

# THE LUSHAI EXPEDITION.

1871—1872.

BY

R. G. WOODTHORPE.

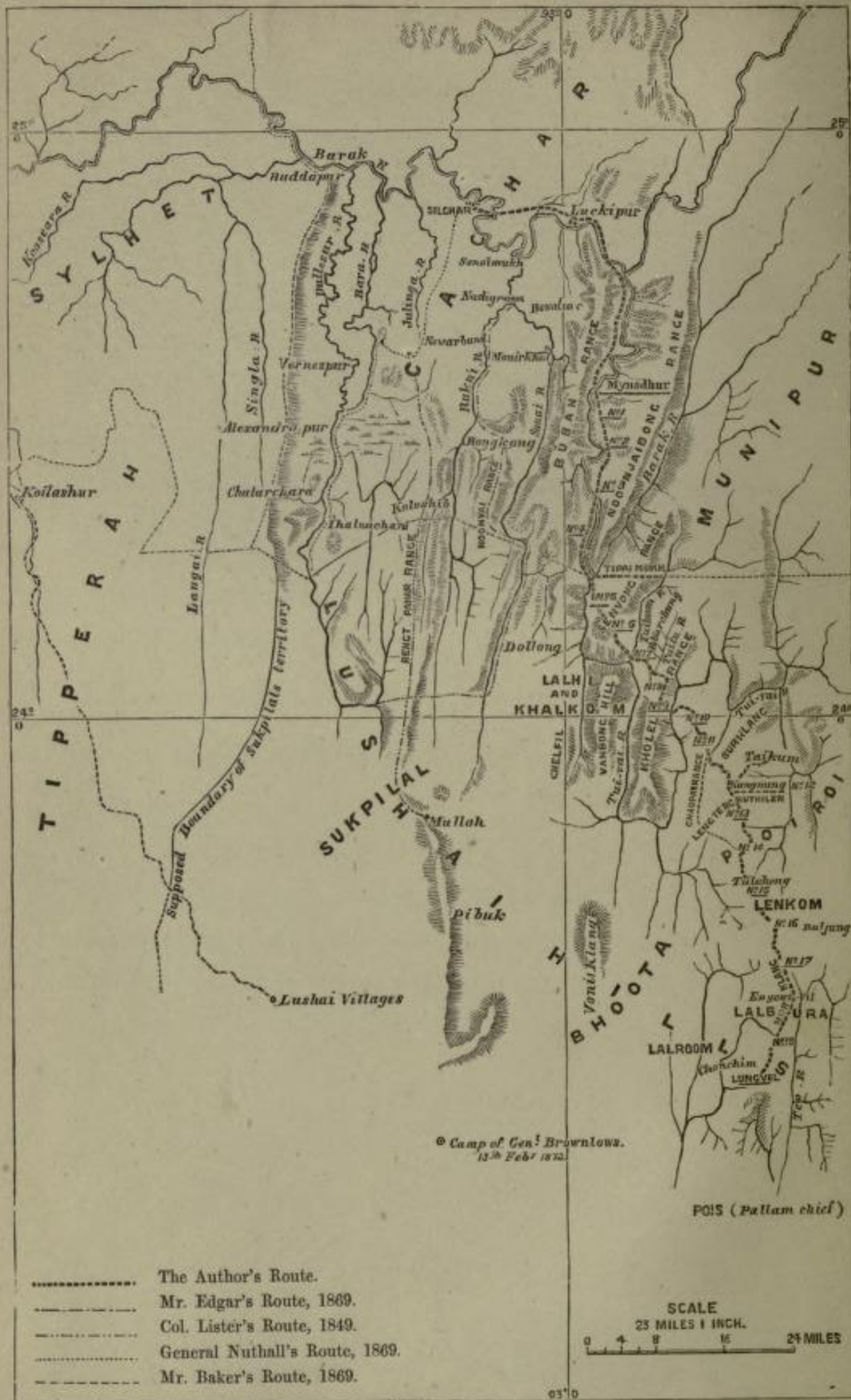
LIEUT. ROYAL ENGINEERS.



VONOLEL'S TOMB.

LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1873.



MAP showing the country passed through by the LEFT COLUMN OF THE LUSHAI EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 1871-72, and the Routes taken in former Expeditions.

Early in February an attack was made on the Kala Naga stockade by Lushais, under Lenkom. The stockade was taken, and a Manipur officer and some Sepoys killed.

Voupilal and Sukpilal were suspected from the first, though the actual raiders were not discovered till afterwards, and an attempt was made to punish them.

A large Expedition was set on foot, consisting of two forces of Military and Police, one intended to proceed up the Sonai to punish Voupilal, the other to reach Sukpilal by the Dullesur River. The Rajah of Manipur was also to have co-operated from his side.

These plans were altered considerably, and the Expedition was unsuccessful. The plan of operations to be carried out was this:—Simultaneously with the advance of the columns from Cachar, one composed principally of police under Mr. Baker, Deputy Inspector-General, was to march on Sukpilal from Koilashur through Rungboom's villages.

The Cachar column, under General Nuthall, which proceeded up the Dullesur, was obliged

On the 17th March, Mr. Baker's column arrived in sight of the Lushai villages, and there being no signs of the approach of that under General Nuthall, he determined, after consultation with his officers, to hold on for another day, and in the meantime to make a reconnoissance, to try to pick up some food, there being none then in camp.

A brush with Lushais took place, and our men returned to camp in the evening. It being evident that the Dullesur column had not advanced for some reason or other, and that with the small force at his disposal, he could not hope to cope successfully with the whole tribe, Mr. Baker determined to fall back on the Depot in rear, and the retreat commenced the next day.

On the 21st, a telegram from Cachar informed him that General Nuthall and his column were back in Cachar, so there was nothing to do but to return with all speed to Sylhet.

Mr. Baker describes the country passed through by his column, thus:—

“The country traversed by us was alto-

gether hilly, we passed no morasses, and excepting the forest lying between the Karruntah range and the banks of the Deo, the country was found to be high, dry, and free from malaria at this season.

“Small streams were met with at the bases of all the higher hills, and occasionally springs on the hill-sides not far from the tops of the ridges. The rivers crossed, the Munneo, Deo, Pakwa, &c., were from twenty to thirty yards wide, and about two or three feet deep, having firm sandy beds, easily forded; but in the rainy season they must become exceedingly deep and rapid streams.

“Judging by their high steep banks, they are liable to great rises and sudden falls, and they are much blocked up with fallen timbers. On some of the ranges are sites of old Kookie villages, now overgrown with high grass, but there are still some fine trees left, among them a few lemon.

“Game seemed to be abundant along the course of the rivers. Elephants are extremely numerous in these valleys, and there are

deer, wild hogs, porcupines, and in the Langai valley rhinoceros are said to be found.

“The principal ranges of hills run north and south, but between these the smaller ranges are innumerable; in fact, the entire country is a jumble of hills. The main features are, therefore, mountain ranges of one thousand to two thousand feet in height, at intervals of ten or twelve miles, trending north and south; of confused lines of hills and spurs running down to the bottom of these intervening spaces; and lastly of deep and narrow streams flowing along the lowest levels from north to south, over sandy or rocky beds, and in very winding courses, often under high and precipitous banks. This very well describes the character also of the country south and west of Tipai Mukh.”

Mr. Baker submitted among others the following suggestions as the results of his experience, and as likely to be useful in the case of a future expedition. Several of these were adopted, and it would have been better if some of the others had also been followed.