Thlatla Township, east of the Kilodyne river. They are the Sizo and Loechei.

IDENTIFICATION:

The terms : ZAO, TLOSAI, SHENDU, LAKHER and MARA.

The Maras were formerly designated by various names such as "Zao", "Tlosai", "Lakher" and "Mara". These tribal names are synonymously used by various authorities to designate


89 According to field investigation there are seventy Mara villages which are distributed in three Townships. In Thlatla Township there are nine villages, thirty five in Matupi Township and twenty-six in Paletwa Township.
The Maras, and are found in various references and in historical publications of Indo-Burman peoples.

They were formerly known as "Zao" to the Chins. Some writers refer it as "Zou". The origin of the term is, however, obscure. Some hold that it is an English transliteration of the Chin word "Zo" and corresponds to a Mara word "Zyu" meaning "hillside". The word "Zao" or "Zou" is widely used by the Chins as a generic term to denote the Maras inhabiting south Haka Sub-Division of the Chin Hills. Grierson thinks "Zao" as the Chin name for the Mara. A similar explanation is given by J. Shakespear. It is held that following the Chin identification, the English picked up the term "Zao" as a generic term to designate the Maras. The Maras, however, do not recognise the term to call themselves "Zao" or "Zo".

Another name for the Maras is "Tlosai". Various writers use it as a generic term to designate the Maras.

90 LSI, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 75.
92 Ibid.,
93 Grammar, p. 368.
95 J. Shakespear: op.cit., p. 213.
who live in the hill tracts of south Mizoram, south Haka Sub-Division and north Arakan. The word "Tlosai" is written variantly as "Tlongsai", "Klongshai", "Klaungshai", "Khongjai", "Khongsai", "Khongshai", "Khongzai", "Klongzai", etc. It is also related to the term "Kaungse" which is the Burmese way of pronouncing "Khongjai", the Manipur name given to all Kukis. The Chuksads who belonged to the Thados were known to the British as "Kaungse".

"Klongsai" is the name used in Arakan for the Mara tribe and some of the Thado-Haokips use the word "Khongshai" for Kukis in general, which reappears in the Meitei "Khongjai". The word "Klongshai" variantly "Khongshai" or "Khongjai" is used to designate the hill-men known as Kukis. According to McCall, the name Tlosai variantly


98 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck : op.cit., p. 4.


100 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck : op. cit., p. 135.

101 A.G. McCall : op. cit., p. 201.
Tlongsai is one of the principal groups of the Maras. From the above accounts it appears that the term Tlongsai is not of local origin but derived from the Burmese term "Kaungse" variantly "Khongjai", the name given to all the Kukis.

Formerly the Maras on the British and Chittagong frontiers were also prominently known as "Shendu". Some writers use the word "Shendu" as a generic term to designate the Maras inhabiting the erstwhile "unadministered" area south of the Lushai Hills and north Arakan Hill Tracts. From references, it appears that the word "Shendu" appeared variantly as "Sandu", "Shandu", "Shendoo", "Shindu", "Shindoo", "Tseindu", etc. The term "Shendu" is closely correlated to the words "Heima", "Lakher", "Mara", etc. used by some writers for the whole Mara people.

"Sandu" variantly "Shantu" is held to be of English corruption of the Khumi word "Samtu" meaning (Sam="hair", Tu="Knot") "wearing hair knots above the forehead". Tradition held by local elders says that the
Khumis on seeing the Maras wearing lofty hair knots above the forehead named the Maras "Samtu". It appears that the British following the Khumi identification called the Maras as "Shendu". The word "Samtu" was thus picked up by them as Shandu or Shendu, and was applied by them to the Maras. The English called the Maras of the erstwhile unadministered area as Shendu since the early part of the 19th century. A.D. Hopkinson mentions the outrages committed by the Shendus (Maras) on the Chittagong frontier from 1830 to 1851.

The Shendus are, however, known to the Burmese and Yaws of upper Myanmar as "Baungshe". The term means "put a turban in front" (Baung or Paung = "put on a turban", She = "in front") applying to the Chins who bind their hair over the forehead. The English did not, however, follow the Burmese name "Baungshe" to designate the Maras.

Writing in 1841, Phayre refers to them as Tseindus, giving a list of thirteen clans which Parry identified with

106 Informant: C. Thahe.
107 A. Mackenzie: op. cit., p. 532.
109 B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck: op. cit., p. 4. Formerly the Maras on the British Arakan and Chittagong.
the Maras. Tickell\textsuperscript{111} also refers to the word "Shendu", identifying with the Heima group of the Maras. The term is also used by Greenstreet\textsuperscript{112} to designate the more prominent groups of the Maras such as the Heimas, Lialais, Nqiaphias, Sabys and Zyhnos. Some writers\textsuperscript{113} use "Shendu" and "Mara" or "Lakher" synonymously to denote the Maras. Fruishank\textsuperscript{114} says that the Shendu are called Lakher. This explanation is shared by Whitehand.\textsuperscript{115} Hminga puts the term "Shendu" in the chronological sequence as Shendo-Shendu-Lakher-Mara.\textsuperscript{116}

The Maras are also known as "Lakher". The term appears variantly as "Lakheyr", "Lankhe", "Lengkhe", "Lokheyr" and "Lungkhe" in various references. The origin of the term is veiled in obscurity. It is held that the term is not of local origin but coined by others. Various derivations have been suggested for the word "Lakher". Writing in 1841, Phayre applies the term "Lungkhe"\textsuperscript{117} to a branch of the-
Maras who formerly established villages on the western slopes of the Mephrutung Hill locally known as Raitla.\footnote{N.E. Parry: \textit{op. cit.}, p.5.}

Fryer\footnote{G.E. Fryer: 'On the Khyeng people of Sandoway Arakan', \textit{JASB}, Part I, 1875.} says that the Lungkhes and Shendus are members of the same tribe. It is, however, possible that the term "Lakher" is an English transliteration of the word "Lungkhe" or "Lankhe".

Spearman\footnote{BBG, Vol.II, p.6.} also mentions the term "Lengkhe" denoting a hill tribe who lived in the north-west Arakan Hill tracts. It seems more probable that the Lengkhes are the Heimas or Shendus who settled in the north Arakan. Parry says\footnote{N.E. Parry: \textit{op. cit.}, p.6.} that the people known to the Burmese as "Lankhe" are the same people as "Lungkhe" and are closely related to the Maras. Mackenzie thinks\footnote{A. Mackenzie: \textit{op. cit.}, p.331.} "Lankhe" as the Burmese name for the Shendu (Maras).

Some writers hold that the term "Lakher" is a tribal name of the Maras known to the Mizos. The word is a purely Mizo expression. It means \textit{la} = "cotton". 

\begin{footnotes}
\item 118 N.E. Parry: \textit{op. cit.}, p.5.
\item 120 BBG, Vol.II, p.6.
\item 121 N.E. Parry: \textit{op. cit.}, p.6.
\item 122 A. Mackenzie: \textit{op. cit.}, p.331.
\end{footnotes}
"plucking", meaning "plucking of cotton". It is held that a Lusei on seeing a Mara woman plucking cotton named the Maras "Lakher". It may be possible that the Lushais following the Burmese identification called the Maras "Lakher".

From the above accounts, it appears that the term "Lakher" is a Duhlien or Lusei corruption of the Burmese name "Lankhe" variably "Lengkhe" or "Lungkhe" designating the Maras. The term was thus picked up by the English and was applied to the Maras of the erstwhile unadministered area of South Lushai Hills and its adjoining areas of Myanmar.

It is subsequently found that the Maras do not recognise the term "Lakher". They believe that the term is a foreign word for expression and is completely alien to their language. Lorrain says:

Lakher is a Lushai name for the Maras tribe, the spelling and pronunciation is absolutely foreign to the language. Mara is the correct name for the people in their own language.125

123 Lai-u Fachhai: Maraland from War-like Land to Missionary Church, Ms. p.6.
124 S.S.Chib: This Beautiful India, 1977, p.118.
125 Grammar, p.1
The Maras are known amongst themselves as "Mara". The term is, however, an archaic word and is found in folk-songs, folk-stories, traditions, etc. It is held that the term was used by the early Maras to designate themselves since time immemorial. It is believed that the origin of the word, however lies elsewhere.

Various derivations have been suggested for the word "Mara". Some say that the appellation Mara is a compound of Ha and Ra meaning "bitter demand of the bride price" as Ha = "bride price", Ra = "bitter demand". Saya Matheih says that the term is purely conventional one, and is coined to designate amongst themselves on account of their bitter demand of the bride price. Folk-stories such as Beinonai, Karabaibu, Hlichhy-Hly-a, etc. refer to the bitter demand of the costly marriage price which is, however, clearly traceable among the Maras.

It is also suggested the word "Mara" is synonymous with "Maliara" meaning "other land" as Ha or Malia= "others" Ra = "land". Local elders are of the opinion that the

126 M-Vachei Choza : op. cit., p.18.
127 Ibid.
129 Informant : H.C.Sado.
early Maras, often emigrated to new tenable land for better jhum cultivation. The term was thus coined to designate them on account of their frequent migration to the land belonging to others. The following verse bears witness to this view.

Chyhu paly tlapkhopa tana,
Mialara la eima sie aw.130

(We migrated to the land of others by crossing the high hill.)

It is also held that the term "Mara" is a Mara transliteration of the word "Mawra" meaning "bamboo land" as Maw or Ramaw = "bamboo", Ra = "land".131 Local elders and scholars are of the view that the term "Mawra" is derived from the Haka word "Mauram" meaning "bamboo land".132 The term was thus applied to the Maras as they settled in the tropical jungle covered with the bamboo forest. Lai-u, agreeing this explanation, interprets it as "the dwellers of the alien fertile land of the south".133 The hill tracts occupy by the Maras is locally known as "Marara"134 meaning "Maraland" or "land of the Maras".

130 Ibid.
131 M.Vachei Choza : op. cit., p.19.
132 Ibid.
133 Lai-u Fachai : op. cit., p.6.
134 Mylai Hlychho : op. cit., p.249.
The above discussion leads to conclusion that the Maras were formerly known under various names. The different names coined by other peoples have, however, clear and precise correlation with the Maras. The word "Mara" is a correct name,¹³⁵ the most conclusive generic term known amongst themselves. The term is widely used to designate the Maras who inhabit the Mara Autonomous District of South Mizoram and the hill areas of the erstwhile South Haka Sub-Division and Northern Arakan in Myanmar.

¹³⁵ Jungles, p.88, Also MSO Record No. MSO/0A/68-69/36
27.2.1968.
Migration and Settlement of the Maras (groupwise)

The Bisu group:

Legends
- Former settlement but abandoned
- Present settlement

The 8 I18 i)roupi

Siblara
Zaora
Chhiera

--- Ngiaphiap
--- Ngiaphiat

Teilauhnaw, Tisi, Khaotly, Bahie, Lodaw, Khingau, Teilauhnaw, Tohiroa, Baby, Khingau
Lautla, Sosai, Tha-al, Abaar, Teichae, Thohripi, Lautla, Khingau, Thoobu
Kheihri, Laubieh, Pa-zao, Chaopie, Patao, Khingau, Teikhaopie, Vave
Khihlö-lopu, Sosai, Charihlø, Lofarao, Lautla, Vave, Chapeih, Lautla
Khihlö, Chaukao, Vautlao, Vaezd, Lautla, Taekhaopie, Sathawchie
Fachae, Aru, Rapau, Sathawchie, Baefo, Chaopie
Khirao, Tikhah, Teichae, Aphaohlauthlu, Zaoame, Abaar
Pasei, Tisi, Chaopie, Lahaohnaw, Lofarao
Sachö, Melaotu, Lofarao, Lopu, Zaokie
Tichho, Faikae, Chaneipi, Ahlie, Loda
Chapi, Tithu, Ratu, Zauhaao
Tikha, Aru, Taikua