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THE REACHES OF THE UPPER SALWEEN.*

By ARCHIBALD ROSE, British Consul, Tengyueh.

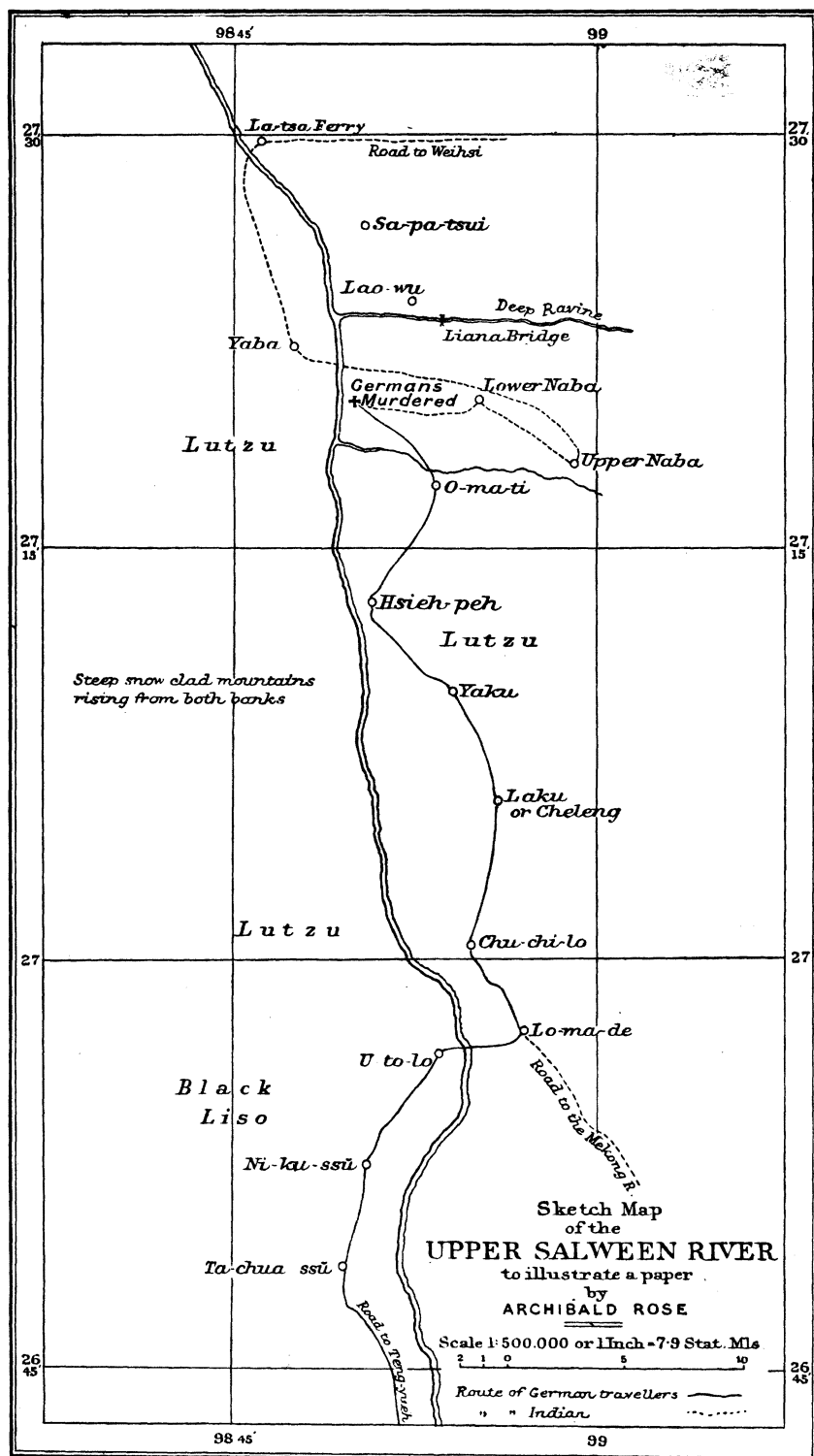
In the autumn of 1908 two German travellers, Dr. Brunhuber and Mr. Carl Schmitz, set out from Rangoon, and, after passing through Burma, advanced from the Chinese frontier city of Tengyueh to the unknown reach of the Salween between latitudes $27^{\circ} 15'$ and $27^{\circ} 30'$, where they met their death at the hands of Lutz tribesmen. Little, if any, of their work has at present been recovered, and lest all record of their labours be lost, I write this small tribute to the memory of two brave explorers.

High in the Tibetan uplands, amongst the river-sources of Asia, rises the Salween river, the great stream which in its southerly course forms a rough boundary between Burma and the Lutz, Musso, and Liso tribes of the Chinese province of Yun-nan, and finally finds its outlet at Moulmein, on the Sea of Bengal. Much of the river has been explored, the late Mr. Litton, of His Britannic Majesty's Consular Service, with his companion, Mr. Forrest, having penetrated as far north as Lo-ma-de (lat. $26^{\circ} 55'$) in 1905, whilst Prince Henry of Orleans skirted some of the northern reaches in 1895, and other portions were crossed by Mr. E. C. Young in his journey to Sadiya. The stretch between latitudes 27° and 28° , however, remained practically unknown until the present year.

Early in December, 1908, Dr. Brunhuber and Mr. Schmitz set out from Tengyueh to ascend the river. For a few days they were accompanied by a caravan of pack-mules laden with tents and provisions, but the rough track proved that the passage of such an expedition would entail infinite trouble and delay. At Chengta the Chinese interpreter, in charge of the mules, was despatched to await them at Wei-hsi, on the river Mekong, whilst the two travellers pressed northwards along the west bank of the Salween, accompanied only by a young Madrassi cook, two Chinese muleteers in charge of the riding-animals, and twelve carriers for their baggage, recruited from the natives of the country.

After leaving Tengyueh little of the river-valley is subject to the direct administration of the Chinese Empire. With the torrential rains of summer heavy mists hang over the river-banks, and malaria and ague have long since taught the Yun-nanese highlander that he must relinquish this tropical valley as a home. In the months of the rains he can scarcely be induced even to cross the river, and as one passes by the bridge on the Talifu-Tengyueh high-road in the late spring, the last of the Chinese innkeepers are seen hurrying from their homes, which remain deserted until the autumn brings a clearer sky. The valley therefore has fallen to the lot of the wilder tribes, who have been pressed back by the Chinese in the struggle for existence, and the rich banks along the

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southern reaches of the river are now cultivated by Shan farmers, whilst the northern stretches are left to the Liso, the "Lutzu" or Anung, the Tibetan tribes of Tsarong, and the Chiutzu of the west bank.

The travellers' first experience was in the territory of the "white" or tame Liso, whose country extends as far north as Hsia-ku-de (lat. $26^{\circ} 25'$), and who own allegiance to sawbwas or chieftains recognized by the Chinese Government, whilst beyond this point lie the villages of the "black" or wild Liso, entirely independent of the Chinese and of one another. In this country, however, the expedition appears to have experienced no serious trouble, save that the natives accompanied them unwillingly as porters, and the muleteers would often search through three or four villages before they could get a party together, whilst from Chengka to Lo-ma-de no provisions could be obtained. At this point, however, they crossed the river by the single rope bridge, already discovered by Mr. Litton, and they followed the eastern bank of the river for five days, through country previously uncrossed by any European traveller. They pressed on along the valley, which is filled with dense tropical jungle, where the track is choked with tough lianas, and mosquitoes and other insects are venomous and numerous, and they were often driven to the rocks of the river-bed when no other path could be found. On both banks were scattered villages inhabited by Lutzu, and high above the jungle rose steep snow-clad mountains, dividing them from China on the one hand and Burma on the other.

About the time of the New Year the expedition arrived at a little village called O-ma-ti, and here the porters were changed, the young chief of the village with eleven of his slaves undertaking the transport, and, in the hope of plunder, these porters appear to have intrigued with the neighbouring hamlets of Upper and Lower Naba and Lao-wu to stop their further progress. Shortly after leaving the village, two of the ponies were enticed away, and the muleteers, who set out to find them, were thus separated from the little party. During the day a sandbank by the river-side was reached, and here the tribesmen threw down their loads, refusing to proceed any further. They ascended to a village on the mountain-side, leaving the two travellers with their Indian servant to spend the night alone upon the bank.

The Indian climbed to the village to buy a fowl, and there he saw the porters talking and drinking with the villagers in a way that aroused his mistrust. He returned and related what he had seen, expressing his suspicions of the men; but Dr. Brunhuber reassured him, saying that the men were weary and would be all right in the morning. The travellers evidently feared no treachery, for they did not unpack the guns, which were in the porters' loads. Dinner was cooked and eaten, and after building up their camp fires, the three men went to sleep on their waterproof sheets, being too weary to pitch camp in spite of the winter weather.

The night passed quietly, but in the morning there was no sign of the muleteers or of the straying animals, nor did the porters come down for their loads. The travellers waited, hoping that their men would catch them up, and presently people began to descend to the sandbank from the village above. They came down about thirty of them, smiling and friendly, though all, even the boys, carried swords; and they offered a basket of rice and some eggs, receiving in return a present of foreign cotton, a pair of scissors, and a knife. Whilst the provisions were being packed by the Indian the savages crowded round the two travellers, who were some distance apart, Dr. Brunhuber having gone down to the river to wash his hands. They made two little groups, each with one of the travellers surrounded by twelve or fourteen of the natives. Suddenly one of the men raised a spear and stabbed Schmitz in the body, and he fell backwards on the sand. The others immediately fell on him, slashing at his body with their great two-handed swords. Brunhuber cried out, and one of the savages cut him down with a sword, making a great gash in his head. He had strapped his revolver at his waist early in the morning, but he had no time to fire before he was killed. Then the spoil was divided and the bodies thrown into the river, which at this point runs swift and deep, and thus ended the expedition of discovery, which was wiped out before its work was fully accomplished.

The Indian was bound and led into captivity, one of the Chinese muleteers was shot with an arrow through the eye before he reached the spot, the other was kept as a slave, and the booty was divided amongst the villages which had participated in the plot. For three months the young Madrassi was held in captivity at Lower Naba, at first bound hand and foot and surrounded by four men at night. Then they turned him into the fields to work with the women, who did all but the heavy ploughing on the rough hillsides. Crops of Indian corn, rice, and peas are grown on the hills, and in the warm clearings by the river tobacco is raised and dried for use, but they grow no poppy, and both opium and tea are unknown. They have crops of garlic, however, with mustard and a few green vegetables, and the lower villages are surrounded with fruit trees. Pigs, goats, sheep, dogs, and cows are kept, but pork is the only meat used by the people, and salt is unobtainable. They have long bamboo houses divided into four compartments, one of which is devoted to the women, and the houses are raised from the ground, being entered by a short stair, whilst the animals are kept in the space below. When the women are not in the fields they spend their time in cooking, or in weaving a coarse fabric from a species of wild hemp. The plant is boiled with wood ash to get the fibres, which are afterwards worked into threads and woven up for the long straight robes which are worn by the men over a pair of short breeches, without socks or shoes. The men wear a loop of silver, usually adorned with a cornelian, suspended over each ear; their ears are pierced also, and the rich insert a piece of

gold wire, the poor a piece of silver or even wood. They are beardless, and their heads are occasionally shaved, leaving a short queue at the back. The women wear a small coat with long sleeves and a short kilt, their only ornaments being a large silver earring with a pendant, and a cloth fillet studded with silver or cowries across the forehead, whilst their legs are encircled by numerous bamboo rings.

Their religion appears to be a form of Nāt-worship, and they have occasional festivals, such as marriages and burials, when wild dances are performed to the accompaniment of guitars and bamboo instruments played with the teeth.

They have no lamps or candles, and at night the men sit round the fires, smearing their faces with lard and ashes, drinking deeply of their rice-spirit, and for ever plotting robbery and murder. Even the neighbouring villages are generally at feud, owing to cattle straying and cattle-raids, and the men go into the jungle to plunder the unwary traveller or harry the Chinese who border these inhospitable regions. They are armed with crossbows, swords, and spears, their arrows are charged with deadly aconite, and they carry a great ox-hide shield and a deerskin helmet, which will serve to turn an arrow from its course. The men are tall, strongly built fellows, and their evil reputation is not belied by their faces, which are of a low and brutal type.

After the Indian had spent three months at Naba he heard rumours that an armed force was advancing up the river, and, whilst working as usual in the fields, he was suddenly shot at and wounded with four arrows by his captors. He recovered from his wounds, however, and was carried across the river to a village on the west bank called Yaba, whence he was eventually ransomed—after five months in captivity—by the Chinese, and taken to La-tsa ferry, from which point they crossed the mountains to the Mekong and Wei-hsi.

Rumours of the murder of Dr. Brunhuber and Mr. Schmitz filtered by slow degrees to Talifu and thence to Tengyueh, where they were received on May 6, 1909, and an expedition was at once sent out by the Taotai to follow in the footsteps of the travellers to gather all possible information. A little band of twenty men, under the command of Colonel Chiang, pressed on as far as Lo-ma-de, and, in accordance with border custom, they were joined by levies of tribesmen as they passed through the Liso country, the Lao-wo sawbwa himself proceeding with the party from Chengka. At Lo-ma-de the horses and most of the transport were abandoned, in order to avoid all possible delays in the jungle, and in five days the expedition reached the group of villages which were reported to have been implicated in the crime.

The mountain village of Upper Naba was first approached, but the villagers retreated before the soldiers, who hurriedly burned a few houses, then followed the fugitives to O-ma-ti. Colonel Chiang's orders were to capture his prisoners alive, and, in the early morning, the

village was surrounded, and his men were ordered to advance without firing. They were speedily discovered, however, and a volley of poisoned arrows warned him that the men would not be taken without a struggle. Seeing a large force collecting, and realizing the weakness of his own band, he ordered them to open fire, and several of the villagers fell, whilst he pressed on and captured nine others, including the young chief. He then started in pursuit of the fugitives, who were escaping in the direction of Lao-wu, but he found his way blocked by a deep ravine, over which the villagers had crossed, cutting the liana bridge behind them. This ravine is reported to stretch into the mountains for many miles, and, fearing that his little band should be overpowered in this unknown and difficult country, and his prisoners rescued, he resolved to beat a hasty retreat. The villages are surrounded with buried stockades of sharpened bamboos, and in his attack on O-ma-ti, one of these stakes pierced Colonel Chiang's straw sandal and entered his foot. Fearing that the tip might be poisoned, he adopted the heroic measure of cutting away the wounded flesh with his sword, and I think it was not without a touch of pride that he presented himself on his return to have the wound dressed and bandaged.

After the capture of the prisoners the party retraced their steps along the Salween as far as Lo-ma-de, then struck eastwards across the mountains to Ying-pan-kai on the Mekong, whence they returned to Tengyueh without the loss of a man, though the little troop had been severely tried by wounds, fever, and the hardships of a forced march through the Salween valley, a region which has a superstitious terror for the Chinese at all times, and of which the dangers and difficulties had been intensified by the heat and the torrential rains of early summer.

My information of the Lutzu country and its wild tribesmen has been gathered from the young Indian, from a Liso tribesman, who spent his youth among them and who speaks their language, from the Lao-wo sawbwa, and from Colonel Chiang. From their accounts I have built up the accompanying sketch-map, showing the routes taken and the approximate positions along the track between the known points of Lo-ma-de and La-tsa ferry. I cannot hope that it is more than approximately correct, but it may prove of interest in tracing the last marches of the two courageous men who have been the first to penetrate the ill-famed land of the Lutzu, and who appear to have been within two marches of the point whence they would have rejoined their main caravan, and lifted the veil from this unknown reach of the upper Salween.
