

**PROGRESSIVE COLLOQUIAL  
EXERCISES IN THE LUSHAI DIALECT  
OF 'DZO' OR KÚKI LANGUAGE:  
WITH VOCABULARIES AND  
POPULAR TALES (NOTATED)**

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Vocabularies and Popular Tales (Notated) by Thomas Herbert Lewin

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**THOMAS HERBERT LEWIN**

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VOCABULARIES AND POPULAR TALES (NOTATED).

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BY

CAPT. THOMAS HERBERT LEWIN, B.S.C.,

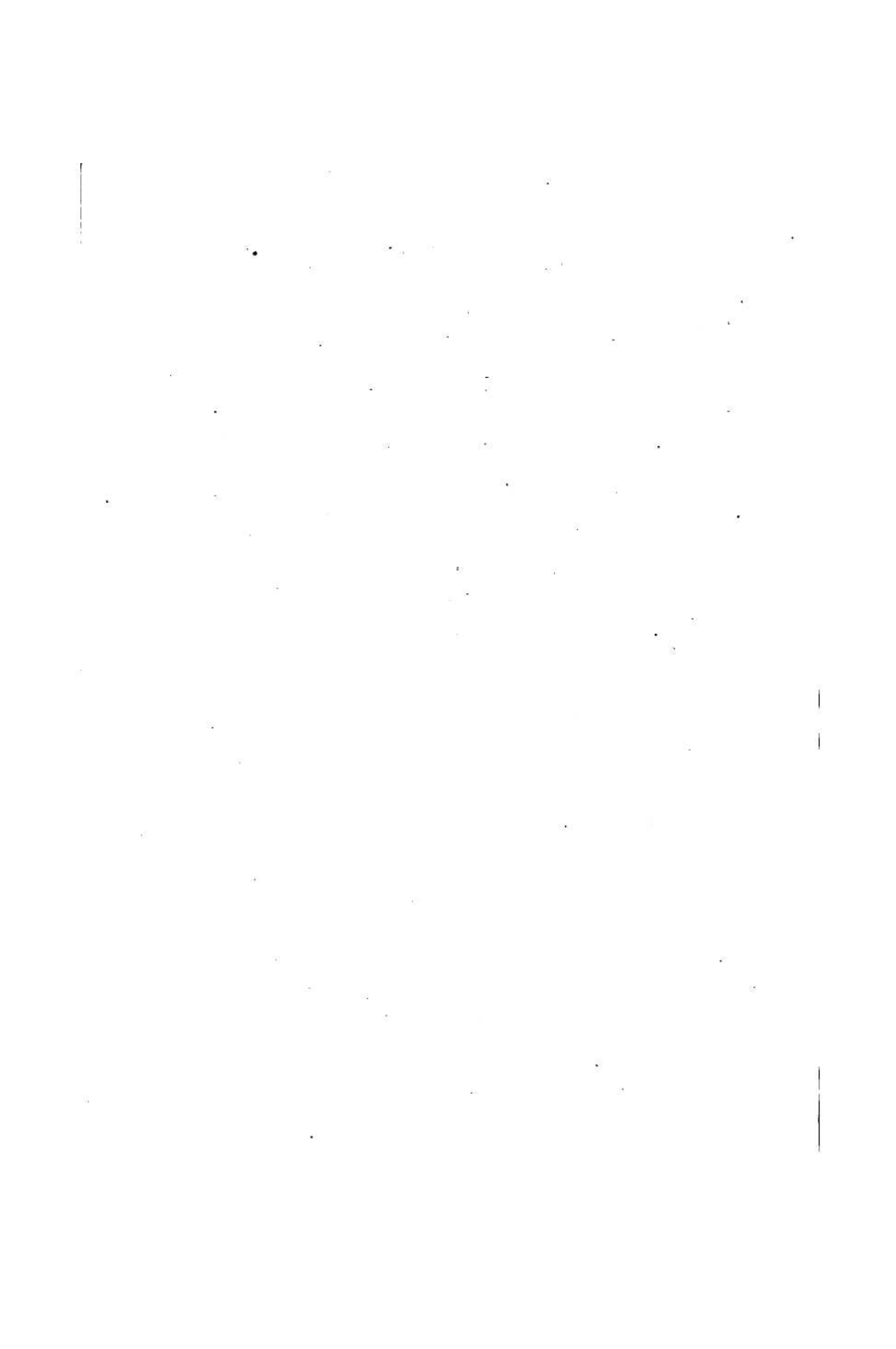
Deputy Commissioner, Chittagong Hills.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE 'Dzo' tribes inhabit the hilly country to the east of the Chittagong district in Lower Bengal; their habitat may be roughly stated as comprised within the parallels of Latitude 22°45' N. and 25°20' N., and between the Meridians of Longitude 92°30' and 93°45'.

Under the term 'Dzo' are included all the hill tribes of this region, who wear their hair in a knot resting on the nap of the neck. The tribes further south and east, of whom little is as yet known, are distinguished under the generic title of 'Poi'; these wear the hair knotted upon the temple.

The 'Dzo' state that the Poi language is entirely distinct from theirs, and that they have no common medium of intercommunication. I am myself disposed to think that the two languages must have some affinity, but I have as yet no certain information on this point.

The term Kúki is a generic name applied by the inhabitants of the plains, Bengalees and others, to all hill-dwellers who cultivate by *Júm*. The word Kúki is foreign to the different dialects of the hill tribes, the nearest approach to it being the 'Dzo' term for the Tipra tribe, which is called by them *Tui-Kák*. (See Vocabulary).

The physiognomy, character, and traditions of the 'Dzo' people seem to indicate that they have sprung from the great Turanian stock of Central Asia. It would seem probable that at some previous epoch, more or less remote, they have come from the southern spurs of the Himalayan range. Our whole information, as to the tribes occupying the comparatively unexplored country between Bengal and China or Burmah, is however so incomplete that speculations as to their origin can be founded on no reliable data. I would invite attention, nevertheless, to the subjoined comparative list of words, which would seem to give strength to the theory above propounded; it at least, I think, gives reasonable grounds for considering the Lushai tribes, including the inhabitants of Munipoor, to have sprung from the same stock as the Ghúrkas and other Himalayan tribes (Mongoloid of Huxley).

ENGLISH.	DZO (SOUTHERN).					GURKE OR NEPALISE (HIMALAYAN).				
	Lushai.	Hill Aracanese, a variety of Burmese.	Kumi.	Thappa.	Sibah.	Rao.	Munipore.			
1 One	Pakat	Tv	Ng'ba	Kat	Hti	Kong	Ana.			
2 Two	Pahmit	Hnit	Hnd	Hns	Hne chi	Ni	Ani.			
3 Three	Pa-tun	Tshin	Hkim	Sun	Sun-ksi	Sun	Ohim.			
4 Four	Pali	Li	Palu	Boli	Li-tai	Bali	Mari			
5 Five	Pa-ngá	Ngá	Pán	Bangá	Ne-tai	Eá	Ma-nga.			
6 Hand	Kúe	Lak	Ke-ók	Mi-but	Hók	La	Kát.			
7 Nose	Hnar	Nakaung	Khao	Mi-ná	Niboba	Neh	Naton.			
8 Eye	Mit	Myetal	Mé	Mi-mik	Mik	Mik-shi	Mith.			
9 Mouth	Múr	Hrup	Liboung	.....	Múra	"	Tchin.			
10 Ear	Béng	Ne	Kano	Menákep	Nekhoba	.....	Nakong.			
11 Hair	Tahum	Chyubang	Téham	Mi-taum	Teh-ghek-be	Tahem	Tahum.			
12 Head	Lá	Goung	Lá	Mi-ta-lá	.....	.....	Kók.			
13 Tongue	Lei	.....	Palai	Mi-lét	Lé-supa	Lem	Lé			
14 Belly	Púm	.....	Kayouk	Mi-tak	Sapópa	Htem	Pók.			
15 Sun	Ni	Ni	Kaui	Nákhun	Nam	Nepaing	Néng sha.			
16 Moon	Tis	Lá	Hlo	Giabut	Léba	Témtú	Tk			
17 Fire	Mei	Mi	Hnai	Mé	Mé	Mo	Mai.			
18 Water	Tui	Ri	Toi	.....	Twevát	.....	Lohing.			
19 Earth	Lei	.....	.....	.....	Khán	.....	.....			
20 Road	Lám	Lám	Lám	.....	.....	Lám	.....			
21 Fish	Nghah	Ngá	Ngo	.....	.....	Ngá	.....			

Note. The members of Omei in Káin have established the only village between the Hmang and the Gákhá in Káin. It is the Gákhá language. The members of Hmang have one tribe in the Hmang who have preserved the pronunciation of Hmang. It is the only one called Hmang. The other being the Gákhá who of Káin in Káin and Káin, a division of whom are called Káin. (See Journal, Asiatic Society, Vol. IX., p. 104.) Another section of the Hmang who are the Sibah, some words from whose dialect are here given.



The 'Dzo' are divided and sub-divided into many tribes and clans, the chief among which are as follows :—

1. Lushai.	5. Hrang-tchal.	9. Bong.
2. Tchawtey.	6. Phántey.	10. Bongtobér.
3. Baltey.	7. Rúkúm.	11. Ngenteý.
4. Paitey.	8. Bétlá.	12. Dzongtey.

Nearly each separate clan has peculiarities of diction proper to itself; but the speech of the whole people is in truth but one language, the differences being those merely of local pronunciation, of special terms or provincialisms, affected by the different clans, in the same way that our English language is spoken differently by the country folk north and south in England. The dialect of the Lushai tribe is, however, common to, and understood by all, being the clan tongue of the great family from which all the chiefs are said to have sprung. The Lushai dialect is in fact the *lingua franca* of the country.

The clan-name Lushai probably means 'the decapitators,' being derived from 'lú' a head and 'shá' or 'shát' to cut; and it is undoubtedly the custom among this people to carry off as trophies the heads of enemies slain in battle.

The 'Dzo' language has hitherto existed only in the form of speech; it has never been reduced to writing, and to this cause may, I think, be attributed the confusing and infinite petty variations of speech among these people. I have not attempted here (nor, indeed, have I the ability) to construct a grammar of the language: starting in total ignorance of its structure or idioms, by slow degrees, the formation of thought and modes of utterance of the people unfold themselves in a manner that is altogether interesting, and that lures you on to continue the study; it is as if one saw unfolding the genesis of human speech.

It seemed to me that as this mode of learning had been to me not only easy but attractive, the course I had followed might advantageously be pursued in like manner by others, to whom, either from motives of scientific interest or from a necessity of communicating with the people, a knowledge of the 'Dzo' tongue might be desirable. I play the part here of a simple pioneer going forward into an unknown forest and blazing a path; it is for those who come after me to expand the track into a fair and well-engineered roadway for the good of all.

In reducing this language to writing, I have, as far as possible, followed the transliteration system of Sir Wm. Jones as adopted by the Indian Government. The Lushai tongue, however, is full of soft sounds and lingual euphonies, and

it is difficult to denote the various gradations in the expression of sound by the limited range prescribed in the Jonesian system; I have therefore been compelled in some cases to depart therefrom or find fresh combinations of letters to indicate novel niceties of pronunciation.

The system of literation which has been employed in this book is sub-joined :—

*Vowel Sounds.*

a	...	as in the English	...	'can.'
á	...	as in the English	...	'ha ha.'
au or aw	...	as in	...	'cause.'
e	...	as in	...	'pen.'
é	...	has a sound like the a in cane, or the a in ale.		
ei	...	is <i>not</i> pronounced as in eider, nor as in either, but has two distinct sounds of é and i.		
ey	...	is used as a final é.		
ai	...	has the power of the Greek ai ai, alas! alas!		
i	...	as in the English word	...	'pit.'
f	...	sounded as a double ee, or as the ea in 'peat.'		
ee	...	double ee or ie sometimes used as a final in place of i.		
o	...	as in the English	...	'on.'
ó	...	ditto	...	'over.'
u	...	as in	...	'nut.'
ú	...	as oo in	...	'ooze.'
oy	...	as in	...	'coy.'
oi	...	as in Australian	...	'cooc.'

*Sounds—Consonant.*

There is the palatal t (marked thus t̄), and the dental or ordinary t unmarked. The letters dz convey a sound like the j in the French, 'jour.' The sounds expressed by the letters ts, tsc, and tsch, are not sibilant like our English s or ts, nor are they like the sh in shall; the sounds are intermediate between the two, and are pronounced and softened between tongue, teeth, and palate. There does not appear to be any sound in the language answering to our English th in 'them' or 'these.'

The 'Dzo' language possesses one peculiarity in common with Burmese, *viz.*, the use of mute or final consonants; letters, that is to say, which cut or clip off the end of a word, which must be formed by the lips but the pronunciation be suppressed.

Such consonants are here denoted by a dot placed below; thus, the imperative affix or sign of the imperative mood in Lushai 'rok' is pronounced as

in the french *rôt*. We find, also, a final sound of 'gh,' which has the powers of the Persian *ghain* as in the Lushai, "Hfir ahmun tlag<sub>h</sub> ey," Iron is useful.

The letter h in the Lushai language is always aspirated, whether it be prefixed, as in the word 'Hla,' for, or affixed, as in 'ngah,' fish.

The consonants ng, prefixed or affixed, have the same sound as in the English 'bang.'

The language may be classed in the Altaic group of tongues, of which it possesses most of the characteristics. It is agglutinative, that is, the roots of words remain generally unchanged, inflections being arrived at by the use of particles suffixed to the root. In construction it is generally the reverse of our English language, the objective case generally preceding the verb, while the word governed by what is with us a preposition precedes the preposition.

In rendering the sentences given as exercises into English, I have purposely adopted a free mode of translation, in order that the student, by observing for himself the literal rendering of passages, may arrive at a more intimate and less parrot-like acquaintance with the structure of the language.

Vocabularies of all the words employed will be found at the end of the book.

There is in this small work much doubtless that requires correction, much to be modified. The need, however, for some manual of the sort is urgent, not merely to facilitate the intercourse of Government officers with the people, but also to pave the way for the introduction of education among the tribes at large.

It would be foolish to postpone an important journey from fear of stumbling by the way; and it would be false pride that would prevent me from putting forth this small compilation, because my successors may discover my many errors.

I would urge only that this book has had to be prepared under circumstances of considerable difficulty, owing to the absolute lack of any competent interpreter; thus to ascertain the meaning of a word or trace the origin or inflections of an idiom has often involved a search of many days.

I trust then that my readers will accord to me that indulgence which is so much needed.

THOMAS HERBERT LEWIN.

DEMAGREE,  
LUSHAI FRONTIER.